



EU Strategies for Coastal Communities and for Islands

MAC – Market Advisory Council

WG1 – EU production

23rd March 2026

Political impetus – the Mission Letters

Mission letters

- EVP for Cohesion and Reform - Raffaele Fitto

*“You will ensure that people in Europe’s regions – whether in cities, **coastal communities** or rural areas - **have real opportunities** to drive growth and productivity across Europe.”*

*“You should ensure that the specific **economic and social challenges facing islands** are taken into account, such as housing, transport, water and waste management...”*

Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans – Costas Kadis

*“You will... support **coastal communities** across Europe with the unique challenges they face”*

*“I would like you to ... to help **build a new business model for coastal communities.***

***[The Ocean Pact]** ... should focus on supporting resilient and healthy oceans and coastal areas’*



European Ocean Pact

The Ocean Pact is built around **six priorities**

1. Protecting and restoring ocean health
2. Boosting the competitiveness of the EU sustainable blue economy
- 3. Supporting coastal and island communities, and outermost regions**
4. Advancing ocean research, knowledge, skills and innovation
5. Enhancing maritime security and defence
6. Strengthening EU ocean diplomacy and international ocean governance



Communication on Coastal Communities

Commission Work Programme 2026:
Communication on islands and coastal communities (non-legislative Q2 2026)

What is it? Two Commission initiative providing a territorial development strategy for coastal communities (**DG MARE**) and a strategy for islands (**DG REGIO**).

By when should they be delivered?
Adoption in early June 2026.

