

**MEDAC advice on the call for evidence
EU strategy for islands**

The MEDAC,

in response to the consultation on the ‘Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on an EU strategy for islands’, launched by DG Regio on 5 March 2026 – Ref. Ares(2026)2435909, fully reiterates the comments it made regarding the MEDAC advice (Ref. 74/2026) on the call for evidence on the EU Strategy for Coastal Communities and calls for greater coordination between the various DGs of the European Commission when launching calls for evidence on similar issues.

The MEDAC agrees with the general framework and the objectives outlined by the Commission in the document in question for islands belonging to the European Union.

In particular, the MEDAC highlights the following critical issues:

- limited economic and employment opportunities compared to non-island areas;
- higher production costs;
- economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities;
- exposure to climate change;
- the difficulties in complying with all the requirements of the ‘controls’ regulation (Reg. 1224/2009 as amended by Reg. 2023/2842) for the fisheries sector.

On the other hand, the MEDAC also highlights the opportunities for growth and development offered by the islands for their rich natural and cultural heritage, the revenue generated by tourism, and the presence of biodiversity.

Regrets, once again, the fact that no socio-economic impact assessment is planned, which should form the basis of any initiative, whether legislative or non-legislative. Indeed, given the complexity of the issue and the impact of any policies on all sectors, businesses and citizens operating in insular areas, it would be appropriate to base decisions on sound economic considerations, such as the potential creation of new jobs, as well as on a rough estimate of the resources required.

Expresses caution regarding the possibility that islands might become “*test beds for innovation in areas such as sustainable transport and mobility, water management, clean energy, climate mitigation and adaptation, tourism, digital innovation and the blue economy,...*”, in the sense that such test beds must not have negative repercussions (or significant limitations) on activities such as

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fishing and aquaculture, historically carried out in those areas, but rather direct benefits and the enhancement of traditional activities.

MEDAC requests clarification on the methods of intervention in island areas in terms of ‘test beds’ to “re-enforce the EU’s security and defence”.

The MEDAC deems appropriate that:

- the coordination of EU policies for island regions is essential for their harmonious development and therefore welcomes the “need for a more coherent and integrated approach that can both improve the delivery of existing policies and ensure that the specific needs of islands are properly reflected in EU initiatives.” In this regard, the MEDAC stresses the need for the challenges faced by operators in the fisheries sector on islands to be borne in mind when designing and implementing the next Common Fisheries Policy, and for *ad hoc* measures to be put in place, where appropriate, even if this involves derogations from the general provisions;
- further analysis is needed regarding controls in the fisheries sector in island areas: many requirements are difficult, if not impossible, to meet on islands, as has emerged on several occasions during the WG1 meetings, due to a lack of facilities and/or control/compliance staff. One example is the total absence of ‘designated ports’ with the necessary infrastructure for the required controls: this forces fishers to undertake long journeys to more distant ports simply to land their catch, thereby increasing risks, fuel and labour costs, and reducing the freshness of the product.
- the next multiannual financial framework (MFF) must take into account the general challenges facing island regions and, in the specific case of fisheries and aquaculture, sufficient resources must be allocated both to address the constraints of insularity and enable fishing activities and subsequent processing to be carried out in a way that safeguards competitiveness, and to promote local specificities by focusing on - sustainability and the conservation of resources.
- In the strategy for the islands, priority should be given to sectors traditionally linked to the islands themselves, sectors which cannot relocate their activities for cultural and historical reasons. Fishing has always characterised life on the smaller islands and even today remains a major attraction for tourism: fishing vessels that cease operations disappear forever, and with them all the values they have carried for centuries.