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From: Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director

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To: Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union

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Subject: COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS EU Strategy on resilient, prosperous and liveable coastal communities

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Delegations will find attached document COM(2026) 530 final.

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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**EU Strategy on resilient, prosperous and liveable coastal communities**

## 1. Introduction

From fishing communities to coastal cities, the daily lives of 95 million people living in the 70,000 km of EU coastline and within the EU's coastal areas, are closely tied to the ocean.

The EU's coastal geography and identity offer unique opportunities. At the meeting point of land and sea, coastal communities have strong environmental, social and cultural assets and untapped potential to advance the sustainable blue economy. They serve as testbeds for blue innovation and new sustainable business models, act as the stewards of coastal and marine environment, strengthen EU's competitiveness, restore marine and coastal ecosystems and safeguard its rich maritime cultural heritage and identity. They play a crucial role as local hubs of maritime trade, tourism and food and clean energy production.

At the same time, the EU's coastal communities are at the frontline of climate change, marine and coastal biodiversity loss, and marine pollution. Unbalanced tourism, affordable housing shortage, seasonality of economic activity (such as tourism, fisheries), and limited job opportunities, as well as environmental risks and increasing hybrid threats, pose additional challenges. Coastal areas are also exposed to security threats due to their geographical location and are of strategic importance from security and defence perspective in the current tense geopolitical environment. If left unaddressed, these pressures risk undermining livelihoods, security and prosperity of coastal communities, with wider consequences for EU's resilience, competitiveness and security. EU coastal communities are highly diverse, ranging from small fishing communities to major industrial port cities, with differing geographies, environments, governance, cultures and demographic conditions. A "one-size-fits-all" approach is neither feasible nor effective. As such, development strategies need to be tailor-made, designed and implemented locally, to reflect specific needs, challenges and opportunities. development strategies need to be tailor-made, designed and implemented locally, to reflect specific needs, challenges and opportunities.

In line with the objectives of the European Ocean Pact<sup>1</sup>, **an EU strategy that brings challenges and opportunities of coastal communities under a single coherent framework is put forward for the first time.** The specific challenges faced by island territories and the outermost regions are tackled by the EU strategy for Islands<sup>2</sup> and the future EU strategy for outermost regions.

## 2. An EU approach to coastal communities

As many EU policies and funds affect coastal areas, a coherent approach to their development and implementation can maximise synergies across maritime, climate, cohesion, social, research and innovation, energy and environmental policies. EU actions will complement, and not replace, national, regional and local efforts, in line with the subsidiarity principle.

By placing coastal communities at its core, this strategy provides clear direction, supporting Member States and stakeholders in planning, programming and implementation – both short and long term.

An EU approach to coastal communities must start from the needs, and concerns of the people living at the coast. Based on stakeholders' consultations<sup>3</sup> and an analysis of the risks and opportunities for coastal communities, the EU approach identifies **three strategic objectives for European coastal communities:**

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2025) 281 final

<sup>2</sup> COM(2026) 520 final

<sup>3</sup> Including the [Call for Evidence](#), workshops and [session](#) at the Ocean days, as well as a [dedicated study](#).

- i. **Prosperity.** Invest in and ensure local benefits from a diverse and sustainable blue economy, supported by innovation and new sustainable business models.
- ii. **Resilience.** Continuously adapt to the growing risks posed by climate change and other environmental, economic, social and security risks, while contributing to decarbonisation, sustainable practice and GHG emissions reductions across coastal and maritime activities.
- iii. **Liveability.** Develop vibrant, inclusive and attractive places where people of all generations can live, work and spend their leisure time, and where maritime culture, heritage and local identity can thrive.

