



Commission presents first-ever EU strategies for islands and coastal communities

Brussels, 10 June 2026

Today, the European Commission adopted two dedicated strategies, one for EU islands and one for EU coastal communities, setting out for the first time a coordinated European approach to support both types of territories and unlock their long-term potential.

The two initiatives introduce a targeted approach, dedicated to the specific needs and unique challenges of:

- **17 million people** living on more than 4,000 islands across 16 EU Member States;
- **95 million people** living along the 70,000 km of EU coastlines and in coastal areas across 22 EU Member States.

To that end, the Commission proposes a coherent, holistic approach addressing economy, connectivity, energy, environment, demography and security in an integrated way, aiming to transform the challenges faced by these territories into opportunities and lasting strengths. This includes ensuring that their specific needs are fully reflected in future proposals and aligned with broader EU priorities.

Most EU islands share common challenges impacting their economic sustainability and quality of life, such as geographical isolation, limited connectivity, high transport costs and travel times, small and fragmented markets, overdependence on tourism, excessive reliance on fossil fuels, climate vulnerability, demographic decline, water scarcity, reduced access to essential services, and other added costs of insularity.

At the crossroads between land and sea, Europe's coastal communities are a vital asset. They combine rich environmental, cultural and maritime heritage with strong potential to drive a [sustainable blue economy](#). At the same time, Europe's coastal communities are at the frontline of climate change, marine and coastal biodiversity loss, and marine pollution, which impact their long-term resilience and economic growth. Some also face additional pressures, including imbalanced tourism, shortage of affordable housing, seasonality of economic activity and limited job opportunities, leading to youth outmigration and economic instability.

This is why a **tailored approach** is essential. The two strategies work in tandem, reinforcing each other to address shared pressures while responding to the unique realities of islands and coastal communities alike.

Recognising these **interconnected pressures**, the EU has developed the two complementary strategies to build a cohesive framework within existing policies and funding, with a view to strengthening economic opportunity, quality of life, and resilience.

A future-proof strategy for Europe's islands

The strategy aims to integrate the needs of islands and reflect the challenges they face into broader EU policies adapted to their specific needs. It is structured around **four key pillars**:

- **Economic development, connectivity, competitiveness and innovation:** boosting entrepreneurship, diversified local economies, sustainable tourism, and digitalisation, while tackling the connectivity gaps that constrain island economic activity and life.
- **Energy security, environmental protection and climate resilience:** accelerating decarbonisation, renewable energy, climate adaptation, and biodiversity protection.
- **Communities and demography:** strengthening public services, healthcare, housing,

education and social inclusion to reverse depopulation and retain young people.

- **Security and crisis preparedness:** reinforcing resilience against natural disasters linked to climate crisis, maritime risks and other emerging threats.

The strategy promotes the establishment of a regular dialogue between EU institutions and stakeholders representing the interests of islands, as well as various technical support measures, including capacity building and exchange of good practices. Member States are invited to include targeted measures for the development of islands in their future [National and Regional Partnership Plans](#), including those linked to insularity in areas such as connectivity, services and infrastructure. Member States are also invited to come up with territorial investment tools to promote integrated strategies for islands and facilitate better cooperation.

A strategy for prosperous coastal communities

The strategy on coastal communities focuses on three priorities:

- To drive prosperity, it promotes a dynamic, competitive, and diversified blue economy, fostering innovation, new business models—such as pescatourism, the bioeconomy, and offshore renewable energy—and creating high-quality job opportunities.
- To strengthen resilience, it enhances adaptability to climate change and broader environmental, economic, social, and security challenges, notably through the implementation of the recently presented [OceanEye](#) initiative.
- To enhance liveability, it promotes vibrant, inclusive, and attractive places where people of all ages can thrive—working, living, and enjoying their surroundings—while safeguarding maritime culture, heritage, and local identity.

The strategy emphasises tailored, locally led solutions, recognising the diverse needs of coastal communities—from remote fishing villages to major port cities.

Key measures include:

- **Empowering coastal communities in maritime spatial planning** through the upcoming Ocean Act, promoting the sustainable use of the ocean's natural capital, fostering climate adaptation and unlocking opportunities for sustainable growth.
- **Supporting blue bioeconomy clusters** and supply chains in coastal areas through local community-led projects, as part of the future EU Blue Bioeconomy Innovation Initiative.
- **Developing a certification system for blue carbon credits to create new opportunities** for blue economy services and income for coastal communities.
- **Advancing climate resilience** through increased risk assessments, investment mapping and capacity building support for coastal adaptation, involving the European Investment Bank and the EU Missions on Adaptation to Climate Change and Restore Our Ocean and Waters.

Background

The EU is home to over **4,000 inhabited islands across 16 Member States**—including the three island nations of **Cyprus, Ireland, and Malta**—where some 17 million people live. These islands are a vital part of the EU's identity, economy, history and cultural heritage. The EU Islands Strategy builds on extensive public consultation, including stakeholder contributions to a [Call for Evidence](#), as well as input from the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, and island communities, who had long advocated for a dedicated policy framework.

Meanwhile, **95 million people—21% of the EU's population—reside along the 70,000 km of EU coastline or within coastal areas** across 22 Member States. The EU Coastal Communities Strategy was similarly informed by a public [Call for Evidence](#), ensuring that local voices shaped its development.

Both strategies align with the [European Ocean Pact](#) (launched in 2025) and complement broader EU policies on climate action, cohesion, and sustainable development. EU Outermost Regions, however, are not covered by these proposals, as they are addressed under a separate dedicated strategy—recognising their unique status under Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. That strategy will be presented later this year.

For more information

[Communication EU islands](#)

[Communication EU coastal communities](#)

[Factsheet on EU islands strategy](#)

[Factsheet on EU coastal communities strategy](#)

[European Ocean Pact](#)

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Quote(s):

"For the first time, the European Union has dedicated strategies for its islands and coastal communities recognising their unique challenges and high potential. By improving transport, boosting green energy, strengthening local economies, and addressing demographic challenges, we'll turn obstacles into opportunities, making these territories key to a sustainable, competitive Europe."
Raffaele Fitto, Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms - 10/06/2026

"Europe's coasts—home to 95 million people—are where our economy and the ocean meet. Yet climate change, from rising seas to biodiversity loss, puts them at risk. Our Coastal Strategy secures their future: strengthening the blue economy, climate-proofing infrastructure, and protecting heritage. From Baltic wind farms to Portuguese pescatourism, we're turning threats into opportunities."
Costas Kadis, Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans - 10/06/2026

Press contacts:

[Maciej BERESTECKI](#) (+32 2 29 66483)

[Isabel ARRIAGA-E-CUNHA](#) (+32 2 29 52117)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)

Related media



[Read-out of the weekly meeting of the von der Leyen Commission by Raffaele Fitto, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission, and Costas Kadis, European Commissioner, on EU strategies supporting coastal communities and islands](#)