

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000173/26  
to the Commission  
Elena Kountoura (The Left)  
(15 January 2026)**

**Subject:** Need to strengthen connectivity and territorial cohesion of island regions in view of the upcoming EU Islands Strategy

According to Article 174 of the TFEU, the Union shall aim at reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and shall pay particular attention to regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps such as island regions <sup>(1)</sup>.

The physical disconnection of islands from the mainland is a permanent structural disadvantage that directly affects residents' access to basic services, mobility, social and economic life, as well as the sustainability of tourism. Despite the fact that connectivity is a key factor in achieving territorial cohesion, as well as being a right of EU island citizens, many island and remote regions in Greece still have limited accessibility and high transport costs <sup>(2)</sup>.

In view of the upcoming European strategy for island and coastal communities and in order for the EU to guarantee connectivity, can the Commission answer the following:

1. Does it intend to propose specific legislative or financial measures to ensure affordable, reliable and stable air and multimodal connectivity for island regions, in particular very small islands, in cases of low competition and high dependence on specific routes, in accordance with Article 174 of the TFEU?
2. Will it support the creation of a dedicated European financial mechanism to compensate for the cost of connectivity in the new MFF, as a complementary tool for cohesion policy, to address persistent structural disadvantages and ensure the long-term social, economic and territorial cohesion of island regions?

Submitted: 15.1.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto on behalf of the European Commission  
(18 March 2026)**

According to EU legislation <sup>(1)</sup>, to ensure connectivity to isolated regions, including islands, Member States may impose Public Service Obligations setting fixed standards of continuity, regularity, pricing or minimum capacity, if the market itself does not deliver an acceptable level of air services to such regions <sup>(2)</sup>.

This can include preferential/maximum prices for residents. Social aid schemes support air transport and ferry services for residents of remote regions <sup>(3)</sup>.

To preserve connectivity, Member States may exempt passenger ships serving small islands from low-carbon fuel obligations until 31 December 2029 <sup>(4)</sup>.

The Commission proposal for the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework <sup>(5)</sup> foresees the introduction of National and Regional Partnership Plans elaborated by the Member States and supporting economic, social and territorial cohesion.

The new approach aims to promote a more coherent, flexible and coordinated use of EU resources for investments and reform across the policy areas.

This framework is also intended to provide greater flexibility to design targeted, place-based solutions for territories facing permanent natural or demographic constraints, including islands.

Territorial development may be supported through integrated territorial strategies, allowing islands to unlock development potential and address structural challenges such as accessibility and connectivity.

<sup>1</sup> In addition, islands may have features such as mountainous and sparsely populated areas, and at the same time belong to cross-border regions, thus worsening disparities within the EU.

<sup>2</sup> Greece is seeing a continuous and significant increase in air and ferry transport costs, which does not appear to be justified by fuel price developments or by new tax burdens. This situation places a disproportionate burden on residents, limits their access to healthcare, work and education and has a negative impact on domestic tourism flows and local community incomes. For example, in November 2025, ELSTAT's Consumer Price Index data show a new 4.2% increase in air travel costs compared to November 2024. Last year there was already an exceptionally high increase of 34.9% compared to 2023, and in 2023 too there was an appreciation of 3.8% compared to 2022.

<sup>(1)</sup> Regulation (EC) No 1008/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 September 2008 on common rules for the operation of air services in the Community, OJ L 293, 31.10.2008, p. 3-20.

<sup>(2)</sup> In Greece, there are currently Public Service Obligations on 28 routes.

<sup>(3)</sup> based on Article 107(2)(a) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12008E107>.

<sup>(4)</sup> Article 2(3) of the regulation (EU) No 2023/1805 on the use of renewable and low-carbon fuels in maritime transport, and amending Directive 2009/16/EC.

<sup>(5)</sup> COM (2025)570: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0570>.

The Commission does not propose a separate financial mechanism or measures exclusively dedicated to island connectivity.

However, the review <sup>(6)</sup> of the Air Services Regulation is considering possible measures to help ensure sustainable and affordable connectivity, including in the EU islands.

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<sup>(6)</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14620-Aviation-EU-air-services-rules-revision-\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14620-Aviation-EU-air-services-rules-revision-_en).