## 2.1. Prosperous coastal communities

### *(1) Strengthening and diversifying traditional blue economy sectors*

The EU blue economy directly generates around EUR 263 billion per year in gross value added. Although it remains underfunded, investment opportunities across blue economy sectors are gaining momentum.<sup>4</sup> Marine knowledge, blue innovations and technologies are already driving new business models and opportunities. Rapid advances in offshore renewable energy, digital solutions and ocean observation can translate into local jobs, skills and investment for coastal communities. Coastal communities can act as blue economy hubs, where innovation drives competitiveness, reinforcing the EU's overall economic performance whilst ensuring a sustainable use of the ocean's natural capital. By focusing investments on regional strengths, **Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3)** foster collaboration in local and regional blue innovation ecosystems creating business growth and jobs in coastal communities. To better connect and scale innovation in key ecosystems, such as blue biotechnologies, the blue bioeconomy, and smart circular aquaculture, the Commission will continue to support the S3 thematic platform for sustainable blue economy.<sup>5</sup>

The blue economy's industrial base - including maritime manufacturing, shipping and ports - remains a major pillar of EU's innovation capacity, competitiveness and strategic autonomy. The **EU Ports strategy** and the **European Industrial Maritime strategy (EIMS)**<sup>6</sup>, set out pathways that translate into new business opportunities and innovation, linked to e.g. green shipping, offshore energy and logistics. This will create local high-quality jobs through port-led innovation and industrial clusters, providing at the same time the infrastructure and connectivity for the competitiveness and security for the EU in its entirety.

**Fisheries and aquaculture sectors**, including the wider value chain, are the backbone of many coastal economies. These long tradition professions are deeply rooted in the EU's cultural heritage, and vital for the EU's food supply. Continued progress in sustainable fisheries management, under the common fisheries policy (CFP), is essential for long-term viability of the sector, local jobs, fair incomes, food security and generational renewal (bringing younger people into the sector so it can continue in the future).

The recent evaluation of the CFP Regulation<sup>7</sup> shows that progress is not sufficient: fish stock recovery remains too slow and economic gains too low, among other due to new challenges including geopolitical developments, climate change and high energy prices. The potential of sustainable aquaculture is still under exploited. The CFP evaluation will inform potential reforms to the CFP and serve as a foundation for the Commission's **2040 Vision for Fisheries**

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<sup>4</sup> 2023 data from the [Blue Economy Report 2025](#) and [The next wave of blue growth – Investor report 2026](#), resp.

<sup>5</sup> [Inforegio - Sustainable Blue Economy](#)

<sup>6</sup> Resp. COM(2026) 112 and COM(2026) 111

<sup>7</sup> SWD(2026) 120 final

**and Aquaculture**, a 15-year strategic framework to guide policy development in the coming decades to strengthen the sectors' competitiveness, sustainability and resilience. In the context of the Vision, the Commission will place particular emphasis on the resilience, sustainability and prosperity of coastal communities.

**Coastal tourism**, the largest employer in the blue economy, offers direct employment to millions of people in the EU.<sup>8</sup> However, excessive tourism can increase vulnerability to seasonality, overcrowding, resource and infrastructure strain, and housing challenges. The Commission's **forthcoming EU sustainable tourism strategy** aims to promote more balanced, resilient and competitive tourism models that benefit local communities and travellers.

## *(2) Opportunities for innovation, marine knowledge, and new business models*

Marine knowledge, blue innovations and technologies are driving new business models, delivering local and EU-wide benefits, while advances in offshore renewable energy, digital solutions and ocean observation can translate into local jobs and investment. Equally, as outlined above, coastal communities can act as blue economy hubs.

Future blue economy growth will depend on accelerated digitalisation, ocean data exploitation and better marine and ocean knowledge. Innovative business models, such as predictive maintenance of offshore assets, as well as dual-use applications, require stronger data and observation systems. **The OceanEye initiative**<sup>9</sup> will strengthen European and global ocean monitoring and observation and create new opportunities for coastal communities: It will **improve our knowledge of coastal waters** and enhance our ability to assess climate risks assessment, detect maritime security threats and offer opportunities for the EU's blue economy. The OceanEye, in synergy with Destination Earth<sup>10</sup>, will deliver coastal-scale data and tools, supporting local innovation in ocean technologies and data services. It will also invest into fostering a stronger emotional bond between citizens and the sea, and transforming ocean observation into a civic and cultural tool.

