



No 1

| Autumn-Winter 2009

ISSN 1831-5720

farnet

M A G A Z I N E

New opportunities for Europe's fisheries areas



European Commission
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

EN



Contents

Photographs (pages):

European Commission (1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9), CC DR Algarve (4), William Stewart (5), Jean-Luc Janot (10, 11, 12, 14, 16), René Kusier (15), Eve Külmallik (18, 19, 20, 25), LIFE Nature EE_007083 (21), CRPM/CPMR (24), Rosa Exposito (25), Marcos Morilla (27).

Cover: Killybegs harbour development (Ireland).

Journalists:

Jean-Luc Janot, Eamon O'Hara.

Other contributors:

Andrew Blackadder, Monica Burch, Paul Soto.

Production:

DevNet geie (AEIDL/Grupo Alba) / Kaligram.

Contact:

FARNET Magazine, FARNET Support Unit, 36-38 rue Saint Laurent, B-1000 Brussels
Tel +32 2 217 44 60
E-mail: info@farnet.eu
Website: ec.europa.eu/fisheries/farnet

FARNET Magazine is published by the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission. It is distributed free on request.

FARNET Magazine is published twice a year in English, French, German and Spanish.

Editor: European Commission, Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Director-General.

Disclaimer: Whilst the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries is responsible for the overall production of this magazine, it is not responsible for the accuracy, content or views expressed within particular articles. The European Commission has not, save where otherwise stated, adopted or in any way approved any view appearing in this publication and statements should not be relied upon as statements of the Commission's or the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries' views. The European Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this publication, nor does the European Commission or any person acting on its behalf accept responsibility for any use made thereof.

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Printed in Belgium on recycled paper.



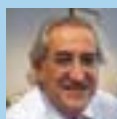
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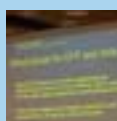
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Over the coming years the FARNET Support Unit will work to strengthen the activities of all those people who believe that fisheries areas can develop a new and more sustainable future.

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Editorial

"A powerful driver of positive change"

Dear reader, it gives me great pleasure to introduce this first edition of the FARNET Magazine which, I am certain, will greatly enrich all our efforts to build a better and more sustainable future for Europe's fisheries areas.

The challenges ahead are significant and can seem daunting: the alarming decline in many fish stocks, a worrying deterioration in the marine environment, climate change, globalisation, and a rapidly evolving marketplace. But we know they are not insurmountable.

The recent Green Paper on the Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy presents a very attractive vision of fisheries areas in the year 2020: sustainable marine and fishing resources, high quality and healthy food, a globally competitive industrial sector offering high quality jobs, and a dynamic small scale fleet selling directly to the increasing numbers of people seeking a better quality of life in Europe's coastal areas. Few people would disagree with these goals or with the proposition that the fisheries community can and should have an important place in broader strategies for the sustainable development of our coasts and inland waters.

One of the key innovations in the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) 2007-2013 is the inclusion of the "Axis 4" measures, which, for the first time, support a territorial approach to the sustainable development of fisheries areas. Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs), bringing together all local stakeholders, are at the forefront of this new approach, acting as laboratories to develop and test local strategies to promote more sustainable economic activities through diversification and adding value in the fisheries sector.

I firmly believe that such opportunities to diversify and add-value exist in most, if not all fisheries areas: the demand for healthy and traceable food is growing; the environmental and cultural assets of Europe's coasts, lakes and rivers continue to attract millions of people; and eco-tourism and renewable energy are emerging sectors that are also well suited to fisheries areas.

Over the coming years, Axis 4 of the EFF will support more than 200 FLAGs in 21 countries to explore new and better ways of seizing these opportunities. The EFF-supported Fisheries Area Network (FARNET) brings these and other stakeholders together at European level by providing a platform for mutual learning, exchange and cooperation. With the potential participation of thousands of actors from across the EU, FARNET will undoubtedly be a powerful driver of positive change.

The FARNET Magazine is an important tool in facilitating communication between the members of this network and for giving a voice to the people living and working in different kinds of fisheries areas.

This first edition of the magazine assesses the current state of play in the implementation of Axis 4 and begins this process of sharing ideas and perspectives on how we move forward. It also includes an interview with César Debén, Director at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, who explains how some of the proposals in the Green Paper might affect fisheries areas and the role that FLAGs could play in future policies.

There is also an insightful report from North Jutland (Denmark), which is an invaluable reminder for us all that ultimately this is about people, their livelihood and way of life. This is why it is so important that together, we now take this important opportunity to be enterprising and energetic in our efforts to find solutions that marry the interests of people and the environment on which they depend.

A stylized blue ink signature of Fokion Fotiadis.

Fokion Fotiadis,
Director-General

STATE OF PLAY IN FISHERIES AREAS

The best is yet to come

The current funding period, 2007-2013, sees the introduction of a new priority axis within the European Fisheries Fund (EFF): Axis 4 for the “sustainable development of fisheries areas”. This represents an important evolution in EU fisheries policy, introducing a new territorial emphasis into what has traditionally been a very sectoral programme. So how have the Member States embraced this new policy strand? And where do they currently stand vis-à-vis its implementation?



▲ Redevelopment of the fishing port of Olhão, in the Algarve (Portugal), has helped to promote diversification.

Out of the 26 Member States receiving money from the EFF, 21 took the decision to allocate part of their budget towards the “sustainable development of fisheries areas” (Axis 4). In doing so, they have made a commitment to use some of the EFF budget to support a territorial, or area-based approach to the development of fisheries areas.

The territorial approach implies a focus on specific geographical areas, and a bottom-up development perspective, which facilitates the emergence of tailored solutions to the different challenges that confront the different types of fisheries areas.

At the heart of this approach is the local action group, to be known in fisheries areas as the “Fisheries Local Action Group” (FLAG). Bringing together local public, private and community and voluntary sector representatives within a single organisational structure, the FLAG helps to nurture a shared vision for the area concerned and provides a local structure to facilitate the decentralisation of funding and decision making in relation to the implementation of a local development strategy.

Overseeing this type of development approach is a new departure for most Member State fisheries departments. National administrations have had to incorporate new measures and actions



▲ Smögen, on Sweden's west coast.

into their operational programmes and undertake a difficult process of selecting eligible areas for this specific support, and FLAGs in these areas that are capable of managing public funds and delivering results on the ground.

Some Member States have been ambitious in their response. Romania and Poland, for example, have allocated up to 32% of their EFF budget to Axis 4 (see page 8). Others have been more cautious, allocating less than 5% of their budgets. On average, 13% of the EFF budget has been allocated to the sustainable development of fisheries areas.

Synergies with LEADER

The territorial approach to local development is new to the EFF. However, this strategy has been pursued for some 20 years by the LEADER Community Initiative and has proven successful in a number of countries in fostering endogenous local development in rural areas. Indeed, many Member States, with the Scandinavian countries being the earliest examples, have been able to build on the experience of LEADER to encourage the establishment of similar structures to assist local development in fisheries areas. In fact, in some countries where rural and fisheries areas overlap, LEADER

local action groups have taken on direct responsibility for the management and delivery of Axis 4 funds, albeit with separate partnerships and accounts, and distinct strategies that focus on fisheries issues. This has offered the advantage of a relatively fast start-up process and the possibility of sharing administrative costs.

