PRESS RELEASE

INSULEUR Welcomes EESC Opinion and Reaffirms Its Role in Advancing the Institutional Integration of the Island Dimension in EU Policies

Chios, February 2026

On 18 February 2026, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), at its 603rd Plenary Session, adopted the opinion entitled *"The Island Dimension in European Cohesion, Competitiveness and Sustainable Development Policies"*, prepared at the request of the Cyprus Presidency.

The adoption of the opinion marks a significant institutional step forward, formally recognising that island territories across the European Union face permanent structural constraints that cannot be effectively addressed through standard, horizontally applied policies.

The opinion clearly acknowledges that insularity is not merely a geographical characteristic, but a structural economic and social condition that systematically affects transport and logistics costs, energy dependency and pricing, market accessibility and scale limitations, SME competitiveness, demographic stability and human capital retention, as well as islands' exposure and resilience to climate-related risks.

Across the debates preceding the adoption, a clear and converging message emerged:

Insularity must be systematically integrated into EU policymaking.

To this end, the EESC calls for:

- the establishment of a **European Islands Strategy (Islands Pact)** providing a coherent long-term policy framework;
- the adoption of a legally grounded **Islands Act**, including an **"insularity clause"**, ensuring the systematic ex ante consideration of island-specific constraints across EU legislation.

Such a framework would introduce **a structured ex ante assessment** of EU legislation on island territories - similar to existing SME or rural proofing mechanisms - and enable tailored policy responses in key areas including transport, energy, state aid, labour markets, housing, climate adaptation and economic diversification.

INSULEUR (Network of Insular Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the European Union) welcomes the adoption of the EESC opinion as a decisive step towards the full institutional recognition of insularity as a permanent economic reality.

INSULEUR has consistently advocated for:

- improved state aid flexibility for island SMEs;
- strengthened connectivity and transport support mechanisms;
- enhanced competitiveness and economic diversification of island economies;
- greater recognition of insularity within EU cohesion and competitiveness policies.

In this context, the EESC opinion reinforces long-standing positions of island chambers and strengthens the political and policy momentum towards a comprehensive EU Islands Strategy.

"The EESC opinion confirms what island chambers and SMEs have consistently highlighted through INSULEUR: insularity is a permanent structural condition that requires coherent and long-term policy responses. INSULEUR will continue to advocate for a dedicated EU Islands Strategy, supported by an Islands Act, to ensure that European policies effectively serve island businesses, workers and communities".

Giannis Roussos, President of INSULEUR

For INSULEUR, Europe's islands are not peripheral territories but strategic European assets, playing a key role in territorial cohesion, maritime connectivity, climate adaptation and the development of the green and blue economy.

Strengthening island territories strengthens Europe's competitiveness, resilience and strategic autonomy.

INSULEUR reiterates its readiness to actively contribute to the design and implementation of a future EU Islands Strategy, ensuring that the voice of island chambers and SMEs is fully integrated into European policymaking.

Further information:

- European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) Opinion: *"The Island Dimension in European Cohesion, Competitiveness and Sustainable Development Policies"*
- EESC Workshop: *"European Islands Economies will need more attention after the New Cohesion Policy 2027"*