Limited job opportunities and seasonality of economic activity (e.g. in tourism, fisheries) undermine prosperity in some coastal areas. Innovations and new business models (e.g. pescaturism, community-supported fisheries, development of local value chains, territorial branding and low-trophic aquaculture) can support **economic diversification**. Renewable marine resources can create jobs and foster local growth within the blue bioeconomy. The upcoming **EU Blue Bioeconomy Innovation Initiative (BlueBIP)** will strengthen regional cooperation and synergies across aquaculture, fisheries, agriculture, research, local authorities, and bio-based industries, to develop practical value chains such as algae-based fertilisers, converting fisheries and aquaculture by-products into feed or biomaterials, recovering nutrients between coastal and farming areas, and low-carbon products from sustainable aquaculture. These actions can boost economic diversification, resilience, and circular economy goals, reinforcing links between coastal and inland regions and stakeholders.

Nature credits and blue carbon credits can be mechanisms to reward restoration activities and reverse marine biodiversity loss while increasing the carbon sequestration. To enable **blue carbon credits** to be issued and traded in the future, **the Commission will support the development of a certification methodology of blue carbon ecosystems (for tidal marshes and seagrass meadows)** under the 2024 Carbon Removal and Carbon Farming Regulation (CRCF). A draft Delegated Act for this methodology is planned by 2028. Besides, as part of

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<sup>8</sup> The coastal tourism sector employed over 2.7 million people and generated EUR 93 bn in gross value added ([EU Blue Economy Observatory](#)). Data from 2023.

<sup>9</sup> [OceanEye: Reinforcing ocean observation and protection - European Commission](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Destination Earth](#)

the **Roadmap towards Nature Credits**<sup>11</sup>, the Commission is structuring a growing portfolio of projects through its research, innovation and pilot initiatives to test different options, supported by Horizon Europe, LIFE, Green Assist and other EU instruments.

The Commission is examining the means for collaboration with Member States in a rigorous common monitoring process that can support reporting and verification for carbon inventories under the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry Regulation (LULUCF)<sup>12</sup> and obligations under the Nature Restoration Regulation. Mobilising private finance for restoration, monitoring and management of these ecosystems can reinforce these efforts.

Uses of the marine space (e.g. nature conservation and restoration, energy, fisheries, aquaculture, shipping, and tourism) are closely intertwined to the development of coastal communities. As competition for space grows, effective planning is essential, and a modernisation of the **Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (MSPD)** is needed. MSPD provides a consistent, transparent and evidence-based framework but challenges persist, including growing climate change impacts, marine pollution, and environmental pressures from intensified coastal and maritime use, stronger land-sea interactions and need for improved ocean governance.<sup>13</sup> The future **European Ocean Act**, expected by end 2026, aims to modernise the MSPD in line with the Ocean Pact's priorities. It will involve coastal communities in addressing challenges related to climate change adaptation, the co-existence of maritime activities, the sustainable use of the ocean's natural capital, and enhanced cross-border cooperation.

The **EU Offshore Renewable Energy strategy**<sup>14</sup> supports decarbonisation and energy security and offers opportunities for coastal communities in advanced manufacturing, port upgrades, supply chain investments, and maintenance services, particularly for offshore wind and increasingly for wave and tidal energy. For the EU, it strengthens energy security and accelerates the phase out from fossil fuels. At the same time, competition for coastal and marine space and complex planning rules can slow permitting of new energy projects and create tensions with other uses of land and sea, such as fisheries and nature conservation. To address these challenges, the European Commission encourages Member States to strengthen integrated maritime spatial planning and streamline permitting, while securing local value and public support by coastal community involvement **Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)** initiatives. Supported with close to EUR 1 bn for the period 2021-2027 under the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) and complemented by EU cohesion policy funds, **CLLD initiatives already deliver direct benefits to local communities**<sup>15</sup> through a **bottom-up, participative** approach, notably for income diversification. Beyond CLLD, a place-based approach (including also **LEADER** and **Smart Villages**) can address the specific challenges of insular and coastal areas. Going forward, these participatory tools should be continued and better integrated in a more multi-sectoral approach to CLLD, including through the future BlueBIP.

