

EN

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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto
on behalf of the European Commission
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The EU's State aid frameworks¹ give Member States the possibility to provide islands with tailored support in view of the structurally higher costs they face.

The proposals for the General Block Exemption Regulation² (GBER) and the Air Transport Guidelines³ continue to support island airports. Among the provisions under discussion in the GBER revision is an increase in the eligibility threshold for airport aid from 200 000 to 500 000 yearly passengers. Airports located on islands can also benefit from higher aid intensities for their investments. In addition, the proposals for the GBER and the Air Transport Guidelines explicitly consider the complexity of maritime connections between islands and the mainland. The ongoing reviews of the relevant State aid frameworks provide an opportunity to assess comments, as appropriate, on the need to cater for island specificities.

Public Service Obligations⁴ (PSOs) facilitate maritime connections and can help offset some of the additional costs that islands face as a result of their insularity. For example, in Greece, the PSO in the electricity sector provides a subsidy mechanism that spreads the extra cost of supplying non-interconnected islands across all consumers, helping to keep island electricity prices lower. The EU is also investing in island interconnections to reduce those costs over time and support decarbonisation. To reduce costs, the Emissions Trading System⁵ and FuelEU Maritime⁶ allow Member States to exempt voyages servicing small islands from their scope.

Finally, the EU strategy for islands⁷, sets out a forward-looking action for the Commission to launch an in-depth analysis of the cost of insularity and best practice measures to mitigate it, notably in the transport sector.

¹ 2014 Aviation Guidelines, the General Block Exemption Regulation, and the Regional Aid Guidelines.

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2014/651/oj/eng>.

³ https://competition-policy.ec.europa.eu/public-consultations/2026-air-transport-guidelines_en.

⁴ https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-modes/air/internal-market/public-service-obligations-psos_en.

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2023/959/oj/eng>.

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/1805/oj/eng>.

⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52026DC0520>.