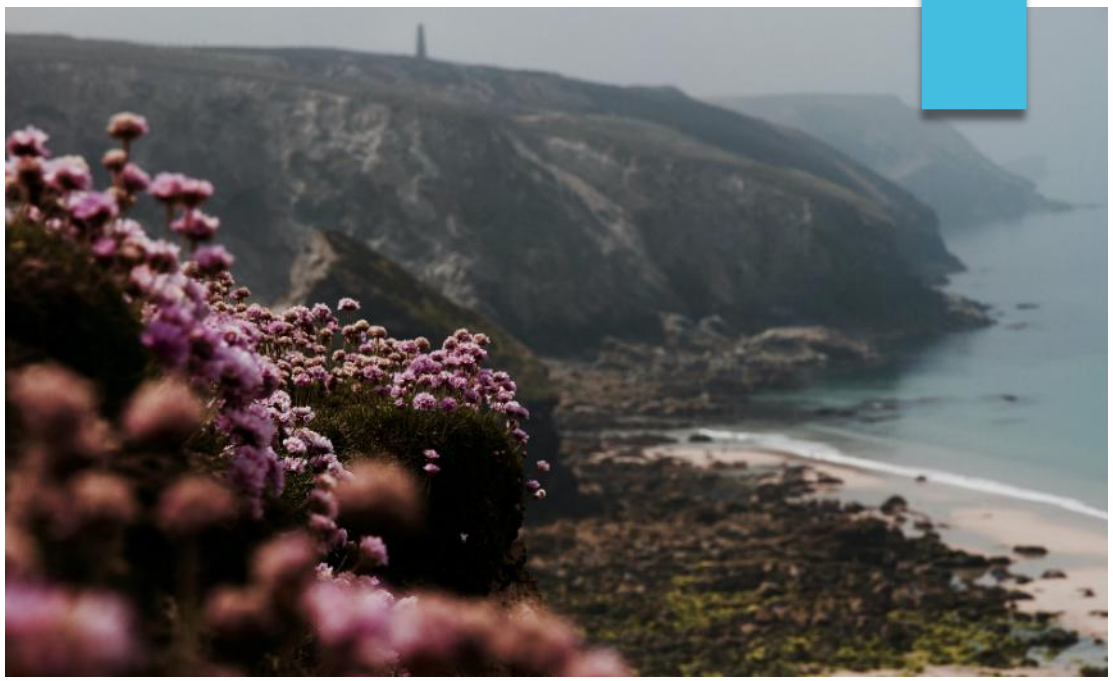
A PROactive approach for COmmunities
to enAble Societal Transformation



ESUG and Pro-Coast

Links with IUCN and IAF, and how REDS applies | Dr Julie Ewald, Chair, ESUG

https://pro-coast.eu

Funded by
the European Union

ESUG: a network of sustainable use experts

143
individual expert members

56
countries represented – now beyond Europe

6
thematic working groups

Founded 1997 as a voluntary, multi-disciplinary network of experts in the European region within the global Sustainable Use Specialist Group of IUCN.

Non-profit under Belgian law since 2002, so it can take part in European Commission projects.

Research with influence: builds evidence for conservation through the use of wild living resources and feed this into policy and practice.

Governed by its members through an elected Chair and Committee, with a part-time Secretariat in Brussels.

Became an IUCN member in its own right in 2025.

Working groups

- Agriculture
- Forestry
- Fisheries
- Biodiversity Business
- Wildlife Species Resources
- Plants and Fungi

esug.sycl.net

Mission and objectives

OUR MISSION

Within the framework of IUCN, to conduct research that enhances understanding of conservation through the use of wild living resources, and to influence policy and practice accordingly.

1

Identify the principles of sustainable use

Evaluate the elements of management that make use of wild species and their ecosystems more sustainable.

2

Increase conservation benefits

Help authorities, users, the public, and researchers work together to devise an integrated, equitable approach to sustainable use.

3

Research, publish, and educate

Conduct and join research and development projects, consult, liaise, and take other action to achieve these aims.

4

Guide communities with IUCN

Encourage conservation through sustainable use, balancing cultural and economic objectives.

esug.sycl.net/2/esug-objectives

ESUG and IUCN: from specialist group to member

1997

Established

Created by IUCN's Sustainable Use Initiative as the European Sustainable Use Specialist Group.

2010

Supports SULi

IUCN forms the Sustainable Use and Livelihoods group across SSC and CEESP; ESUG becomes a support group.

2014

Supports SUME

IUCN's Commission on Ecosystem Management creates Sustainable Use and Management of Ecosystems; ESUG supports it, with many ESUG members joining SUME.

2025

IUCN member

ESUG becomes a Belgium-based member of IUCN.