Generational renewal is essential to keep coastal communities vibrant and competitive. Ageing populations and youth emigration weaken local labour markets, entrepreneurship and key maritime sectors, such as fisheries, aquaculture or innovative blue industries. Creating quality jobs, clear career pathways and strong skills offers, as well as reducing administrative burden, are key to attract and retain young people and to boost innovation. In 2027, the Commission will propose a **Blue Generational Renewal strategy** to attract young professionals to blue

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<sup>11</sup> COM/2025/374 final

<sup>12</sup> Regulation (EU) 2018/841

<sup>13</sup> COM(2026) 174 final. Second report outlining the progress made in implementing Directive 2014/89/EU

<sup>14</sup> COM(2020) 741 final

<sup>15</sup> [CLLD in fisheries and coastal communities](#): Achievements and Lessons. FAMENET, 2025

careers and support long-term sustainability and innovation. In the offshore energy sector, a partnership under the **Pact for Skills** will train 124 thousand people in offshore renewables by 2030.

**Finally, investment in digital and transport connectivity** is vital for economic growth and access to services in coastal regions. Member States and regions can use cohesion policy funding to improve both physical and digital connectivity areas. In 2021-27, cohesion policy allocated EUR 40 billion to support EU's digital transition targets, largely to close the digital divide and to boost connectivity. This is mostly prominent in the less developed and remote coastal regions and territories, particularly for islands, as reflected in the EU strategy for Islands. **The Commission encourages Member States to use existing possibilities under the Connecting Europe Facility for the remainder of the current programming period (2026 and 2027)**, and to prepare for implementation under the new multiannual financial framework.

***Flagship Actions – The Commission:***

- *in the context of the 2040 Vision for Fisheries and Aquaculture, will place a particular emphasis on the resilience, sustainability and prosperity of coastal communities.*
- *within the OceanEye initiative, will support coastal stakeholders to make maximum use of ocean data for their resilience and growth.*
- *will support industry to pilot dual-use solutions and develop EU-wide interoperability standards for dual-use vessels and technologies, building on OceanEye formats.*
- *in the context of the revision of the MSP framework under the European Ocean Act, will pay particular attention to the needs of coastal communities*
- *will support the development of a certification methodology as next step toward blue carbon credits.*
- *will support the creation of blue bioeconomy clusters and value-chains in coastal communities through a Community Led Local Development approach, within the future EU Blue Bioeconomy Innovation Initiative.*

## **2.2. Resilient coastal communities**

Climate change effects, such as rising sea levels and temperatures, coastal erosion, flooding, storm surges, saltwater intrusion and ecosystem degradation are increasingly affecting EU's coast. They threaten people's health and safety, infrastructure, water and food security, asset valuations and risk premia, local economies and the environment. The first **European Climate Risk Assessment**<sup>16</sup> identified **coastal areas** among those most **exposed** to climate risks. These impacts also place cultural and world heritage sites at growing risk.

Without mitigation and adaptation measures, **annual damage** from coastal flooding in the EU could rise sharply from EUR 1.25 billion nowadays to between EUR 93 billion and 961 billion by the end of the century, affecting 1.5 to 3 million people.<sup>17</sup> Yet, every EUR 1 billion invested in adaptation could cut potential flood damages by EUR 14 billion.<sup>18</sup> Coastal resilience is a core element of the EU's Climate Adaptation strategy.<sup>19</sup> Through the **EU Missions: Adaptation to Climate Change and Restore our Ocean and Waters**<sup>20</sup>, the Commission helps communities assess climate risks, develop adaptation strategies and implement solutions.

<sup>16</sup> [European Climate Risk Assessment — European Environment Agency](#)

<sup>17</sup> [JRC PESETA IV -Task 6](#)

<sup>18</sup> [UNEP Adaptation Gap Report 2023](#)

<sup>19</sup> COM(2021) 82 final., where local adaptation is identified as one of three cross-cutting priorities.

<sup>20</sup> [EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate change](#) and [EU Mission: Restore our Ocean and Waters](#)

Working in synergy, the Missions advance co-designed, systemic approaches, with particular attention to nature-based solutions, that strengthen coastal resilience to climate impacts such as flooding, erosion and sea level rise. By end of 2026, the European Commission will launch three new flagship Mission Adaptation projects, with EU support of around EUR 30 million. They will demonstrate integrated adaptation solutions in coastal climate hotspots, where multiple and compounding climate risks require coordinated responses.

