



Special Session

The European outermost regions: remote territories... forgotten territories?

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Abstract

Over the past few decades, numerous analyses have focused on reducing economic and social disparities among European regions, examining the catch-up process of the less advanced areas. However, these studies often overlook the European Outermost Regions (ORs), leading to a skewed understanding of the effectiveness of European policies. It is crucial to acknowledge that part of Europe's territory extends beyond the continental confines, reaching areas far removed from the major European metropolises. This includes the nine ORs belonging to three Member States: France (Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique, Mayotte, Réunion, and Saint-Martin), Spain (Canary Islands), and Portugal (Azores and Madeira). These regions, housing around 5 million people, face multiple challenges due to their isolation, including limited access to larger markets and constrained economic and social development. Except for French Guiana, the only continental region among them, these ORs are markedly small compared to their respective countries.

These structural challenges are acknowledged in Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which outlines specific difficulties unique to the ORs: remoteness, insularity, small size, challenging topography and climate, limited internal markets, and dependence on a few products.

As we convene for the 63rd ERSA congress in an OR, it is timely to concentrate on these ultraperipheral regions of the EU, particularly to assess the efficacy of cohesion policies in addressing the structural disadvantages of these territories. Despite a

general trend towards development, these regions remain among those most lagging in progress. Recent literature suggests the existence of 'development traps'—situations where, despite an overall catching-up tendency, some regions stagnate economically or are caught in poverty cycles. This scenario is likely applicable to the ORs, and we aim to explore this further in a special ERSA session.

Topics of the special session

Assessing policy impact and structural challenges: *How have EU cohesion policies influenced socio-economic development in ORs, and what structural barriers impact their effectiveness?*

Economic resilience and sustainable growth: *What strategies can foster economic diversification, sustainability, and connectivity in ORs, considering their unique geographic and economic challenges?*

Social cohesion and quality of life: *How do remoteness and limited resources affect social inclusion, health, education, and overall quality of life, and do place-based interventions can address these challenges in ORs?*

Governance, innovation, and regional cooperation: *What governance models, innovative practices, and regional cooperation mechanisms can support the sustainable development and integration of ORs into wider economic systems? How the territorial governance is affecting regional development of ORs?*