Other countries, however, have faced difficulties in harnessing LEADER experience and expertise, which has led to significant delays in getting Axis 4 off the ground. Meanwhile, in many new Member States there is little experience in bottom-up, territorial development, and few existing structures capable of running a participative, local development strategy. In some cases local actors can also be reluctant to engage in "collective actions". All of this adds considerably to the challenge of getting the process off the ground in these countries.

Two approaches to selecting FLAGs

So, what paths have the different countries taken, and where have they got to? In terms of the selection process itself, two alternative approaches have emerged: a two-stage and a single-stage process.

Single-stage approach

Where sufficient experience exists and conditions on the ground permit, national administrations can carry out selection and approval of FLAGs and their strategies in a single stage. For example, in Finland where the fisheries industry is fairly evenly distributed throughout the country, the whole of Finland was considered eligible for Axis 4. As such, the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry opened a single, nationwide call for proposals for FLAGs and their strategies in June 2007, with no delimitation of areas. Within four months it had received 11 applications from which it selected eight FLAGs for an initial period of 2008-2011.

In order to better target support, other countries have carried out a preliminary phase of defining the eligible areas, before publishing a call for proposals. The calls for proposals are generally preceded by information sessions to ensure relevant and potential actors are aware and prepared to respond to the call.



Axis 4: A sea of change in European fisheries policy

Why do we need an Axis 4?

Coastal areas cover 40% of the EU territory and contain 43% of its population. This includes some of Europe's most competitive centres of economic growth as well as sought after locations for new leisure and residential developments. Such activities place enormous pressures on the natural environment and on traditional activities like fishing.

More remote coastal areas and other areas (including lakes, ponds and river estuaries) that are heavily dependent on fishing also face significant challenges. Restructuring in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, developments on world markets, dwindling fisheries resources and the need to exploit natural resources and the environment in a sustainable manner are all increasingly impacting on the viability of communities in these areas.

How does Axis 4 respond to these challenges?

The European Commission recognises that these complex and rapidly-evolving issues affecting fisheries areas and communities cannot be dealt with by traditional policies and tools on their own. It believes that because of the diversity of fisheries areas and of the problems confronting these areas, assistance should aim for an integrated local development approach, centred on a territorial strategy and adapted to the local situation. Therefore, under Axis 4, the design and implementation of the local development strategy is as decentralised as possible, with preference given to the involvement of private actors on the ground and a bottom-up approach.

What are the key features of Axis 4?

There are five key features which characterise the approach promoted under Axis 4:

- 1. The local territorial approach:** funds are concentrated on the fisheries areas that need them most and actions supported are designed to meet the diverse needs of these areas;
- 2. Integrated strategies:** a local development strategy ensures that the actions undertaken reinforce each other, building on the unique strengths and opportunities of each fisheries area, and also addressing specific weaknesses and threats;
- 3. Participation and partnership:** the strategy mobilises the knowledge, energy and resources of local actors from the public, private and community and voluntary sector, which come together to form the Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG). The FLAG facilitates local decision-making on strategic priorities and on the use of resources to implement the strategy;
- 4. Local innovation:** the strategy seeks to exploit new markets, new products and new ways of working, both in the fisheries sector and in other local sectors;
- 5. Networking and cooperation:** fisheries areas and communities learn from each other and find allies for strengthening their position in a global economy.

What types of measures are eligible and who are the potential beneficiaries?

Axis 4 of the EFF provides support for the sustainable development of fisheries areas. In particular, it supports initiatives aimed at adding value to fisheries products, as well as measures to promote economic diversification, particularly into areas such as tourism and leisure, food and renewable energy, which exploit local resources. It also supports other measures aimed at improving the quality of life in areas affected by the decline in fishing activities, such as small scale infrastructural projects, environmental protection and training and capacity building for local communities.

How is Axis 4 implemented?

Twenty-one Member States will implement this new priority Axis and between them they are expected to select approximately 200 FLAGs.

Axis 4 funding will be allocated to the selected FLAGs to support the implementation of their local development strategies. This funding will be used to support projects initiated by the FLAG



itself, as well as projects conceived and implemented by local actors from the public, private and community and voluntary sectors.

FLAGs will be encouraged to learn from each other through inter-regional and transnational cooperation and exchange, which will be supported and assisted by the FARNET Support Unit.

Two-stage approach

A number of countries, however, felt it necessary to split the selection process into two stages: one stage to select and approve the FLAGS and a second phase to approve the strategies. As in the single-stage approach, the eligible areas are either defined in advance by the national administration, or are defined based on the proposals received.

The initial phase in which the groups are selected generally involves a preliminary application ("declaration of interest") by each FLAG, and a period of capacity building during which the FLAGS prepare a local development strategy. FLAGS are given between 6 and 12 months to prepare their strategies.

During the second phase, the national or regional authorities assess the strategies. Those approved receive funding to begin implementation.

The partnerships and their strategies

Although some Member States have not yet finished the process of strategy approval, we can already see certain patterns emerging in terms of the kinds of partnerships and their objectives. In particular, we can see how the size of the budget tends to shape both the partnership and the strategy.

Small budgets

Those countries with smaller budgets allocated to Axis 4, have tended to piggy-back off existing organisations, such as LEADER local action groups or local NGOs. In these cases, the strategies tend to be more sector based, concentrating on soft activities designed to add value to fisheries products.

However, small scale diversification projects are also within the scope of such groups. In France, for example, the Pays Pyrénées-Méditerranée FLAG proposes to work on waste collection around port areas as well as on small scale sustainable fishing. Other FLAGS have seen this budget more as seed money to lever in funds for larger projects through studies or pilot projects, or to fund side activities and meetings of larger projects.



▲ In Marsaxlokk (Malta), fishing is both a cultural and tourism attraction.

What is the total Axis 4 budget ?

The total EFF contribution to Axis 4 for the period 2007-2013 is €567 million (€826.6 million including EFF and other public contributions), which is just over 13% of the overall EFF budget. The amounts allocated to Axis 4 of the EFF in the different Member States are as follows:

COUNTRY	% OF EFF ALLOCATED TO AXIS 4	EFF INVESTED IN AXIS 4/ €
Belgium	11.04%	2 900 000
Bulgaria	15.00%	12 001 456
Cyprus	5.07%	1 000 000
Denmark	9.32%	12 461 279
Estonia	22.80%	19 281 513
Finland	9.14%	3 606 000
France	2.64%	5 699 644
Germany	12.47%	19 438 000
Greece	16.02%	33 300 000
Ireland	3.55%	1 500 603
Italy	4.00%	16 973 714
Latvia	23.13%	28 911 476
Lithuania	12.23%	6 693 770
Netherlands	10.27%	4 987 125
Poland	32.00%	234 909 624
Portugal	7.06%	17 403 406
Romania	32.51%	75 000 000
Slovenia	10.00%	2 164 029
Spain	4.36%	49 336 048
Sweden	15.00%	8 199 720
UK	8.42%	11 598 450
Total	13.18%	567 365 857

These amounts were valid in November 2009 but may be subject to further adjustments.