EU funding, including cohesion policy funds, provides significant support for climate action across Member States and regions in 2021-2027. However, important investment and policy gaps remain at national, regional and local level. **The Commission, together with the European Investment Bank (EIB), will explore conducting an EU-wide mapping identification of the existing investment pipelines and potential new investment opportunities for coastal adaptation, their costs and benefits in light of future climate change. Furthermore, the Commission will use EIB technical advisory support (e.g. JASPERS<sup>21</sup> and other relevant advisory mandates) to deliver capacity building support for the preparation of coastal communities' investment strategies and projects. These may then be supported by a combination of EU grants and EIB lending instruments specifically for small and medium sized authorities in developing climate resilience projects. In parallel, the Commission will foster cooperation and strategic partnerships between national and coastal communities' authorities using existing instruments such as the European Urban Initiative, Regio Peer2Peer Communities, and JASPERS.**

To enhance resilience in coastal communities, the Commission has identified several priorities at EU, national and regional level: **(i) improve knowledge and awareness** of coastal risks, supported by OceanEye and its emerging tool the Digital Twin of the Ocean; **(ii) better mapping investment needs;** **(iii) strengthening investment planning and governance** and clarifying risk ownership across governance levels; **(iv) support capacity building** to deliver resilience projects; **(v) mobilise investments** for climate adaptation and mitigation. These efforts will build on existing and emerging tools, including Climate-ADAPT, EMODnet and the Digital Twin of the Ocean. The latter, developed in synergy with the Destination Earth initiative, will provide near real-time information on ocean and coastal conditions. This will strengthen the authorities' ability to anticipate and respond to hazards, map risk, and better targeting prevention measures to protect people, infrastructure, ecosystems and local business.

**Nature-based solutions** can also be particularly effective, by delivering environmental, social and economic benefits while strengthening coastal resilience. In 2026, the Commission will propose a **European Framework for Climate Resilience** to integrate future climatic risks into EU policies, investment decisions and risk management. Authorities are therefore encouraged to **integrate sea-level rise and climate risks into coastal management and spatial planning.** Initiatives such as the New European Bauhaus will also support coastal cities through innovative and replicable resilience solutions, while the forthcoming **European Ocean Act** aims to strengthen the integration of climate change into maritime spatial planning.

**Co-management involving local stakeholders**, especially fishers, in the designation and management of protected areas, can improve conservation outcomes and the long-term viability of measures. By combining science with local knowledge, it can increase compliance, reduce conflict and support climate adaptation. It can also deliver local benefits through restoration, monitoring and stewardship jobs, as well as revenues from nature restoration and blue carbon credits. The Commission **encourages community-led local development initiatives in coastal and fisheries areas (FLAGs/LAGs)** to support marine stewardship,

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<sup>21</sup> [JASPERS - Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions](#)

restoration and nature-based projects. Member States are also invited to ensure that coastal communities are actively involved on decisions pertaining to marine protected areas.

Coastal communities are also central to **Europe's security and resilience**. Many are located along the EU's external maritime borders and face growing security pressures, including hybrid threats, sabotage, and risks linked to ongoing conflicts, such as drones and floating sea mines. These threats can disrupt fisheries, maritime transport, and other economic activities, while also undermine border surveillance and facilitate cross-border crime. Particular attention must also be given to the protection and resilience of **critical coastal and maritime infrastructure**, including ports, offshore energy infrastructure and submarine cables. Coastal stakeholders, including fishers, port authorities and local maritime actors, can contribute to maritime situational awareness through the voluntary reporting of anomalous or suspicious activities at sea, in line with national frameworks.

In addition, **strengthening security and defence in coastal areas is essential** to ensure the protection of critical infrastructure, reinforce surveillance capacities, and enhance rapid response capabilities in the maritime domain. In this context, advanced digital capabilities such as Destination Earth and its high-resolution Climate Change Adaptation and Extreme Weather Events digital twins can support authorities and coastal communities through improved situational awareness, risk forecasting, early warning systems and the simulation of complex climate and security-related what-if scenarios.

To strengthen preparedness and cover more communities, **the Commission will expand the CoastWAVE initiative<sup>22</sup>** by integrating local hazard assessments and customized warning systems to ensure that alerts reach coastal communities. These efforts are aligned with the **EU Maritime Security strategy**, the **EU Port strategy**, and the **EU Preparedness Union strategy** and the future **European Security strategy**, reflecting the need for stronger resilience and risk awareness across coastal areas. Consistent with these strategies, authorities should strengthen risk awareness near port areas, so residents can react effectively in the event of incidents.