Resilience & adaptation



Vibrant communities




Economic development

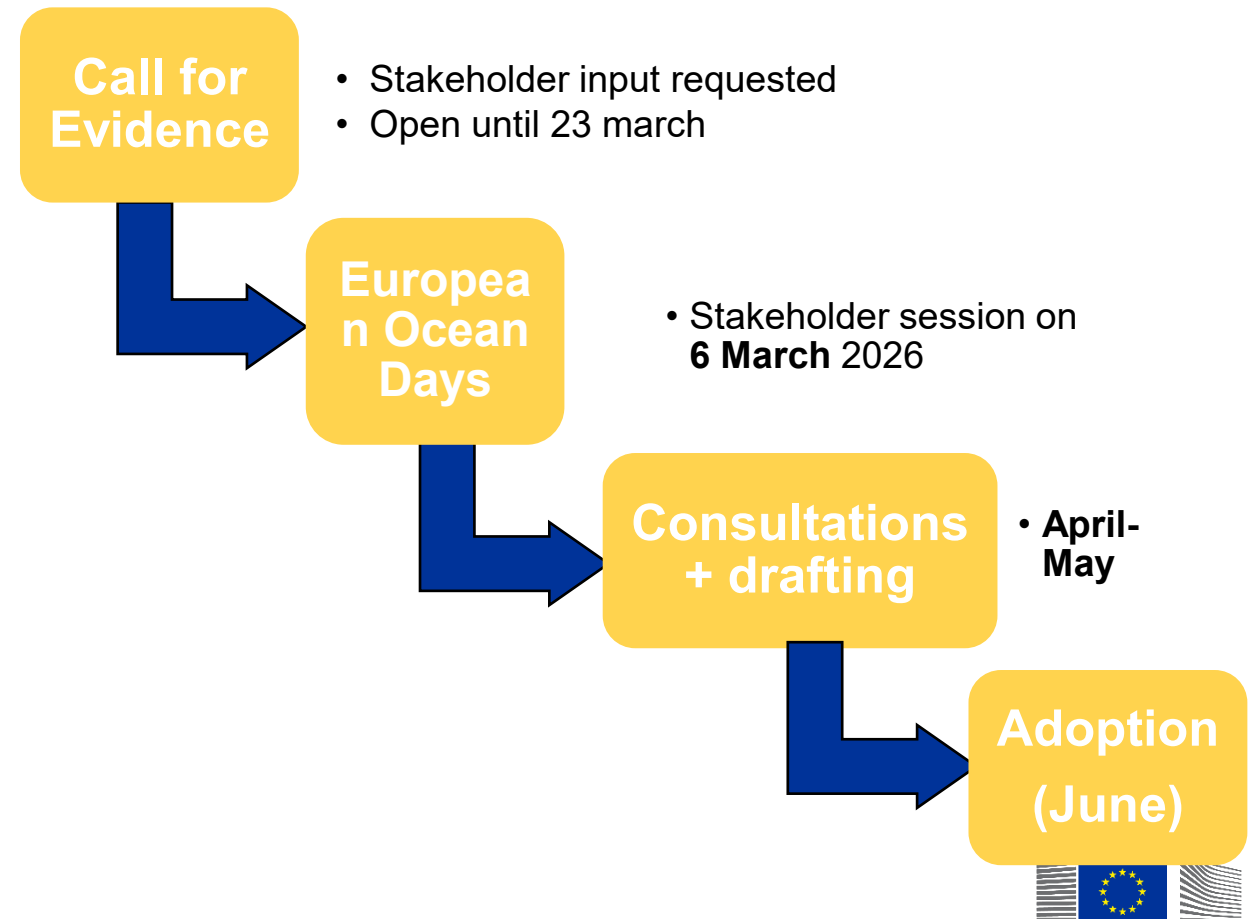


A timeline for preparation

By when should it be delivered? Adoption in Q2 2026

How will we consult stakeholders?

1. A **Call for Evidence** is opened to consult stakeholder until 23 March.
2. Stakeholder events  **European Ocean Days 2026**: Half-day interactive stakeholder session on 6th of March.
3. In house (MARE and DGs) consultation



3 interlinked objectives

The strategy aims to contribute to this through a set of interlinked objectives:

1) **Enhancing resilience and adaptation**

- by reducing energy dependency, strengthening preparedness for climate-related risks, promoting marine and coastal protection and nature restoration, supporting adaptation efforts of coastal areas and communities and managing other environmental and socio-economic vulnerabilities.

2) **Strengthening economic competitiveness**

- by supporting economic diversification, socio-economic viability and sustainable management, innovation, decarbonisation, connectivity and access to finance, notably in the blue economy.
- a focus on the potential development of the sustainable blue economy, including its impact and reliance on healthy and well-functioning seas.

3) **Fostering inclusive and vibrant communities by ensuring social cohesion,**

- helping coastal areas and territories attract and retain youth and talent, improving quality of life, access to essential services and connectivity, and promoting cultural, community-based, marine-related, citizen-science and other initiatives that sustain local identity and heritage.



The initiative aims to tackle:

The European Union's coastal areas are home to **around 90 million people**

Coastal communities are geographically and socio-economically **diverse**.

A unique geography and rich natural and cultural heritage. These create **strong potential** for sustainable economic development, innovation and healthy ocean stewardship.

However, also face a **number of specific challenges**, such as:

- high vulnerability to climate change and environmental degradation,
- a lack of access to services,
- a lack of affordable housing and high economic dependence on a few key industries.
- an ageing workforce and limited alternative economic opportunities.
- some fishing and aquaculture communities (particularly connected to the sea) face a combination of environmental, economic and social pressures, being on the frontline of climate change and ecosystem degradation while also confronting declining profitability,
- overtourism;



- **The EU has long supported the development of coastal areas and communities** through its sectoral policies, regional policy and planning tools, helping to address their specific geographic, environmental, climate, economic and social challenges and creating opportunities for sustainable, blue growth.
- **However, the fragmented landscape of EU sectoral policies, initiatives and funding instruments** often makes it more challenging for Member States to put in place coherent national policies supporting coastal territories and communities.
- **Need for a coherent and integrated policy framework** that can both improve the delivery of existing policies and ensure that the specific needs of coastal communities are adequately reflected in EU initiatives.
- **Need to provide a strategic framework that ensures current and future EU policies, funds and instruments are allocated coherently** to support Member States and regional and local authorities in addressing the challenges facing coastal communities.
- **Aligns with the subsidiarity principle** by complementing and supporting action taken at local, regional or national level. Notably, EU action empowers local authorities to develop and implement tailored policies. It offers guidance and resources to foster sustainable development and ensure that no community is left behind.



EU strategy for islands

- From **174 TFUE** particular attention to territories with permanent geographic or demographic handicaps (ORs apart)
- **But socio-economic variety** (population, surface, distance from mainland) and economic weight – tailored measures
- **From cohesion policy and funds** (+19 B€ in MFF 21-27) **but beyond**, other policies and instruments
- **Opportunity for** coordinated policy framework + to empower MS to better steer their programming and implementation NRPP (timely for preparation next MFF)

4 key areas:

- Economic development, competitiveness and innovation,
- Green transition, climate resilience and environmental protection,
- Social cohesion, demography and quality of life,
- Security and Resilience

+ complementarity with EU strategy for Outermost Regions



Thank you



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