

**Table S2.** Critical issues rising with regard to policies supporting the European insular regions

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Islands' reflection in the EU territorial statistic units (NUTS). Islands are, in some cases, identified as parts of a mainland NUTS 3 region or a conurbation, rendering thus identification of their distinct developmental disadvantages quite vague [106].

The shortage of islands' refined statistical data renders informed decision-making difficult, with an inherent risk of biased results failing to properly reflect islands' specificities [107].

Most islands do not benefit from dedicated Operational Programmes, being in direct (and uneven) competition with more powerful and resourceful mainland territories [76].

Insufficient handling of insular regions and their geographic/developmental barriers in the EU Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 [108]. In fact, islands, alongside a range of other specific region types, e.g., mountain regions, sparsely populated regions, rural areas, are perceived as one group of territories with "specific geographical features" and as "less developed areas" [62]. Thus GDP-based classification, used in formulating the EU Cohesion Policy (developed, transition or less developed regions), is questioned [106, 80]; and leads to insufficient representation of the socioeconomic state of insular regions in contrast to the mainland ones.

Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) 2016–2025 [109]. It aspires to downscale the 2030 SDGs at the regional, sub-regional, national and local level in the Mediterranean by deploying a strategic framework that addresses sustainability objectives in Mediterranean as a whole. However, Mediterranean islands, although emblematic spatial entities of the region and highly vulnerable to climate stressors are getting no special attention in this document.

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Source: Own elaboration