As **ocean stewards**, coastal communities play a vital role in protecting marine resources and ecosystems, while supporting livelihoods, food security and sustainable blue economy activities. Coastal communities are central to the source-to-sea approach and are essential for **the conservation and restoration** of the coastal and marine environment, including the exceptionally rich biodiversity of the outermost regions.

**Ports are key coastal hubs for circularity and pollution control.** Under the Ports strategy, the Commission will support this role by simplifying technical criteria, streamlining permitting and issuing guidance to Member States.

Despite substantial protection and restoration efforts and the progress made on sustainable fisheries management, **coastal and marine ecosystems remain under heavy pressure** from pollution, eutrophication, overfishing, erosion and climate change. Around **80% of protected marine and terrestrial habitats in Europe** are in a poor or bad condition, and **62% of rivers, lakes and coastal sites** are in poor ecological state.<sup>23</sup> This has negative consequences for public health and reduces the safety and attractiveness of coastal areas. It also undermines the fundamental sustainability pillar of blue economy sectors, such as fisheries and aquaculture. More effective **implementation and enforcement of environmental EU environmental legislation remain essential**, alongside targeted restoration measures under the Nature Restoration Regulation.<sup>24</sup> By September 2026, Member States are expected to submit national

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<sup>22</sup> [CoastWAVE 2.0 | UCP Knowledge Network](#)

<sup>23</sup> [The EU's Environment 2025 EEA, 2025](#) and [Copernicus Marine Ocean State Report \(OSR\)](#)

<sup>24</sup> Directive 79/409/EEC, Council Directive 92/43/EEC, Directive 2008/56/EC and Regulation (EU) 2024/1991.

restoration plans, marking a key milestone towards more coordinated conservation of coastal and marine ecosystems. The planned revision of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in the forthcoming European Ocean Act aims to strengthen environmental protection, simplify provisions and strengthen coherence with the EU acquis.

**Through Horizon Europe Missions Restore our Ocean and Waters<sup>20</sup> and A Soil Deal for Europe<sup>25</sup>** the EU is already supporting coastal communities by developing and testing innovative solutions for restoration, coastal management including water retention and nutrient pollution and regenerative blue economy practices. The **Ocean and Water Research and Innovation Strategy** will help scale the source-to-sea approach by innovating water management and improving water efficiency. EU funds - like Cohesion Policy funds, EMFAF and LIFE - already support investments in biodiversity, climate resilience, sustainable water management, and the circular economy across coastal areas.

#### **Flagship actions - The Commission:**

- *will promote structured co-management partnerships (including fishers) for protected areas and will support Member States and local authorities to embed stakeholder involvement in planning, monitoring and periodic review of the plans.*
- *together with the EIB, will explore conducting an EU-level investment mapping for coastal adaptation, and using EIB technical advisory support to deliver capacity building support.*
- *will foster cooperation and strategic partnerships between national and coastal communities' authorities.*
- *will expand the CoastWAVE initiative to extend local hazard assessments and tailored warning systems to more communities.*

### **2.3. Liveable coastal communities**

Access to healthcare, education, skills, digital and transport connectivity, and affordable housing, is essential to keeping coastal communities attractive and liveable, especially for young people. These services are also crucial for ensuring an effective Right to Stay.<sup>26</sup> Yet coastal communities across the EU face very different economic realities and territorial challenges, especially in rural and remote areas.

The **Long-term Vision for the EU's rural areas<sup>27</sup>** provides a holistic EU framework to address these challenges, including the specific needs of rural coastal areas that face geographic constraints, accessibility gaps and population decline. The first-ever **EU Anti-Poverty strategy** adopted on 6 May 2026, and the forthcoming **EU Rural Action Plan**, to be adopted later this year, will further support these efforts.

**Housing affordability** is under particular pressure in certain neighbourhoods, particularly in cities but also other tourist hotspots<sup>28</sup>. Rising demand driven by tourism flows, short-term rentals, secondary homes, vacant dwellings, investment demand or other forms of non-primary use of housing, increasingly risks displacing local populations and limiting access to housing for essential workers. Scaling up social housing can be an important policy option for coastal municipalities. The upcoming Pan-European Investment Platform for affordable and

<sup>25</sup> [EU Mission : A soil deal for Europe](#)

<sup>26</sup> In line with the upcoming [Strategy on the Right to Stay](#).