While these types of activities remain largely sector based, it is important that the FLAG strategies and their objectives fit with a larger territorial strategy for the area. As such, it is interesting to see that the partnerships in these countries with relatively small budgets generally show a good balance of actors from within and outside the fisheries sectors. In Denmark, for example, the FLAGs have approximately 30% representation by fishing organisations, and in Germany 35%, with the remainder split between the public sector, civil society and non-fisheries private sector actors. Finland is perhaps the main exception here, with 50% of its FLAGs made up of actors from the fisheries sector.

Large budgets

Those countries that have allocated larger budgets to Axis 4 have tended towards self-standing organisations – as in the case of Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. This is very often because those countries with the largest Axis 4 budgets are also those with the least experience in local territorial development. An exception is the region of Galicia (Spain), which despite its wealth of experience in local development, has also chosen to develop its FLAGs completely independently from existing LEADER groups.



▲ A ferry enters the newly developed harbour on the island of Stora Dyrön, Sweden.

In these cases, the partnerships tend to include a stronger representation from the fisheries sector. Latvia is the main exception to this rule, with only 33%. Moreover, Latvian FLAGs have been established in close coordination with LEADER groups.

Despite a generally high representation of the fisheries sector in these partnerships, the FLAGs with the larger budgets have tended to present strategies that move away from merely adding value to fisheries products and towards diversification into tourism and activities that strengthen links between fisheries and the area's natural and cultural heritage. FLAGs in Galicia, for example, home to the biggest fishing industry in Europe, receive EFF co-financing of between €4-10 million, which they are using to support cultural and marine tourism and local gastronomy.

France, Latvia, Spain, Sweden, Portugal and Estonia. Some of these countries have also set up a fisheries group network at national level, facilitating exchange and cooperation between groups.

The European Commission is adamant that groups in all Member States must be up and running by the summer of 2010. Moreover, if FLAGs are going to constitute an effective voice within the policy debates already underway, early results on the ground are vital.

Well thought-out, effective and long term strategies are vital in responding to the serious challenges that fisheries areas face. Axis 4 offers an important opportunity to build a more sustainable future for these areas. But Member States and groups are running against the clock – and with the condition that haste does not come at the expense of quality. ■

The beginning of the journey

At the time of writing (November 2009) around 80 FLAGs were in place with their development strategies approved. Denmark, Finland and some German regions were, in 2008, the first to get their fisheries groups off the ground. 2009 has seen the selection of FLAGs in

Report

THE EFF SUPPORTS THE DEVELOPMENT OF FISHERIES AREAS IN NORTH JUTLAND [DENMARK] Focusing on added value

The fisheries areas of North Jutland are focusing on quality and making better use of local products and services to create more and better employment opportunities for more people.



▲ Bettina Kühn, standing next to the seafood boxes produced by her company, Skagenfood.

"It's going to succeed this time. I've been told that I will receive the building permit within a fortnight." As if to make sure, Herbert Matthäi re-examines the plans for the shellfish cleaning and refrigeration plant, which he developed with a former school friend, a biologist from Berlin. He continues: "We haven't invented anything new. The principle is well established. A similar system is in operation in Japan. It's very simple and cost-effective. The use of salt water in a closed circuit gets rid of waste and enables the catch – mussels, sea snails and lobster – to be conserved for up to six weeks. Two tonnes can be processed in 24 hours. It offers many benefits. When you're trying to catch fish, you also catch shellfish, but never in large enough quantities for daily or regular sales. This system allows you to build up catches of the right size, and to wait for the best rates before selling. It's a new source of revenue for Thorup Strand." The 21 boats operating from this small fishing port on the west coast of North Jutland will all benefit from this new initiative. Two local fishermen have actually invested in the project, to which the Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) has awarded a grant



▲ Herbert Matthäi showing the plans for his innovative shellfish conservation system.

of €34 400. This covers 30% of the cost of the new system, which will be installed in a new building costing a further €130 000 to construct.

But why is Herbert, a 72-year-old retired sales representative who normally only fishes for pleasure, taking on such a project? *"It's for a good cause. I'm getting involved because I live here, and it's for the future of this community, which welcomed me as one of their own when I came here from Germany 55 years ago."* Herbert leads the way to the port to show us the site of the future plant; an area of derelict land next to the coastal rescue station, which means it will have minimal environmental impact on the coastline.

On the way, we meet Richard Kristensen, a young fisherman, who has moved into leisure fishing. *"Because of the quotas, I thought I would be better off in tourism,"* he explains. In March 2008, he set up his own company, North Sea Fishing, which employs two people. He took out 80 fishing trips in 2008, and over 100 between January and August 2009. *"We can take up*

to 12 passengers on board per trip and we offer two alternatives – a 4-hour trip costing €50, and a 12-hour trip for €120. In both cases, customers can keep the fish they catch. We clean the fish for them and they can even keep them in the freezer at the camp site, with which we have an agreement."

To get the business started, Richard applied for and received a €23 000 grant from the FLAG, which covered about 43% of the cost of adapting his boat. This work essentially involved replacing the mast, strengthening the hull and fitting a heated cabin in order to be able to organise trips at sea in winter.

Combining fishing, tourism, people and nature

Herbert and Richard and their two initiatives in Thorup Strand are emblematic of what is going on throughout the "northern" fisheries area. Covering the five North Jutland coastal municipalities on the North Sea, the area contains a number of

important fishing ports which are faced with major challenges: the loss of fishing rights, small scale enterprises with little innovation, competition from larger boats, the delocalisation of the processing industry, an ageing workforce and a lack of training for those working in the fisheries sector. The FLAG's strategy focuses on revitalising the sector and the fishing communities by seeking to extend the tourist season and to better exploit local maritime resources. *"Our strategy is simple,"* explains Leo Mikkelsen, Chairman of the FLAG, *"it contains four sets of priorities, which have to be combined: fishing, tourism, the local population and nature."*





▲ Richard Kristensen has diversified into leisure fishing

In its efforts to achieve the first objective, the FLAG can rely on *Skagenfood*, a company based in the port of Strandby with direct access to the auction market. Founded in 2001 by Bettina Kühn and her husband, both business students in Copenhagen at the time, *Skagenfood* sells fish and seafood packs to individual customers via the Internet. Some 10 000 expanded polystyrene boxes leave the company's packing unit each week to be delivered to households throughout Denmark. Bettina explains: "we have decided to remain focused on the domestic market for the time being, as there is plenty of growth potential. The Danes still consume relatively small amounts of fish." She continues: "we also try to ensure maximum traceability by buying from local fishermen, and by using our own logistics. Customers can contact us at any time to check on even the smallest detail." Various priced options are available, with the contents varying according to the season and the landings. Each box also contains recipe suggestions for the customer. The company, which employs 18 staff directly, achieved 29% growth in 2008, but just 1%

in 2009. Bettina is not deterred, however: "Economic crisis or not, we were looking to diversify in any case. Thanks to a €22 000 grant from the FLAG, we have been able to purchase a packaging machine and promotional material for marketing a range of ready-made seafood dishes aimed specifically at two sectors – the supermarkets and canteens. We have to make better use of fresh fish to ensure the profession remains attractive to young people, but it's not an easy task. Fishing is a very traditional industry, which is resistant to change, and so it's difficult to promote new varieties."

