

EMPOWERUS PROJECT: COMBINING THE OCEAN & SOCIETY SURVEY WITH PROJECT SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

EmpowerUS — Finland, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, Spain and Norway

FIELDWORK

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SAMPLES

Finland (n=1025), Bulgaria (n=1107), Cyprus (n=216),
Ireland (n=1044), Spain (n=1037), Norway (n=1003)

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IMPACT OF DATA

**POLICY BRIEFS TO MAKE THE
CASE FOR A NATIONAL
OCEAN LITERACY STRATEGY**

**ADVANCING OCEAN LITERACY IN
THE UN OCEAN DECADE**



WHAT IS THE OSS?

A global tool designed to help countries understand how their population thinks and feels about the ocean, and their capacity and willingness to take action on ocean health.



OSS PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

In 2025, 14 countries ran the OSS. Open access, nationally representative datasets are available. **2026 is open for participation.**

WHY DID THEY RUN THE OSS?

The EmpowerUs project focused on sustainable and resilient coastal development. In six different countries, researchers worked with communities to develop solutions, and community empowerment was central to this process.

In the final year of this project, the Ocean and Society Survey was used to gain a broader picture of ocean literacy in each country: widening the lens from specific coastal communities to the wider population.

As users can add questions to the OSS, the researchers were able to use the survey as an opportunity to explore attitudes to empowerment and community in national populations. Questions added to the survey included:

1. On a scale of 1-5, tell us how you feel about the following statement: 'I have knowledge to overcome challenges in my community'.
2. On a scale of 1-5, tell us how you feel about the following statement: 'I am willing to take part in actions that make my community more sustainable'.

WHAT DID THE OSS REVEAL?

Interesting results from the EmpowerUs countries include:



76%

of people in **Bulgaria** are willing to change their lifestyle to support ocean health



71%

of people in **Spain** know that their daily actions influence the ocean



95%

of people in **Ireland** are willing to take action to help their community



86%

of people in **Norway** highly/very highly value the ocean for the benefit of clean air and water

Across the six countries:



43%

state that the ocean influences their daily activities



57%

state their daily actions influence the ocean

IMPACT OF DATA IN NORWAY:

The adaptability of the OSS made this a unique opportunity to explore both ocean literacy and community empowerment in six different EU countries. This case study will focus on how the survey data was used in Norway, led by the Nordland Research Institute.

1

POLICY BRIEFS TO MAKE THE CASE FOR A NATIONAL OCEAN LITERACY STRATEGY

In Norway, the OSS data revealed something surprising. 26% of respondents reported feeling responsible for the health of the ocean, while 40% knew their daily actions influence the ocean. For Norwegians, ‘friluftsliv’ is a way of life. Friluftsliv means ‘open air living’ and characterises the nation’s love of nature and spending time outdoors.

These results therefore seemed unusually low for a population that places high value on nature and environmental responsibility. Using these powerful figures, the Norwegian EmpowerUs team compiled a policy brief recommending the government develop a national ocean literacy strategy, and dedicate funding to place-based implementation.

2

ADVANCING OCEAN LITERACY IN THE UN OCEAN DECADE

The OSS data has reframed Norway’s strategy for the UN Ocean Decade. The data on Norwegians’ attitudes and feelings towards the ocean has spurred the National Committee for the Ocean Decade to make ocean literacy a priority in their work. The Committee have now embraced a more modern understanding of ocean literacy: one that goes beyond education towards fostering emotional connections to the ocean.

The Committee subsequently published a report outlining their core goals for the Ocean Decade. Goal 10 is ‘Everyone knows the ocean!’. This goal aims to catalyse a cultural shift in how Norwegians value and understand the ocean, setting out actions to improve ocean communications and research.



NORDLAND RESEARCH INSTITUTE

National Committee for the Ocean Decade’s report, Midway - but halfway?



EMPOWERUS NORWAY REFLECTS ON THE OSS:

EmpowerUs Norway says that the survey is a great opportunity to get some **eye-catching statistics**, which can be powerful to steer funding in the direction of ocean literacy and also help you develop ideas of how to initiate and communicate ocean literacy projects.

EmpowerUs Norway also says that the survey is a valuable way of getting a broad brush context of your country. Running the survey in a group of countries provides an important collective timestamp and is an enlightening opportunity to compare across countries.

"It's a really nice way of thinking, how do we move beyond marine education? How do we think about who we engage? What should we be engaging and focusing on?"



WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

Interested in using
the survey data?

Interested in
running the survey?

Get in touch!

