

# The outermost regions and the EU: a privileged, renewed and strengthened partnership

For many years the EU has acknowledged the specific features common to the Azores, the Canary Islands, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Madeira, Martinique, Mayotte, Réunion and Saint Martin, and has afforded them a special status. For the first time, however, the Commission is working with the Member States to establish **customised support** to help these regions **build on their unique assets** and **create opportunities** for their inhabitants.

European Commission President, Jean-Claude **Juncker**, said: *“I have always paid particular attention to the nine regions we call the outermost regions, which are first and foremost European regions, and which project Europe’s presence in the world. This strategy, which provides the basis for a renewed, strengthened and privileged partnership, is a new specific example of a Europe that protects, provides the means to act and offers equal opportunities to everyone.”*

Commission Vice-President responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, Jyrki **Katainen**, said: *“We want these regions to have easier access to the European fund for strategic investment, which is at the heart of the investment plan. A dedicated initiative with the European Investment Bank will help, with enhanced technical support, to make the planning and financing of projects more effective.”*

The Commissioner for Regional Policy, Corina **Crețu**, added: *“The EU is helping these regions to overcome their difficulties, so that none of them feel isolated or left behind. They have many extraordinary assets, such as blue growth, space sciences and renewable energies, and we will also help them to reap the benefits of globalisation.”*

**The EU is committed to the outermost regions, together with the Member States.**

The Commission will seek to shape policies that better reflect these regions’ realities and interests, particularly when negotiating trade or fisheries agreements.

For that purpose, a **platform for dialogue** will bring together the regions and their Member States, the European institutions and private stakeholders, who will meet to exchange views during the legislative process. The Commission will also establish, on request, **special working groups** on specific issues, such as making the best use of European funds or promoting employment.

The strategy stresses clearly that ensuring these regions’ prosperity is a shared responsibility among the regions, Europe and the Member States, which must show the political will to support these regions on the path to growth.

## **The EU helps these regions to capitalise on their strengths in a globalised economy**

The strategy supports their full integration into their surrounding regions by means of **joint projects** with neighbouring countries, which could receive European funds in the future for the prevention of natural risks, waste management, transport or energy, to give some examples.

In order to promote innovation and investment, the EU will help the regions to participate in the [Horizon 2020](#) research programme, with special coordination and support action. **A new initiative will be created under the [Juncker Plan](#)** with the aim of facilitating regions' access to the European fund for strategic investments (EFSI), in particular via a single access point within the [European Investment Advisory Hub](#).

Making use of the [smart specialisation](#) model, which has proved its worth, the strategy seeks to help the regions to **build on their assets**, supporting greater innovation in traditional sectors such as fisheries and agri-food. To that end the Commission will provide for the [POSEI programmes](#) to continue beyond 2020 and will assess whether State aid can be used to support the renewal of small-scale fishing fleets.

## **The EU is working to create equal opportunities for everybody in these regions**

In order to promote the **acquisition of skills and mobility**, Europe will give young people in these regions a financial boost to enable more of them to participate in the [Erasmus](#) programme and in the [European Solidarity Corps](#). Furthermore, better transport links are crucial to these regions' economic development and to their inhabitants' quality of life. The Commission will launch a study to identify their connection needs and, where justified, undertakes to co-finance ports and airports.

## **The EU protects these regions from the effects of climate change**

Extreme weather events, such as Hurricane Irma, have demonstrated that these regions need help in tackling the effects of climate change. The EU will incorporate the challenges facing them into its LIFE programme and its [strategy on adaptation to climate change](#), which is currently being evaluated with a view to possible revision. In order to support the reconstruction efforts in Saint-Martin/Sint-Maarten, the Commission is currently considering the best way to combine different European funds.

## **Background:**

Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union acknowledges the special characteristics of the outermost regions and affords them a special status.

In 2004, the Commission presented a first strategy aimed at shaping the partnership between the European institutions and these regions. That strategy is now being renewed in order to tackle persistent challenges, such as high unemployment rates, particularly among young people, greater

vulnerability to the effects of climate change and a dependence on economic sectors which have not incorporated innovative processes.

Most of the measures under this strategy respond specifically to requests made by the presidents of the outermost regions in a memorandum submitted to President **Juncker** at the [4th Forum of the Outermost Regions](#) in Brussels in March 2017.

**Further information:**

[The new strategy for the outermost regions](#)

[Memo – The outermost regions and the EU: a privileged, renewed and strengthened partnership](#)

[Factsheet on the new strategy for the outermost regions](#)

[Factsheets – What impact will the new strategy have in your region?](#)

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