



## European Island Regions' Forum

### COMMON DECLARATION

Whereas:

- Island regions suffer from territorial discontinuity and peripheral position from the mainland, resulting in reduced competitiveness and development. The ongoing EU challenges together with the upcoming green and digital transitions are likely to widen the gap between islands and the other regions even further if not properly compensated;
- the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union takes account of the of islands' challenges and needs in the following articles:
  - Article 91, paragraph 2, calls on the European Parliament and the Council, while pursuing the objectives of Treaties within the framework of a common transport policy, to take account of cases where their application might seriously affect the standard of living and level of employment in certain regions, as it is the case for island regions;
  - Article 170 calls on the Union, while pursuing the objectives of cohesion, to take account in particular of the need to link island, landlocked and peripheral regions with the central regions of the Union while developing trans-European networks in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy infra-structures;
  - Article 174 calls on the Union, in pursuing its actions leading to its economic, social and territorial cohesion as well as to reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured regions, to strengthen territorial cohesion, paying particular attention, inter alia, to the geographical handicaps of island regions;
  - Article 175 requires that the formulation and implementation of the whole of European Union's policies and actions, as well as the implementation of the internal market, shall take into account the objectives set out in Article 174 and shall contribute to their achievement;
  - Article 349 considers insularity as one of the main constraints which severely restrain outermost regions' development, thus calling for specific measures in a number of areas;
  - Declaration 33 on Article 174 states that the reference in Article 174 to island regions includes fully island states.

We, the representatives of the insular authorities taking part in the 5<sup>th</sup> high level conference on EU's policies in island regions under the *European week of regions and cities*, hereafter referred as members of MedInsulae, strongly support the call to establish preliminary impact assessment procedures for every EU policy that is likely to impact on island regions, including archipelagos and double insularity.

An island-based approach under EU policies can be driven through an European Union Pact for Islands, likewise the Urban Pact and the future Rural Pact, as basis for an European Union Agenda for Islands.

A consultation of the European Commission for a better and comprehensive assessment of the impact of EU policies on islands can serve as inception and strengthen the commitment of the upcoming Swedish and Spanish Presidencies of the Council of the European Union in 2023.

Hereby, the members of MedInsulae:

1. recall the European Union Pact for Islands under the European Parliament resolution of 7<sup>th</sup> June 2022 on *EU islands and cohesion policy: current situation and future challenges (2021/2079(INI))*, reported by MEP Younous Omarjee;
2. recall the European Parliament's resolution of 4<sup>th</sup> February 2016 on *The special situation of islands (2015/3014(RSP))*, reported by MEP Iskra Mihaylova;
3. recall the Committee of the Regions' opinion *Enhancing Cohesion Policy support for regions with geographic and demographic handicaps (Art. 174 TFEU) (CoR 2959/2022)*, reported by MCoR Marie-Antoinette Maupertuis;
4. recall the Committee of the Regions' opinion *Towards sustainable use of Natural Resources within the Mediterranean insular context (2020/C 440/19)* reported by MCoR Francina Armengol.
5. recall the Committee of the Regions' opinion *Entrepreneurship on Islands: contributing towards territorial cohesion (2017/C 306/10)* reported by MCoR Marie-Antoinette Maupertuis;
6. recall the European Economic and Social Committee's opinion of 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017 on *Islands in the EU: from structural handicap to inclusive territory (2017/C 209/02)*, reported by MEESC Stefano Mallia;
7. recall the Final Declaration of the General Assembly of the Islands Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions held in Gotland (Sweden) on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022;
8. plead for prior territorial impact assessment of EU policies on islands, including archipelagos and double insularity, thus analysing how to prevent spill over effects and how to preserve EU policies' original goals;
9. call on the European Commission to set up a task force on island regions as to include high representatives of the European Commission, MEPs, members of the Committee of the Regions and members of island regional authorities, along with a steering group and an expert group;
10. call on the European Commission to complement the upcoming 9<sup>th</sup> Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion with the insular dimension and islands-based data, in order to illustrate the main changes in territorial disparities concerning NUTS2 and NUTS3 island regions, thus underlying adequate policy action to tackle territorial disparities between islands and mainland regions and foster cohesion in Europe;
11. call on the European Parliament to complement the research and analysis made by its in-house research services, including the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), with the insular dimension in order to highlight island regions' specificities and challenges;
12. call on the Committee of the Regions to complement the EU annual regional and local Barometer with the insular dimension and islands-based data in order to highlight island regions' challenges the EU should concentrate on, likewise urban and rural areas.

Brussels, \_\_\_\_\_ 2022

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