Contributions to IUCN's global work on sustainable use

- IUCN Policy Statement on Sustainable Use of Wild Living Resources (Amman, 2000)
- CBD Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for Sustainable Use of Biodiversity (2004)
- Inputs to CITES, CMS, FAO and OECD, and workshops at the Bangkok Congress (2004)
- Knowledge event at Barcelona Congress (2008)
- Provided Design and Science Coordination for EU-funded projects AEMBAC (2000-4, GEMCONBIO (2006-8) & TESS (2008-11)
- Developed web-networks on Sakerfalcons, Farmland for Partridges and Naturalliance for IUCN SULi and SUME (2015-ongoing)
- Coordinated Sustainable Use responses to three relevant thematic reports by IPBES during 2014-2024)

ESUG and IAF: a shared conservation network

About IAF

1968 IAF formed; helped restore raptor populations

90 countries with national member organisations

2010 Falconry recognised by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage

A shared network

Several members of the ESUG Pro-Coast team, including science coordination, are also active in IAF, a member of IUCN.

Portals built by ESUG

In 2014-17 ESUG built multilingual portal networks (sakernet.org and perdixnet.org) for IAF.

Hosting in Brussels

IAF hosted the ESUG General Meeting on 14 October 2026 at the Museum of Falconry.

Linked into Pro-Coast

Pro-Coast stays connected with IAF developments and takes part in some of its events.

Pro-Coast D7.4 Clustering report; ESUG About page; esug.sycl.net

Pro-Coast: communities and science for coasts

Where we work

- **4** North-east Atlantic
- **3** Adriatic Sea
- **1** Mediterranean
- **1** Black Sea
- **1** Baltic

Island and continental coasts, in EU and non-EU areas

A PROactive approach for COmmunities to enAble Societal Transformation. Horizon Europe and UKRI-funded, coordinated by ESUG, to help local communities maintain and restore the coastal nature through repeated cycles of deciding together, applying and assessing.

20
partners

14
countries

10
coastal case studies

€3.29M
EU/UKRI funding

1 Nov 2023 – 31 Oct 2026 | online platform maintained to 2033

The Pro-Coast toolkit: five results

Deep Change Framework

An adaptive, participatory process that guides local transformation toward sustainability.

CHUI

Conservation & Human Use Index: an interactive way to assess sustainability challenges, tested at Streedagh Beach, Sligo.

REDS

Reciprocal Environmental Decision Support: tailored advice in return for local observations.

CUSP

Community Sustainability Platform: a multilingual hub in 14 languages, maintained by volunteers until 2033.

17 policy recommendations

A roadmap for the European Commission, national governments and local authorities.

Sources: PRO-COAST D7.3 final impact report; ProCoast final conference press release (Oct 2026); pro-coast.eu

REDS: tailored advice in return for local data

Land managers

Gardeners, farmers, and other citizens who manage land and know their local ecosystem

Observations and local knowledge

Tailored environmental advice

Scientific model

An information system that learns from each contribution and improves its advice

Reciprocal by design

Using a REDS system to get advice also gives scientists information that improves future advice.

Citizen science + decision support

Many citizen science tools are relatively easy for non-experts to use, Many decision-support tools are not accessible to non-experts;
REDS joins the two in one system.

Open and adaptable

Its bidirectional architecture can apply to ecological, social, and behavioural models.

How REDS applies to Pro-Coast

A signature tool on CUSP

- REDS-based systems are a unique selling point of the Community Sustainability Platform.
- Offered alongside CHUI on the multilingual platform, which ESUG will maintain until 2033.

Piloted with communities

- Pro-Coast in Purbeck (Arne, Dorset): residents explore how gardens support house sparrows and carbon sequestration.
- Grey squirrel sightings reported through the REDS app help coordinate support for red squirrels.

Proof of concept

- Gardeners' data automatically improved an indicator-species model for house sparrows.
- The result: more accurate, tailored conservation advice returned to the same gardeners.

Who can use REDS next

Conservation organisations, protected-area and site managers, citizen-science initiatives, researchers, and public authorities. Further development depends on resources for implementation.

PRO-COAST D7.3; Pro-Coast in Purbeck (pro-coast-purbeck.sycl.net); REDS brief v2.1 (earthadvice.org)

From Pro-Coast to a wider network

Platform to 2033

ESUG has committed to maintain CUSP, with the REDS and CHUI tools, until 2033.

Scale-out across Europe

The 13 October 2026 conference at the European Parliament launched efforts to scale out Pro-Coast tools.

Policy uptake

17 recommendations for the European Commission, national governments, and local authorities.

Partner with ESUG

Experts with relevant experience can apply to join; interested bodies can become Patrons.

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pro-coast.eu