

EmpowerUs Project Launched to Enable Coastal Communities to Act for Change

Press release: 5 October 2022

The European Union has launched an exciting new research project to empower coastal communities to transition towards more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient coastal development.

EmpowerUs (*Socio-economic Empowerment of coastal communities as users of the sea to ensure sustainable coastal development*) is a €6 million project that launched under the EU Horizon Europe Programme on 1 October 2022 and will run for three years.

Coastal communities face many challenges including extreme weather associated with climate change, rising sea levels, tourism pressures, changing fisheries and traditional industries, and how to adapt to sustainable economic development. Recognizing that these complex challenges require multiple, integrated solutions, **EmpowerUs** is a multidisciplinary, collaborative project that will support coastal communities in their transition to becoming more environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable.

Working with local, regional, national, and international stakeholders, **EmpowerUs** will co-create, pilot, and evaluate tailored empowerment programs to support coastal communities in their transformation towards becoming more sustainable.

The programs will include a portfolio of flexible, transdisciplinary tools to support social innovations that increase socio-economic resilience, well-being, and job opportunities for a diverse range of community members, ensuring that nobody is left behind. In addition, practical guidance on implementing nature-based solutions to address environmental problems will enable communities to take ownership of their climate resilience.

The programs will be implemented across a network of six pilot sites located in **Bulgaria** (Burgas Province), **Cyprus** (Eastern Limassol Region), **Finland** (Åland Islands), **Ireland** (West Coast), **Norway** (North), and **Spain** (Northwestern Mediterranean). Tools from the Empowerment Programs will be shared for free on a digital platform so that all coastal communities in Europe and beyond can adapt and apply the lessons learned to their own sites.

EmpowerUs project coordinator, Dr Maiken Bjørkan, research professor at Nordland Research Institute, Norway, said:

“Living by the sea, I’ve witnessed first-hand the social, economic, and environmental challenges faced by coastal communities. To solve these problems, we have to work together. Merging the multidisciplinary background of the EmpowerUs team together with the lived experience and expertise of community members will be a powerful combination. I’m excited to get the project underway!”

EmpowerUs is led by Nordland Research Institute (NRI), Norway, and brings together 16 partner organisations from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Spain, and the UK. The project will create European leadership in the socio-economic empowerment of users of the sea in line with the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#), the [EU Green Deal](#), and the [Paris Agreement](#).

The inaugural EmpowerUs partner meeting was held in Barcelona on 4 and 5 October. Please follow [@EmpowerUs_EU](#) on Twitter for the latest updates.

About EmpowerUs

- **EmpowerUs** (“*Socio-economic Empowerment of coastal communities as users of the sea to ensure sustainable coastal development*”) is a research and innovation action funded under the European Union’s Horizon Europe program, grant No. 101059957. The project will run for three years from 2022 to 2025, with a total budget of €6 million and EU contribution of €5.2 million. The remaining project funding comes from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to support the role of Queen’s University Belfast.
- Project website (coming soon): www.empowerus-project.eu
- Follow us on Twitter: [@EmpowerUs_EU](https://twitter.com/EmpowerUs_EU)

EmpowerUs Partners

- [Nordland Research Institute](#) (Norway)
- [Kunnskapsparken Helgeland](#) (Norway)
- [Ruralis - Institute for Rural and Regional Research](#) (Norway)
- [Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation](#) (Bulgaria)
- [Cyprus Marine and Maritime Institute](#) (Cyprus)
- [Development Agency of Lemesos](#) (Cyprus)
- [Aalborg University](#) (Denmark)
- [Allmanna Forvaltningen](#) (Finland)
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- [Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich](#) (Germany)
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- [Autonomous University of Barcelona](#) (Spain)
- [The Queen's University of Belfast](#) (UK)



Funded by the European Union under the Horizon Europe program, Grant No. 101059957 (EmpowerUs). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or Research Executive Agency (REA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.