

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002636/24
to the Commission**

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(22 November 2024)

Subject: Territorial continuity and island transport: achieving transparency and sustainability

Despite the existence of numerous agreements, including the memorandum of understanding between the Italian Government and the island regions, and despite action taken by authorities to support territorial continuity, problems linked to the high costs of maritime and air routes to islands remain. What is more, transport operators' opacity continues to seriously harm local economies, tourism and business activities.

The problem is compounded by the need to improve transport infrastructure without undermining islands' fragile environment, a matter which calls for an integrated approach that combines environmental sustainability and transport efficiency.

In the light of the above:

1. What measures will the Commission take, with a view to protecting consumers' rights, to ensure transparency and prevent misleading commercial practices by transport operators?
2. What practical steps can the Commission take to support the — environmentally friendly and sustainable — improvement of transport infrastructure for island regions?
3. With a view to tackling unfair practices on island routes and fostering measures that serve islands, are plans afoot to bolster cohesion policy?

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Answer given by Mr Tzitzikostas on behalf of the European Commission
(18 March 2025)

1. EU rules provide for open markets in maritime ⁽¹⁾ and air services ⁽²⁾ aiming to reduce prices for consumers through competition between operators.

Where the market fails to provide adequate connections, EU rules provide the possibility for Member States to set up public service obligations to ensure sufficient connectivity, including for islands. It is for Member States to define specific operational conditions and ensure they are met.

Operators must in principle ensure ticket prices offered to the public are non-discriminatory ⁽³⁾ and that passenger rights are respected in line with EU Passenger Rights Regulations ⁽⁴⁾. Furthermore, for air services, airlines and ticket intermediaries must always display the final ticket price including all applicable taxes, charges and surcharges, and the price of optional supplements. It is for the Member States to enforce these rules.

2. The Commission supports island regions in their transition to sustainable economies. Trans-European transport network policy aims to develop high-quality, interconnected transport infrastructure across the EU, including links to islands and in support of the wider concept of 'European Maritime Space' ⁽⁵⁾.

3. Cohesion policy investments are already focusing on passenger and freight transport capacity to improve Italy's transport infrastructure and reduce divergence with EU partners and within Italy. They are concentrated largely in less developed and island regions, aiming at enhancing accessibility, territorial cohesion and transport sustainability.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation 3577/92 covers services within the Member States and Regulation 4055/86 services between the Member States.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A31992R3577>

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A31986R4055>

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EC) No 1008/2008.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2008/1008/oj/eng>

⁽³⁾ Article 23(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1008/2008 and Article 4(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1177/2010.

⁽⁴⁾ In particular Regulation (EU) No 1177/2010 for waterborne transport <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32010R1177&from=NL> and Regulation (EC) No 261/2004 for air transport <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32004R0261>

⁽⁵⁾ https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/infrastructure-and-investment/trans-european-transport-network-ten-t/european-maritime-space_en