There is hope, however, which is perfectly exemplified by people like Mogens Klausen. The 44-year-old embodies an attitude that many people would like to see adopted throughout the area. "I started out in 2000 as a mobile fishmonger working in supermarket car parks. My fish burgers were an immediate success and my business expanded quickly. By 2007, I had three vans, but I'd had enough of moving around. I wanted to do what I'd always dreamed of – having my own restaurant." In 2009, Mogens took the plunge and made

a €700 000 investment in the construction of a building housing a 30-seat restaurant and a fishmonger's outlet. He received a €40 000 grant from the FLAG to install a smokery and other equipment required for making a wide range of fish and seafood products. He increased his staff from 2 to 8, and Mogens has now established himself as "Mister Fishmonger" in the small town of Hune, which has a permanent population of 3 000, as well as 4 000 summer homes. This means lots of good customers for the new venture: "holiday-makers by the sea want to try fish prepared in all kinds of ways, including the most unusual. I aim to meet this demand. I also plan to remain open throughout the winter, which the other restaurant owners are unwilling to do."



Operational synergies and national networking: the Danish FLAG model

In Denmark, 55 local action groups (LAGs) have been formed to implement parts of the rural development programme and the fisheries programme 2007-2013. 16 of them are Fisheries Local Action Groups or FLAGs.

Danish LAGs are organised as associations, with open and free membership. Board members are elected from one of the following stakeholder groups: 1) Local citizens, 2) Local enterprises and trade organisations, 3) Local associations and 4) Public authorities. As regards the FLAG North, for instance, the board has 21 members, of whom eight represent local associations (culture, nature, etc.), six come from local enterprises and business organisations, while another six represent local and regional authorities. There is also one representative of local citizens. Four members out of the 21 come from businesses or organisations operating in the fisheries sector.

"The fairly low share of fisheries sector representatives in the FLAG North board and the great variety of their projects indicate a territorial approach", says René Kusier, who is responsible for the national network at the Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries. "A survey carried out on our behalf in 2008 () shows that about a third of board members in FLAGs are nominated by enterprises and trade/business organisations. In general, the FLAGs tend to have stronger links to the fisheries sector than the rural groups have to the agricultural sector but they have fully adopted the territorial, non-sectoral, approach to development."*

There are strong links between fisheries and LEADER groups. Eleven out of sixteen FLAGs are both fisheries and LEADER LAGs. These "mixed" groups are based to a certain extent on a common partnership; they cover the same territory and have a shared secretariat (coordinator), but distinct strategic objectives, measures and budgets.

The 16 FLAGs share a total average yearly budget of €2.9 million (budget 2007-2009), which would make €180 000 per FLAG if the 5 "pure" FLAGs did not receive a higher share (€352 000 for LAG North, for instance). This means that staffing is low. In fact, while most of the FLAGs have appointed a coordinator, about half of them have been employed for less than half-time. *"The reason is mainly a financial one, explains Lars Hedegaard, Coordinator of the FLAG North, "nothing more can be afforded".*

The 2008 survey shows that business development and the attraction of new residents are the highest priorities for FLAGs, whilst nature and the environment have a slightly lower priority. "Softer" values, such as creating increased awareness of issues related to rural and coastal areas, or improvement of cooperation between stakeholders are also considered to be key objectives.

National Network Unit

A "National Network Unit (NNU)" based in Copenhagen is the national contact point for both fisheries and rural local action groups. It is also the national link to the other Member State networks and the FARNET Support Unit. The NNU acts as a contact point for all other stakeholders and potential beneficiaries related to the fisheries programme and the rural development programme. The NNU:

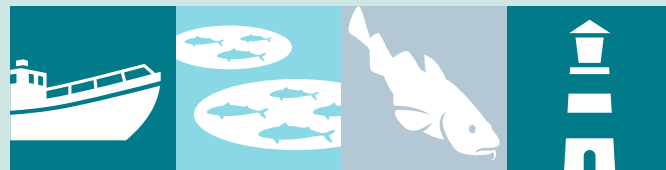
- > develops tools (website, publications, training sessions...) to increase knowledge and information sharing between LAGs, FLAGs and other stakeholders;
- > arranges conferences, seminars, study trips, and is responsible for providing guidelines, rules and the overall coordination of the local action groups; and
- > hosts the secretariat for the monitoring committee.

Contact:

National Network Unit

Danish Food Industry Agency
Nyropsgade 30
DK-1780 Copenhagen V
Hotline: +45 33 95 89 89
netvaerkscenter@ferv.dk
www.fiskeriudvikling.dk

Fiskeriudvikling.dk



(*) **"Danish Local Action Groups in Rural and Fishing Areas 2008 – Composition, activities, and cooperation in the start-up phase".** March 2009. Annette Aagaard Thuesen, Jens Fyhn Lykke Sørensen, University of Southern Denmark, Danish Institute of Rural Research and Development. ISBN 978-87-91304-37-8. English summary: www.sdu.dk/~media/Files/Om_SDU/Institutter/Iful/Udgivelser/Danish_LAG.ashx



▲ Mogens Klausen is delighted with the success of his new fish shop.

Quality

"Tourists think: hey, this is nice here, we're not tempted to spend our money as everything is closed." Noël Mignong, head of development at the local authority of Jammerbugt, sees the irony in the situation, but is acutely aware of the area's weaknesses. *"We have one of the highest rates of unemployment and the lowest house prices in the country. The level of training is generally low, because the workforce was attracted to the fisheries and other industries, which are now closed... There are 8 000 summer houses and 4 million guest nights in the municipality, but many visitors bring their own food and come to enjoy*

things that are free. The question remains: 'how can we really start making money?'..."

Local products feature highly on the list of approaches identified by the local authorities to add value. *"Owing to the sea and the modest house prices, we have lots of artists and crafts people living here, who often have difficulty in making ends meet,"* explains Lars Haagensen, a consultant. *"In response, we have adopted an event-based strategy aimed at mobilising this sector. An event is held each weekend and whenever a club or an association organises an activity, artists and crafts people are invited to take part. We also encourage restaurant owners to put more emphasis on seafood dishes."*

"Generally speaking, our approach focuses on quality", adds Noël Mignong. *"Take shops, for example. Our aim is to discourage shopkeepers from Copenhagen, Aalborg and elsewhere from renting boutiques here in summer and selling low quality goods. To combat this trend, a local fund has been set up, which has already bought back fifteen commercial outlets, and only rents them on the provision that good-quality merchandise is sold. We are also focusing on upgrading the building stock. The quality of architecture is definitely in need of improvement."* Noël points to the time-share apartments built in the 1970s right in the middle of the coastal village of Blokhus, and which are now in need of an extensive facelift. He also mentions the restoration and conversion of a former coastal rescue centre into a quaint seaside cottage. *"This is a completely private initiative, but we have also submitted two applications to the FLAG; one to renovate the beach restaurant, and another to build a 'fisherman's house'. This should work well, as the FLAG and the local authorities share the same vision."*



▲ The port of Amtøft has benefited from a major redevelopment to facilitate tourism and to accommodate large sailing vessels.

