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The need for transparency and involvement of EU islands in the implementation phase of RRP

Over the past year, the Network of Insular Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the European Union-INSULEUR has repeatedly called on European institutions and Member States to adopt a specific strategy for EU islands in their Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRPs) and has strongly demanded to put in place a fully-fledged consultation with insular Chambers of Commerce and their business community on the definition of these NRRPs before their submission to the Commission. It is however regrettable that a sizeable number of Member States give an insufficient explanation as to how regional and local authorities have been involved in their design and implementation and that only few fulfil the requirement with merit.

Nevertheless, it appears that not all interventions of INSULEUR have been made in vain since specific measures to overcome the obstacles faced by territories beset by geographical and demographic handicaps (and islands specifically) are foreseen distinctly in many plans and a certain territorial dimension is also attributed to investments supporting the energy and digital transition as well as the climate adaptation. For instance, islands tend to be identified as targets for specific investments to promote energy transition and measures supporting broadband connectivity and although we are still far from an intent to recognize insularity as a permanent feature affecting negatively all islands' economies, INSULEUR welcomes these measures that are steps in the right direction to enhance the potential of the RRF funding and brace the need for place-based recovery strategies.

INSULEUR therefore particularly welcomes EUROCHAMBRES position paper of 29/06/2021 which highlights our stance by calling on the Commission to put a particular emphasis in involving insular Chambers and SMEs in the implementation and monitoring of RRP and reminding that if islands are left behind, the recovery will simply not happen.

Most importantly, INSULEUR acknowledges President von der Leyen's reply dated 28/06/2021 to President's Borg latest letter in which she reaffirms that "*the importance of islands and remote regions features in the legal foundation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility as the Regulation states in the third recital those efforts to reduce regional disparities should in particular benefit islands and outermost regions*". INSULEUR indeed recognizes the importance of the listed projects and measures related to EU islands in RRP which are crucial initiatives for boosting the recovery of certain insular economies; however, as President J. Borg states "*these are definitely very important steps in the right direction and the key to increase the legitimacy and successful implementation and governance of the NRRPs for EU islands should now lie on the full involvement and real say of insular actors in this process along with the recognition of insularity as being a permanent feature affecting negatively, directly, and indirectly ALL islands' economies.*"

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