PRESS RELEASE

OECD Report puts Islands at the centre of Europe's Policy Agenda

Chios, 3 March 2026

INSULEUR - the Network of Insular Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the European Union - welcomes the publication of the OECD report *"Enhancing Resilience and Innovation in Island Economies – Policy Pathways Beyond the Shoreline"*, officially released on 26 February 2026.

This report, prepared by the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities in cooperation with the European Commission's SG REFORM and funded under the Technical Support Instrument (TSI), marks a historic step forward in recognising insularity as a structural and measurable dimension of public policy.

In September 2024, at the invitation of the **Secretary General of the Aegean and Island Policy** of the Hellenic Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy, **Mr. Manolis St. Koutoulakis**, INSULEUR participated in a dedicated consultation held in the framework of an OECD study visit.

Giannis Roussos, the president of INSULEUR, acknowledges Mr. Koutoulakis for his role in convening this consultation, which provided a useful channel to bring forward island-specific evidence and priorities that fed into the OECD's analysis and final recommendations.

INSULEUR's contributions to the report included:

- Evidence and insights from its study on island business demographics across the EU;
- Concrete lessons learned and best practices from EU-funded projects implemented in insular regions;
- Targeted recommendations on supporting island SMEs, addressing the structural cost of insularity and enhancing innovation ecosystems in small and fragmented markets.

The OECD report is particularly significant as it approaches, for the first time, the **"cost of insularity"** as a measurable public policy parameter. It analyses structural cost differentials in transport, service delivery and business operations; highlights the concept of "multiple insularity" and internal territorial disparities; and proposes monitoring mechanisms and composite resilience indicators tailored to island realities.

INSULEUR strongly supports the report's call for the introduction of effective **"island-proofing" mechanisms** in policymaking and for the full integration of insularity considerations into the future design of EU Cohesion Policy and the 2028–2034 Multiannual Financial Framework. Recognising

structural constraints is not about exception-making; it is about designing policies that reflect reality and enable islands to move from dependency to transformation.

INSULEUR also welcomes the explicit recognition of the role of island networks in strengthening visibility, data, cooperation and multi-level governance.

Europe's islands face persistent structural challenges, including higher transport and service delivery costs, limited economies of scale and below-average GDP levels in many regions. Yet they are also uniquely positioned to act as laboratories for green and blue economy transitions, digital solutions, smart specialisation strategies and innovative governance models.

The OECD report provides a practical and credible framework to support this shift and INSULEUR remains committed to working with EU institutions, national governments and regional authorities to translate its findings into concrete, island-sensitive policy action.

The full report is available here:
https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2026/02/policy-pathways-beyond-the-shoreline_44bf6356/1aedeacb-en.pdf