Redevelopment

The FLAG has already been involved in several initiatives to upgrade buildings and to foster the development of tourism. The village of Amtøft on Limfjorden, the sea inlet that makes the top part of Jutland

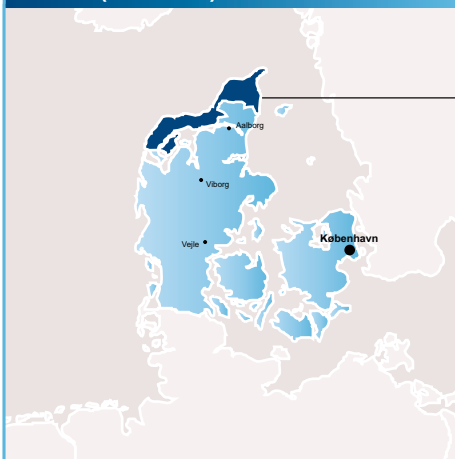
an island, has benefited from a major scheme to “revitalise” the marina. This included dredging work and the construction of a pontoon to berth large sailing and pleasure boats, a visitor information centre and picnic areas. Local volunteers contributed significantly to the work on this project, which also received a grant of €42 000 from the FLAG. “It was our banker who put us in touch with the FLAG,” recalls Knud Lynge, president of the sailing club. “Ironically, the bank went bankrupt shortly afterwards, but that did not compromise the project. In fact, we have become a planning model for the dozen or so small coastal ports on the fjord, with which we have formed a network.”

Nearby in Klitmøller on the North Sea, a grant of €24 500 was awarded for the restoration of two former fishery warehouses and to improve access to the beach. “The initiative put the finishing touches to an extensive redevelopment process which we embarked on in 1997, having already started some initial work in 1966, when the port silted up and most of its trade moved to *Hanstholm*,” reveals Peter Sand Mortensen, a member of the FLAG board of directors, who previously spent ten years representing fishermen at the International Transport Federation (ITF). “*Klitmøller* is regarded as one of the best locations in northern Europe for windsurfing, so we had to play the tourism card. The fifty or so buildings that made up the former fish houses represented an unexploited opportunity. These were located right in the centre of the village but were in a very poor state of repair. In 1997, we started to restore and redevelop the largest buildings into multipurpose facilities, and then, in 2003, we renovated 27 fishermen’s huts. As well as giving the village back some dignity, this set of buildings is now used by 58 boat owners.” What’s more, “all of this also makes it easier to integrate new arrivals, because we have set up a kind of welcoming programme. We invite all boat owners to ‘adopt’ a family that has recently moved to the area to help them become part of the village life. Klitmøller has seen around forty families arrive in the past five years. Not bad for a village with a population of 950!” Not bad indeed, and when the population rises, everything starts to pick up. Is this a sign that the tide is turning in North Jutland? ■



▲ In Klitmøller, 27 fishermen’s huts have been converted for leisure purposes.

NORD (Denmark)



Area:
3 920 km²

Population:
236 311 inhabitants (2009)

Density:
60 inhabitants/km²

Budget	€		
	EU	National	Total
Total (2007-2009)	762 781	293 377	1 056 159
Average per year	254 260	97 792	352 053

CONTACT

Fiskeri LAG Nord

c/o Lars Hedegaard

Vestre Strandvej 10 – DK-9900 Skagen


Tel.: +45 9845 8007 – www.fiskerilagnord.dk

Interview

“FLAGS: pioneering the territorial approach in Europe’s fisheries areas”


In his position at the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, César Debén has led the work on the preparation of the Green Paper on the Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)*. This paper outlines a set of proposals aimed at achieving “a whole-scale and fundamental reform (...) a sea change cutting to the core reasons behind the vicious circle in which Europe’s fisheries have been trapped in recent decades.”¹

FARNET Magazine interviewed Mr Debén to find out how the Green Paper’s approach will affect Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs).

 **FARNET Magazine: The Green Paper sees the problems of fishing and fisheries areas as being mainly structural, and it suggests a number of key measures to address these problems. How will the FLAGs be affected by these measures and how can they contribute to finding solutions?**

One of the Green Paper’s main proposals is to reposition fishing within a global approach that combines integrated maritime policy, coastal environmental policy and the CFP. In this respect, the FLAGs represent the first attempt at coordinated action at regional and local level, and are the first instrument to be part of this sustainable maritime development strategy. In this sense, the FLAGs are a testing ground. This is a fantastic experiment and, for the European Commission, an opportunity to better understand the realities of the situation on the ground.

Another challenge raised by the Green Paper is to bring the decision making process closer to the local and regional levels. The promotion of a culture of compliance with rules, laying the foundations for the success of the new policy, is to be achieved by greater involvement of fishing industry players in drawing up and implementing this policy. Great progress has been made in establishing the Regional Advisory Councils (RAC), the regional consultative bodies which bring together all the representatives of the sector, but an intermediate link is still missing, a forum where RACs, scientists, environmental organisations, Member States and regional governments can meet and engage in debate and discussion. The FLAGs could be this missing link, a platform for reflection that expresses the needs and expectations of those on the ground.

 **One of the solutions put forward by the Green Paper to overcome fleet overcapacity is transferable fishing rights. How will this affect the people and territories that depend on fishing?**



César Debén,
*Director of Policy Development and
Co-ordination at the European Commission's
Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs
and Fisheries*

First of all, it is not so much a question of reducing overcapacity, but more a question of the industry taking greater responsibility. This will allow it to plan medium-term and long-term resource management itself, and to achieve a sense of individual and collective ownership. If you have a sense of ownership of the resource, you make sure you respect it and that other people respect it too.

The second objective is to improve the viability of enterprises. Experience in Europe and elsewhere shows that transferable rights is a system, which, if well managed, and in contrast to quota systems,

improves viability.

The third objective is the streamlining of production tools. Once again, experience in third countries shows that transferable rights enable the streamlining of fleets and the avoidance of overcapacity.

Of course, there is a very real risk that small-scale fishing could be absorbed by large-scale fishing, and the concentration of rights in large companies must categorically be avoided. According to the principle of the social market economy foreseen in the Lisbon Treaty, we are obliged to introduce measures to eliminate this risk. For example, some countries prohibit the transfer of individual rights from small-scale fishing to large-scale fishing, but not vice-versa. This is one safeguard provision, but there are also many others. The advantage is that, today, we have access to very comprehensive information, which enables us to avoid this type of mistake or undesired effect. The Green Paper is very clear on this matter. The protection of small-scale fishing is one of the few issues on which the Commission explicitly takes a position, by recommending that Member States set up a system that differentiates between small-scale and large-scale fishing.

¹ ec.europa.eu/fisheries/publications/greenpaper/greenpaper_en.pdf

What role could the FLAGs play within the framework of this differentiated system, and, more generally, in exploring the approaches envisaged?

Firstly, the FLAGs can play a role in promoting integration, between the fishing sector and other sectors of the local economy, based on the logic of increasing the value of the local resource. This is a specialist task and we cannot expect our fishermen to develop such strategies themselves. The FLAGs have a major role to play here because they bring together the know-how of players in various fields, including food, tourism, culture and the environment.

