

Question for written answer E-001524/2025
to the Commission
Rule 144
Elena Kountoura (The Left)

Subject: Need to incorporate specific measures to better support the health coverage of islands in the EU cohesion policy framework

EU island regions face chronic and structural problems with regard to access to basic health services. This issue is exacerbated by geographical isolation, seasonal population pressure, the inability to attract medical and nursing staff and the inadequacy of infrastructure. Despite the fact that the TFEU recognises insularity as a permanent structural handicap, these specific problems do not appear to be dealt with sufficiently under the current cohesion policy strategy and priorities.¹

Taking into account the desperate shortages of doctors, nurses and basic health infrastructure on at least 15 Greek islands, as reflected in data from the Panhellenic Federation of Public Hospital Employees in view of Easter and the upcoming tourist season², and the resolution of the European Parliament³ calling on the EU to draw up a dedicated strategy and agenda for islands, with clearly defined priorities for action and funding, and stressing the need to improve health infrastructure and upgrade primary healthcare provision, access to healthcare and the provision of support, in order to encourage the establishment of healthcare professionals, can the Commission say:

1. Does it intend to establish a specific horizontal priority and category of funding and targeted support for basic public health services on islands within the framework of the cohesion funds?
2. Does the Commission intend to establish specific rules, targeted financial support and binding criteria for strengthening healthcare services in island regions under the post-2027 cohesion policy framework, in order to take account of the specific situation of islands with regard to access to healthcare services?

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¹ Despite financial support from EU cohesion policy funds, such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), for action in the area of health, the problem of poor and unequal health coverage on islands remains acute and, in many cases, it is getting worse. This highlights the need for more targeted, established and permanent measures.

² For more information, see https://www.efsyn.gr/ellada/ygeia/468921_kentra-aerodiakomidon-choyn-ginei-tanisia#goog_rewarded

³ For further information, see European Parliament resolution of 7 June 2022 on EU islands and cohesion policy: current situation and future challenges (2021/2079 (INI)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0225_EN.html.