

Recommendation n°. 81

European Union Strategy for the Coastal Communities of the Outermost Regions

Considering the call for evidence launched by the European Commission (EC) under the initiative 'EU Strategy for Coastal Communities', which aims to define a coherent strategic approach to support the sustainable development of the coastal communities of the European Union (EU);

Considering the structural specificities of the Outermost Regions (ORs) of *Saint Martin, Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana*, the Azores, Madeira, *the Canary Islands, Mayotte and Réunion*, covered by Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), in particular their remoteness from mainland Europe, the small size of their markets, their climate vulnerability, their dependence on the maritime sector, their infrastructure limitations and their more limited administrative capacity, which constrain their coastal communities;

Considering that this initiative is intended to contribute to the development of sustainable, resilient and innovative blue economies, as well as to improving the quality of life of coastal communities;

Considering that the EC identifies the need to strengthen the coherence and effectiveness of policies, funding instruments and implementation mechanisms, with a view to better supporting the Member States and regional and local authorities in mitigating the challenges faced by coastal communities;

The Advisory Council for the Outermost Regions (CCRP) hereby issues the following opinion:

1. Strengthening economic competitiveness

Strengthening the economic competitiveness of the coastal communities of the ORs must rest on an approach that enables the use of more efficient, safer and environmentally sustainable vessels, as well as the adoption of renewable energy in the infrastructure supporting the sector, taking into account the structural constraints of these territories, such as the additional costs arising from insularity and remoteness, the small size of the fleets, the limited capacity for own investment and the strong dependence on the fisheries sector.

Accordingly, **it is recommended that the Member States concerned promote the modernisation and innovation of the fisheries sector, including the integration of new technologies that enhance connectivity at sea, and the modernisation of the artisanal fishing fleet and its port infrastructure.**

At the same time, it is essential to ensure proportionate, stable and predictable financing conditions that allow operators to plan medium- and long-term investments, in particular as regards the modernisation of vessels, the energy transition and adaptation to environmental requirements, ensuring that the modernisation process does not compromise the socio-economic development of our communities.

In this regard, **the CCRUP recommends that the European Commission, in the next post-2027 financial and regulatory framework,**

1. Ensure the continuity of specific financial instruments for financial compensation, in particular under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF);

2. Promote the reintroduction of POSEI-Fisheries for the fishers of the ORs adapting it to their specific characteristics, with dedicated rules, a financial allocation and simplified management.

3. Improve the EMFAF by adapting it to the specificities of the fishing communities of the ORs, with simplified management.

2. Strengthening resilience and adaptation

The coastal communities of the ORs face a combination of environmental, economic and social pressures, being particularly exposed to climate change and to the degradation of marine ecosystems.

It is therefore important to ensure the protection of our marine biodiversity and the sustainability of fishery resources, promoting management based on scientific research, data collection, up-to-date scientific knowledge and ocean literacy, as well as the implementation of mechanisms based on independent environmental impact assessments, with the effective participation of coastal communities.

Strengthening of measures to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is particularly important, not only for the protection of marine biodiversity but also for the economic sustainability of the coastal communities engaged in fishing activity.

Consequently, **the CCRUP recommends that the European Commission promote an integrated approach that strengthens the environmental and socio-economic resilience of our communities, with a focus on the ecological and energy transition, including the development of solutions based on renewable energy and the improvement of energy efficiency**, as essential factors for the monitoring, safety and management of maritime activities.

3. Promoting inclusive and dynamic communities

The CCRUP considers it essential to promote inclusive and dynamic coastal communities, ensuring an improvement in the quality of life of local populations.

In this context, generational renewal in the fisheries sector of the coastal communities of the ORs is of particular relevance, currently constituting a structural challenge marked by the progressive ageing of the working population. To ensure the continuity of fishing activity, it is crucial to make it more attractive to young people, by improving working conditions, providing suitable training and guaranteeing stable incomes. To that end, it is important to attract young people with minimum compulsory schooling and vocational training in the field of fisheries, while strengthening the integration of technical and scientific skills within fishing communities.

In this context, **the CCRUP recommends that the European Commission:**

1. Draw up adapted and equitable regulation for the ORs, allowing medium- and long-term investment planning;

2. Drive forward the modernisation of vessels, as well as the improvement of safety and living conditions on board;

3. Continue to authorise fleet renewal in the ORs;

4. Continue to promote support for ocean literacy, fostering continuous upskilling across the entire fisheries value chain.

Fishing activity in the coastal communities of the ORs, which is characterised by artisanal fishing, is of particular relevance to the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the regions in which those communities are located, contributing to maintaining employment among their populations and to strengthening their food sovereignty.

To that end, **the CCRUP recommends that the European Commission promote support for coastal communities dependent on the fisheries sector, namely through the improvement of fishing infrastructure.**

It also recommends that the European Commission and the Member States concerned encourage sector organisations and other interest groups with an interest in our waters to join the CCRUP, with a view to developing innovation projects, stimulating investment and strengthening the economic resilience of the coastal communities of the ORs.

Opinion of the *Asociación Tinerfeña de Amigos de la Naturaleza (ATAN)*

This organization does not agree with the reintroduction of POSEI fisheries for fishermen of the Outermost Regions.