The FLAGs can also help to reduce the tensions that exist between fishermen, fish farmers, pleasure sailors and other users of the marine environment. We have to find ways of achieving conciliation and cooperation to facilitate the co-existence of these different players, all of which are important, and the FLAGs can play a vital role in this respect.

The strategies pursued by the FLAGs combine sectoral approaches (traceability, labelling, selling in shorter food chains, etc.), diversification towards new activities (such as tourism) and improving the links between fishing, cultural heritage and the environment. In your view, what is the right balance between these approaches?

Everything depends on the local situation, and, in some territories, you could choose to focus more heavily on one particular area. This is why it is so important to clearly define the objectives and the mechanisms for cooperation based on the local situation in which you are operating. This is what we have learned from the experience of LEADER. The mobilisation of stakeholders is vitally important. I think that local situations are so diverse that it is impossible to identify any one sector that should be given priority. We should also try to avoid the unrealistic expectations that you sometimes come across. It is unrealistic, for example, to think that we're going to put in place "contracts to safeguard the sea." No, the FLAGs have to focus on areas where there are viable economic niches. We have to be careful not to give priority to mechanisms that tend to increase dependency and a reliance on indirect aid or grants for crisis sectors. No fisherman would want to leave his children a business that depends on subsidies and the goodwill of the administration.

The FLAGs try to coordinate their action with that of local rural development groups, for example. To what extent could they facilitate local coordination in the use of EU funds generally in coastal areas?

Firstly, let's not forget that Axis 4 and FARNET have been developed directly on the basis of experience gained from the LEADER programme. The positive results of the LEADER approach encouraged the Commission to introduce these instruments. As to what structure and approach the Community funds might adopt beyond 2013; this question has been asked, and one aspect under consideration is how to improve the integration and coordination of actions. Once again, the local action groups – fisheries or LEADER – could provide the platform for debate and experimentation. In any event, the territorial approach is becoming increasingly significant in European policy. As coastal regions continue to attract increasing numbers of inhabitants, and grapple with the impacts of climate change, they are confronted with huge challenges in terms of infrastructure, environmental protection and economic sustainability. Coastal areas are set to play an increasingly important role

in the European and global economy. The FLAGs can act as a testing ground for an integrated development approach, opening up new avenues and opportunities for the future.

The Green Paper begins by outlining an attractive fictitious political scenario. It describes a very appealing vision of fishing in 2020, with effective resource management, high-quality products, coastal fishing supplying local markets, and favourable demographic flows. By 2013, more than 200 FLAGs will already have been working for four or five years, each bringing together around 50 local players on average. This means that the "FARNET community" will include at least 10 000 players in 21 Member States. What message would you like to send to all of these people? And what can the Commission do to maximise the results of their work?

The Green Paper clearly states that the challenge of a new CFP and, more globally, a new Integrated Maritime Policy for the EU* should not remain at the political level or in "Brussels". This policy will affect all of Europe, including people and ecosystems. Having 10 000 partners who will have accumulated information, knowledge and experience in coordinated action will represent a real asset for the new approach. This is why it is so important that this first set of programmes succeed. Failure is not an option. The results of the first FLAGs will be seen at the same time as the new CFP comes into force and as we assess the initial impact of the new maritime strategy. It is, therefore, vitally important.

Having said that, the only demands that can be made of the FLAGs – because they are autonomous – is to be as transparent as possible, to break down local barriers and to rise above parochial disputes. The experience of LEADER has shown that it is essential to overcome negative local dynamics.

Are you optimistic about the future?

In the ongoing debate about the future of fishing, Axis 4 is perceived as a positive element, a beacon of hope. For budgetary reasons and owing to certain adverse effects of aid in the past, there is a shift towards reducing subsidies. However, I sense a real demand on the part of European operators for Axis 4, resources with sufficient funding. If it proves its value to development, Axis 4 or an equivalent system will be followed up and could even be given a more important role, but it is still too early to say. What is certain is that FARNET must now fulfil the missions assigned to it, and in this regard, we have every confidence that it will be successful. ■

**Interview conducted (in French)
on 1 October 2009**

*** Note from the editor:**

To read more about the Green Paper on the Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, see: ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/review_en.htm

To read more about EU Integrated Maritime Policy, see: ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/index_en.html



GETTING STARTED ON THE GROUND

Messages from Pärnu

On 4-5th June 2009, the European Commission organised a seminar in Pärnu, Estonia, which brought together the first local partnerships that will implement strategies for the sustainable development of fisheries areas across Europe over the next five years. The seminar also marked the setting up of the FARNET Support Unit.

The event, called “Getting started on the ground with Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund”, attracted 125 participants from 19 different countries. On welcoming the participants, Ants Noot, General Secretary, and Toomas Kevvai, Deputy General Secretary for Rural Development and Fisheries Policy at the Estonian Ministry of Agriculture, pointed to the importance of Axis 4 for Estonia. Their country has dedicated almost one quarter of its European Fisheries Fund budget to support eight Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) to implement strategies for the sustainable development of fisheries areas. Three of these FLAGs are already up and running. Estonia has also designed

an extremely comprehensive two-stage selection and capacity building process, which is the subject of another article in this magazine, and will, no doubt, provide inspiration for other countries.

Embracing the “bottom-up” approach

During the opening session, various members of the European Commission set out their expectations for Axis 4. Ernesto Penas Lado, Director with responsibility for the Baltic Sea, North Sea and land-locked Member States at the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries,

explained that around 200 local action groups are being set up in 21 EU countries, with a total public budget of more than €800 million, to test out more sustainable strategies for the future development of fisheries areas. The distinctive feature of this important experiment, he suggested, is that it is not a recipe imposed from above. Local stakeholders from fisheries areas take responsibility for implementing strategies which they themselves have designed to fit their specific needs.

Ślawomir Tokarski, head of the unit responsible for structural policy and economic analysis, stressed that the experience and capacity required to manage such a bottom up approach takes time to develop and that it is important to draw on the experience of other successful initiatives like LEADER. He outlined some of the key steps that needed to be taken by local groups, administrations and national networks.

From sectoral to territorial objectives

Later in the proceedings, Alberto Spagnolli, head of the unit responsible for structural actions in the Baltic Sea, North Sea and landlocked Member States, set the broader context for territorial approaches within the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). He explained that major challenges such as the depletion of resources, declining production and supply to the European market, fleet overcapacity and poor profitability means that European policy must pay more attention to objectives such as diversification, economic and social prosperity, protecting the environment and improving quality of life.

In fact, the CFP is moving towards some of the wider policy perspectives covered in Europe's Integrated Maritime Policy and, at the same time, the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) is shifting from sectoral to territorial objectives. Mr Spagnolli believes that FLAGs can help to show which policies really work in different contexts and could play a more important role in influencing the design of future policies. But for this to happen, they have to show results in time to influence the European debate.

Progress slower than expected

A workshop on the state of play of Axis 4 in each country confirmed the very diverse range of approaches being adopted in terms of process, selection of groups, number and size of groups, budget levels, composition of groups, and nature and character of the areas covered.