<sup>27</sup> COM/2021/345 final

<sup>28</sup> SWD(2025) 1053/2 - Understanding the housing crisis

sustainable housing will work towards mobilising funding for social and affordable housing. In parallel, as announced in the European Affordable Housing Plan, the Commission will propose an **Affordable Housing Act** to help public authorities identify areas of housing under stress, and in full respect of subsidiarity, enable them to take proportionate measures to safeguard housing affordability. Moreover, the **Regulation on Short-term Rentals**<sup>29</sup> which applies since 20 May 2026 will bring more transparency and help public authorities, to regulate the market in a proportionate way by requiring compulsory registration of hosts, and sharing of data on actual transactions between digital platforms and national authorities. The current MFF already supports efforts to address shortages of affordable, quality housing with at least EUR 43 billion<sup>30</sup> via Cohesion Policy Funds, InvestEU, LIFE, the Single Market Programme and Horizon Europe, as well as through NextGenerationEU, while cohesion policy's mid-term review enabled the reallocation of an additional EUR 3.3 billion under the ERDF to the affordable and social housing priority. Looking ahead, the Social Climate Fund will finance investments for energy efficiency and building renovation and clean heating and cooling. **The Commission encourages Member States to step up investments** in housing and associated services in coastal communities under housing pressure, notably for the most vulnerable groups.

The EU's coasts are also home to a rich **maritime heritage**, including UNESCO World Heritage marine sites<sup>31</sup>, local traditions, food culture, practices and crafts that sustain community identity, and intergenerational values. Activities such as small-scale and artisanal fisheries, aquaculture, shipbuilding and seafaring, are central to the social and cultural fabric. Their unique contribution to local identity should be recognised at all levels of governance.

Initiatives such as the **EU4Ocean Coalition for ocean literacy** will continue to raise awareness of the ocean's cultural, social and economic significance, highlighting the maritime heritage of coastal communities, while supporting intergenerational knowledge and ocean stewardship. The **New European Bauhaus (NEB) Facility** and the **New European Bauhaus Ocean, Coastal and Island Communities Lab**, also offer opportunities for coastal projects that combine sustainability, design, culture and climate resilience.

**The Commission encourages Member States and local communities to continue promoting blue and maritime heritage initiatives** through CLLDs and its FLAGs and other programmes and initiatives at local and national level.

**Flagship actions - The Commission:**

- *will propose an **Affordable Housing Act** to support public authorities in identifying areas of housing stress and enable them, in full respect of subsidiarity, to take measures to protect and promote housing affordability in those areas.*
- *through the **new European Bauhaus (NEB) Facility** and **launching the New European Bauhaus Ocean, Coastal and Island Communities Lab**, will offer opportunities for coastal projects that combine sustainability, design, culture and climate resilience.*

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<sup>29</sup> Regulation - EU - 2024/1028

<sup>30</sup> The European Affordable Housing Action Plan. COM(2025) 1025 final

<sup>31</sup> [World Heritage Centre - World Heritage Marine Programme](#)

### 3. Implementation of the strategy

#### 3.1. Funding

Access to finance for the blue economy is steadily increasing. Through the **BlueInvest Platform**, the EU supports start-ups and SMEs to develop and scale innovative ocean technologies and services, including in coastal areas, by providing coaching, investor matchmaking and fundraising support. The blue economy investment instrument - backed by EMFAF and InvestEU and implemented by the European Investment Fund (EIF) - aims to mobilise up to EUR 1 billion in equity investment by 2028. Moreover, the European Investment Bank (EIB) also plays a key role, with average annual investments of about EUR 2.6 billion in blue economy and coastal protection projects.

**Stronger collaboration and synergies with National Promotional Banks and other multilateral financial institutions** can help further coastal business and communities access funding, technical advisory services and capacity-building support. The **EU Taxonomy Regulation** also helps direct investment towards activities contributing to the sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, legislative programmes<sup>33</sup> will play a central role in unlocking private capital. By reducing the cost of long-term equity investments and recognising the risk-reducing effect of EU or national guarantees in capital requirements, these legislative programmes can encourage investments.

