



## Feedback from the European Marine Board Secretariat to the European Commission's call for evidence on [the EU Strategy for Coastal Communities](#)

(17 March 2026)

The European Marine Board (EMB) welcomes this initiative to provide a strategic framework to support coastal communities. While we support strengthening economic competitiveness in coastal areas, we urge caution. All approaches for coastal management should consider the environment in addition to the sustainable blue economy and communities.

Coastal areas exist at the interface of land and sea and hence coasts and their communities are impacted by both. This includes the flow of pollutants and nutrients, saltwater intrusion into freshwater reserves, impacts from human activities, and extremes of weather and climate change. Coasts are also at a policy interface as there is currently no explicit European policy for coastal zone management. To protect coastal zones from these pressures, they need to be managed using a holistic systems approach that considers the dynamics between human societies and natural ecosystems as part of interconnected social-ecological systems. Policies must be coherent across economic sectors and levels of governance.

Coastal environments and ecosystems support livelihoods and blue economy sectors, provide protection from climate extremes, and deliver human mental and physical well-being benefits (<https://sophie2020.eu/strategic-research-agenda/introduction/>), therefore their resilience should be a policy priority. Coastal resilience requires scaling up sustainable practices, developing effective responses to minimise pressures, and strategies to reduce the impact of pressures that cannot be minimised, while maintaining the social, political and economic integrity and welfare of coastal communities. Conflict mitigation and resolution should be integrated into policy. Policies need to take advantage of co-benefits such as the creation of space for recreation and nature and be co-designed with diverse stakeholders. For transformative change, all policies must have mechanisms to identify and overcome practices that are resistant to change and that lead to the persistence of business as usual.

To strengthen economic competitiveness and foster inclusive and vibrant communities, training will be critical. The current workforce is not able to deliver the skills and knowledge needed for the future blue economy. Hence, dedicated training programmes (e.g. <https://oreskills.eu/>) across all career levels and roles are needed to (re)train the workforce, including in new sectors and in areas where traditional sectors are in decline. Capacity building, financial and human resources, and specific tools are needed for local governments to develop and implement effective national plans for coastal management.

With ongoing climate change, the EU must acknowledge that we will have to change how we live at- and interact with our coasts. Coastal communities are aware of how their environment is changing and are

willing to engage in adaptation measures but must receive that opportunity. Holistic coastal management plans should be built around the concepts of adaptation and liveability. Management plans should consider research on adaptation tipping points to plan for policy changes and avoid maladaptation. Adaptive capacity of coastal communities can be built by enhancing assets, flexibility, social organisation, learning, and agency ([www.marineboard.eu/publications/building-coastal-resilience-europe](http://www.marineboard.eu/publications/building-coastal-resilience-europe)). There is also a clear role here for innovation and EDITO ([www.edito.eu](http://www.edito.eu)).

The EU should ensure that coastal communities are prepared for climate change and its impacts. This requires a sustained and fit-for-purpose Ocean observing system, as presented in the Ocean Observing Initiative, and open data flows to support climate prediction and modelling across European to local scales. Observations are also needed to protect coastal infrastructure and blue economy assets from climate change impacts and marine geohazards ([www.marineboard.eu/publications/marine-geohazards-safeguarding-society-and-blue-economy-hidden-threat](http://www.marineboard.eu/publications/marine-geohazards-safeguarding-society-and-blue-economy-hidden-threat)).