Firstly, the setting up of the FLAGs and the development of their strategies is taking considerably longer than originally predicted. At the time of the conference, only around one third of the groups were in operation and there were only three national networks. The Commission has made it clear that all FLAGs should be operational by the second half of 2010. Facilitating this will clearly be one of the priorities of the FARNET Support Unit.

Secondly, at least two very different types of FLAGs and strategies seem to be emerging. In many of the Scandinavian countries and some West European countries, the budgets are small and, as a result these groups tend to specialise in a narrower range of fisheries related projects and rely heavily on existing experienced local partnerships. In some other Member States, however, the budgets are much larger. As a result, local strategies are likely to cover broader issues of local diversification and be managed by bigger, free-standing FLAGs.

This diversity is one of the key challenges facing the Commission and FARNET, but it also provides some opportunities to make use of existing experience to transfer to areas with less experience.

Building an effective partnership

Representatives from successful partnerships in different European countries (Jane Fowler from Scotland, Stig Hansson from Sweden, and Anastassios Perimenis from Greece) made interventions in parallel workshops which gave participants a real

opportunity to learn from practical experience in building and managing local partnerships. One general point of agreement was that the human building blocks are the key to the success of local territorial approaches. It was said that *"a good partnership can make a mediocre strategy work but a poor partnership can ruin the very best of strategies"*.

Some areas reported considerable obstacles to participation by stakeholders or the wider community. There can be a reluctance to speak, lack of experience, self interest and a lack of concern for broader projects, cynicism and suspicion. In this context, it is very important to take account of what already exists in an area and to identify and build on the elements that unite people so that actions are complementary and not in competition.

Anastassios Perimenis from Lesvos in Greece suggested that, *"this is an art as much as a science and depends on getting the right chemistry between partners. It takes time – years rather than months"*. Stig Hansson advised participants to *"start small, have wide doors and low thresholds. This gives more courage and self-esteem to the group"*.

In this context, a consistent message was the need for properly resourced capacity building programmes. Actions here include training for trainers and direct training for group members and staff on building and running a FLAG and developing a strategy. Participants insisted that it is essential for fisheries stakeholders to be involved from the beginning, but to also welcome the involvement of other stakeholders.



▲ Workshop during the seminar.

Running the group in tune with the strategy

The second day of the conference focussed more on the day to day running of the group and the role of the staff. Useful insights were provided by Chris Parkin from Scotland, Merle Adams from Estonia and Petri Rinne from Finland. In particular, one of the most interesting points to emerge was the importance of linking project selection and day to day management to the vision contained in the strategy. Even if the right procedures are in place and people have the right skills and clearly defined roles, achieving success will be difficult unless stakeholders share a common goal.

Petri Rinne reminded participants that *"the local group is not just a counter for funding projects but also an organisation that adds value by providing local expertise and support for development."* In the same vein, Merle Adams emphasised the importance of using small successes to create a common sense of purpose.

Another important consideration highlighted, is the need for Axis 4 to be complementary to other strategies and initiatives, to ensure joined-up thinking and action at local level. Chris Parkin argued that there should be one agreed overarching strategy for an area which guided all initiatives. The important thing is not which programme provides the overall strategy but that it exists, he insisted. Where Axis 4 has limited resources it might make more sense for it to fit within other initiatives but in other cases it could provide the lead.

Cooperating locally and internationally

Mr Spagnolli argued that the case for international cooperation and networking has become even stronger in recent years with increasing globalisation, accelerating technological change, climate change, increasing international regulatory frameworks, and the disarray in the international financial markets. These trends bring opportunities as well as threats but it does mean that the exchange of good practice and cooperation are important components of any local development approach.



▲ Folklore on the island of Kihnu.

He also stressed the need for cooperation and transfer of knowledge in the start-up phase, through twinning and mentoring arrangements, to meet capacity building needs of newly selected groups. Funding is available under the EFF to facilitate these activities and FARNET will produce a toolkit to help facilitate this process. Edgar Linde from Latvia, René Kusier from Denmark, and Paul Soto from the FARNET Support Unit also provided examples of how networks can bring tangible benefits at both local and transnational levels.

Reflections to take home

To close the seminar, Stephanos Samaras, head of the unit responsible for structural actions in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea at the European Commission, gave the participants three key messages to take home. Firstly, he stressed the paramount importance of all Member States having the majority of FLAGs in place, with good quality strategies, by 2010. The FARNET Support Unit will help with this but in parallel, it is essential for Member States to mobilise national technical assistance for professionally run capacity building programmes. In this sense, he suggested that the two-stage approach used in Estonia was a particularly good example for countries with little experience of local development and a lack of community organisation on the ground. This could be helped by twinning and mentoring between experienced and less experienced groups and countries.

Secondly, he warned participants of the dangers of budgets that were either too small or too large. Below a certain level, it becomes impossible to have the critical mass to develop a genuine territorial approach and the groups are not able to cover the costs of animating and administering the strategy. On the other hand, very large budgets may lead to problems of absorption with the risk of taking on poor quality investments which are unrelated to a genuine local strategy.

Thirdly, he also recommended balanced partnerships, adapted to local circumstances. The EFF Regulation recommends that more than half the actions funded by Axis 4 should be led by the private sector in order to lever private sector funds. However, care should also be taken to ensure that no one specific sector dominates and all stakeholders should have the opportunity to be involved in the capacity building process of the FLAGs. In a similar vein, it is essential to ensure that the FLAGs are managed by independent and professional managers, with clear and transparent rules and selection procedures. Project management and administration should be kept simple to avoid bureaucracy that could kill efficiency.

The final day of the conference was taken up by a wonderful field trip to the Island of Kihnu. After such hospitality and good organisation, it was clear to all that Estonia will be a key player in the sustainable development of European fisheries areas. ■

LOCAL AGENTS OF CHANGE:

Building capacity in Estonia's fisheries areas



Capacity building is a key feature of the Estonian Axis 4 programme, which has been designed around a two-stage selection process. The first stage focuses on training and animation with a view to establishing functioning groups with local development strategies.

◀ The island of Manilaid, at the entrance to the bay of Pärnu.

The Estonian Ministry of Agriculture has identified eight fisheries areas potentially eligible for Axis 4 funds. The selected areas cover an area of 15 766 km², or 36% of the country's total land area, and are home to 3 570, or 87% of Estonia's 4 100 fishermen.

The Axis 4 programme represents an important opportunity to revitalise these areas, with the Estonian government allocating some 23% of the total EFF budget to Axis 4 measures. However, realising this opportunity requires a significant cultural change in areas where there is little experience in applying for, or managing public funds, and minimal experience of cooperation within or between sectors. This is further compounded by a lack of skills that are readily transferable to other sectors and generally low levels of empowerment among fishermen.

The Estonian administration has, therefore, placed a high priority on building local capacity. In particular, a two-stage selection process was designed to allow

time for local stakeholders to learn to work together and to develop relevant skills and know-how, before progressing to programme implementation.