**EU cohesion policy, the Common Agricultural Policy and maritime policies** continue to support sustainable development across coastal regions, complemented by capacity-building initiatives, such as TAIEX-REGIO Peer2Peer<sup>34</sup> and FAMENET for Local Action Groups.

Looking ahead, the proposed 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework offers new opportunities for Member States and regions to strengthen coastal communities. Member States are encouraged to **align their National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) with the objectives of this strategy** and, in partnership with regional and local authorities, support place-based solutions tailored to local needs. The proposed **European Competitiveness Fund (ECF)**<sup>35</sup> could also support investment and innovation in sustainable blue economy sectors.

The Commission will fund, as part of the **Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership**<sup>36</sup> under Horizon Europe, more than EUR 450 million by 2027 in over 43 R&I projects supporting a climate-neutral, sustainable, and competitive blue economy, including dedicated support for resilient coastal communities and businesses. By end-2026, local and coastal communities will also be involved in a call for technical support to help prepare transition agendas under **the Mission Ocean and Waters**<sup>37</sup> so that projects and investments reflect local needs.

#### 3.2. Governance

Effective support for coastal communities depends on strong **multilevel governance approach** and close collaboration among local, regional, national and EU authorities. The meaningful involvement of local and regional actors in policy design and implementation is essential to reflect local needs and help achieve EU priorities.

The EU has established territorial cooperation structures and dialogue platforms linking coastal communities with regional and national authorities, ports, industry, academia and civil society, such as the **EU Sea Basin Strategies and the EU Macro Regional Strategies**. These

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<sup>32</sup> Regulation (EU) 2020/852

<sup>33</sup> [C\(2025\) 2731 final](#)

<sup>34</sup> [Info regio - TAIEX-REGIO Peer2Peer](#)

<sup>35</sup> COM(2025) 555 final

<sup>36</sup> [Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership](#)

<sup>37</sup> [Horizon Europe Work Programme 2026-2027](#).

frameworks help translate EU priorities into “place-based solutions” that strengthen environmental sustainability, economic diversification and regional value chains.

By 2027, the Commission and Atlantic Member States will work on updating the Atlantic Maritime strategy, including the possible development of a new macroregional framework for the Atlantic region. In parallel, the Commission, together with the Union for the Mediterranean and Eastern Mediterranean partners, will develop a new sea basin strategy to support a sustainable and competitive blue economy in the region.

Initiatives such as the **European Maritime Day**, including the annual campaign of local events “**EMD in my country**”, help connect local communities with EU opportunities and policy. The **EMD Blue Cities network** will strengthen cooperation among European coastal and port cities to promote sustainable maritime policies, innovation, and healthy marine environments.

At the same time, substantial gaps remain in the collection of local-level socio-economic and environmental data on coastal communities. Using existing harmonised statistical definitions, classifications and data collection frameworks, Eurostat alongside other Commission services will aim to close these gaps to help local authorities and stakeholders to better target measures, prioritise investments and strengthen resilience.

**Flagship action - The Commission:**

- *will update the Atlantic<sup>38</sup> Maritime strategy with Atlantic Member States, including considering a new Atlantic macro-regional framework, and will present, together with the Union for the Mediterranean and Eastern Mediterranean partners, a new Eastern Mediterranean sea-basin strategy to support a sustainable, competitive blue economy.*

#### **4. Conclusions**

EU coastal communities are central to the EU’s economic prosperity, climate resilience and cultural heritage. The Commission’s strategy for prosperous, resilient and liveable coastal Communities, sets out the key opportunities to **strengthen** these areas and support their **long-term development**. The strategy places **people** at its heart and provides a **coherent framework to better connect relevant EU policies**. It also builds synergies with existing initiatives, notably the EU strategy for islands and the EU strategy for outermost regions.

The Commission will work with Member States to align future policies and funding instruments with coastal communities' specific needs and ensure efficient implementation. With the Council Presidency, the Commission will convene a **high-level conference on Islands and Coastal Communities on 26 June 2026** to kickstart the implementation of both strategies.

Overall progress will be assessed transparently and periodically through the **Ocean Pact dashboard** and the **State of the Ocean Pact Report**.