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E-002348/2026

Answer given by Mr Tzitzikostas
on behalf of the European Commission
(26.8.2026)

The Commission recognises the importance to address the challenges impacting the economic sustainability and quality of life of the EU islands. In this context, the EU strategy for islands¹ adopted in June 2026 sets out a coordinated approach to support islands and unlock their long-term potential.

The Commission is aware of the recent rise in freight rates. Rates for commercial maritime transport services are set by market operators and are not governed by EU legislation. Shipping companies must nonetheless comply with the relevant EU competition rules, including bans on anti-competitive agreements and the abuse of a dominant position.

The Emissions Trading System (ETS) review proposes changes that also reduce compliance costs for shipping companies, including administrative simplifications and a dedicated EU mechanism to support shipping companies with ETS allowances for the uptake of sustainable fuels and clean propulsion technologies.

The current multiannual financial framework (MFF) allows for support tailored to the specific needs of islands, notably through the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the Connecting Europe Facility.

The Commission proposal for the next MFF fully supports the objectives set out in Article 174 of the Treaty to promote economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU, including by addressing the needs of areas facing severe natural or demographic handicaps, such as islands. The accompanying national and regional partnership proposal provides Member States with flexibility to address structural challenges while setting out the requirement to allocate resources in a manner that considers, inter alia, the specific needs and constraints of islands and outermost regions.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/policy/themes/islands/EU_strategy_for_islands.pdf.