

Irish Green Party Submission

EU Islands Strategy



The Irish Green Party / An Comhaontas Glas supports an EU Islands Strategy that recognises islands as distinct policy territories requiring targeted interventions, strengthened governance mechanisms, and evidence-based decision-making. Ensuring that island communities can remain viable places to live, work, and participate fully in European society is consistent with the European Union's commitments to sustainability, cohesion, and balanced regional development. Culture and language can thrive on the islands in ways that are not possible on the mainland and this must also be supported.

1. The Right to Remain

EU policy should explicitly recognise the right of island populations to continue living sustainably on their islands. Patterns of population decline are not inevitable consequences of geography, but rather outcomes shaped by policy choices and investment priorities. A viable future for island communities requires a coordinated, place-based policy framework addressing structural barriers to long-term residency.

This necessitates integrated investment across core enabling conditions, including:

- Adequate housing supply, including refurbishment and activation of vacant housing stock
- Sustainable, year-round employment opportunities and economic diversification beyond seasonal sectors
- Equitable access to essential public services, including healthcare, education, and childcare
- Reliable and affordable transport connectivity, alongside high-quality digital infrastructure

Ensuring the right to remain should be understood as a foundational principle underpinning territorial cohesion and balanced regional development within the European Union.

2. Ring-Fenced Island Funding

Island territories experience structural constraints associated with peripherality, scale, and connectivity that are insufficiently addressed through general rural or regional funding mechanisms. A distinct policy approach is therefore required to ensure that funding instruments are appropriately tailored to island-specific conditions.

The EU Islands Strategy should establish dedicated and ring-fenced funding streams targeted at island communities, with priority investment directed towards:

- Expansion and renovation of housing stock to support population stability
- Enhancement of maritime and multimodal transport infrastructure
- Provision of high-speed and resilient broadband connectivity
- Development of sustainable enterprise ecosystems, including support for micro-enterprises and social enterprises
- Investment in remote working infrastructure and digital hubs

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Targeted, predictable funding frameworks will support economic resilience, reduce structural inequalities, and strengthen long-term demographic sustainability.

3. Closing the Island Data Gap

A significant constraint on effective island policymaking at EU level is the absence of consistent, comparable, and disaggregated data relating to island territories. Current statistical frameworks often insufficiently capture the socio-economic, environmental, and demographic characteristics of island communities, limiting the capacity for evidence-based policy design.

The EU Islands Strategy should prioritise:

- Development of harmonised statistical indicators enabling comparability across island regions
- Strengthening of the evidence base supporting targeted and proportionate policy interventions
- Support for the establishment of an island-focused research and policy centre capable of informing decision-making at EU and Member State level

Strengthening data infrastructure will improve policy effectiveness, facilitate longitudinal analysis, and ensure that island-specific realities are adequately reflected in European policymaking processes.