Eight steps to success

The approach adopted by the Estonian authorities was to develop a programme of measures, combining training, a handbook, the establishment of a Fisheries Network and the provision of direct advice and assistance. The overall approach is described by the Ministry of Agriculture in terms of Kotter's eight-step change model¹:

1. Create Urgency
2. Form a Powerful Coalition
3. Create a Vision for Change
4. Communicate the Vision
5. Remove Obstacles
6. Create Short-term Wins
7. Build on the Change
8. Anchor the Changes in Corporate Culture

Creating urgency

Motivating and instilling a sense of urgency was the main objective of an initial series of meetings and consultations with local fisheries actors. "Our very first activity in relation to Axis 4 was to introduce the draft of the national regulation to local fisheries organisations and to other stakeholders, including local governments," explained Eve Külmallik from the Estonian Ministry of Agriculture. "We travelled in every part of Estonia several times to explain this new approach. It was a sort of wake up call for fisheries areas – new opportunities are coming and there is a need to change the way of thinking."



¹ Kotter, J. (1998), Leading change: why transformation efforts fail, Harvard Business Review on Change (pages 1-20), Harvard Business School Publishing, Boston MA.

Forming a powerful coalition

Having created awareness of the Axis 4 measures, and captured the attention and interest of stakeholders, the next step was to launch a new training plan (see box), which was developed jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture, adult educators from Pärnu College, the University of Tartu and the "Acorn" Study Centre. The first two modules of the training plan (Information

Seminar and Forming an Action Group) were aimed at facilitating the establishment of the FLAGs. *"We wanted each participant to find their role in the FLAG and then to work together towards common objectives, the first of which was to establish a non-profit association,"* explained Ms Külmallik. *"We also wanted to bring out the true leaders in fisheries areas, those who would take an initiative in team building."*

Creating a vision for change

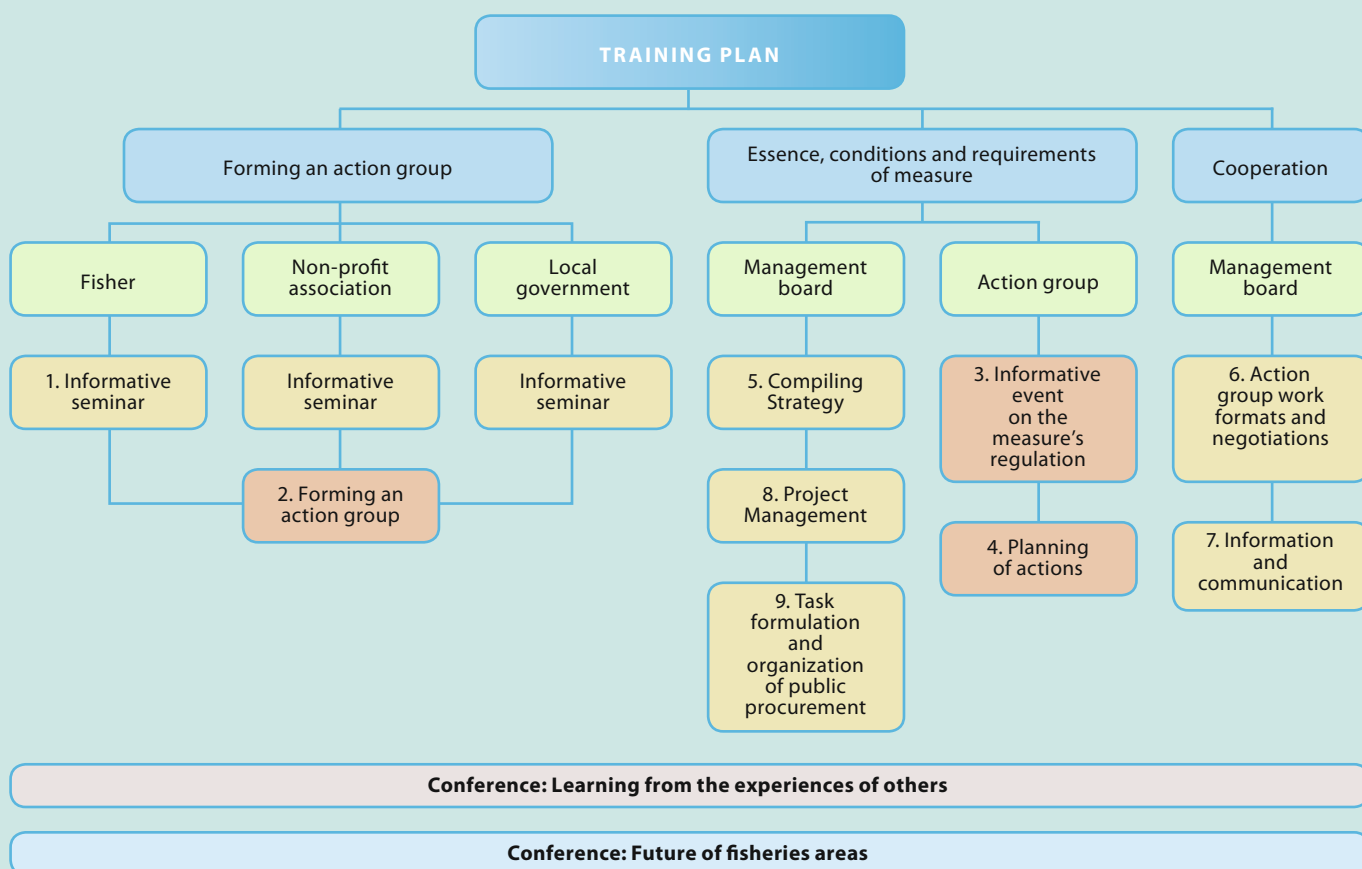
The second part of the training plan included a further five modules, which helped participants to create a vision for their areas and develop a strategy for realising this vision. During the first two modules, FLAG members prepared an action plan for the preparation of a local development strategy.

Axis 4 training plan in Estonia

The training plan focused on four key objectives, considered to be essential for the implementation of Axis 4 at local level:

1. To set-up eight Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs);
2. To train new FLAG leaders and, through them, to launch the work of the FLAGs;
3. To develop the ability of FLAG members to cooperate and the capacity of the FLAGs to function as learning organisations;
4. To create FLAG members with the know-how to develop strategies for their areas.

The training plan was designed around three distinct target groups: fishermen and other fisheries-related enterprise; representatives of local governments; and non-profit associations. Different modules were developed for each target group, as well as common modules for those who would go on to form the FLAG and, eventually, the nominees to the FLAG management boards (see Figure).



The nine modules of the training plan

The training was supported by a comprehensive handbook (66 pages), which describes the "Sustainable development of fisheries areas" measure, and explains how to form and run a FLAG, how to compile a local strategy according to the requirements laid down in the regulation, and how to implement a local strategy. It also provides examples of successful fisheries related cooperation projects.

Based on an assessment of the FLAGs and their action plans, which took place during August and September 2008, eight groups were then allocated funding (approximately €70 000 per group) to develop their strategies. This represented the first stage of the two-stage selection process.

A specific training module on “compiling a strategy” helped to guide the management boards of the selected groups through the strategy development process. During a further module on project management, each FLAG developed their own assessment and selection procedures for processing project proposals, and a module on “task formulation and organisation of public procurement” provided instruction on how to carry out public procurement and evaluate offers.

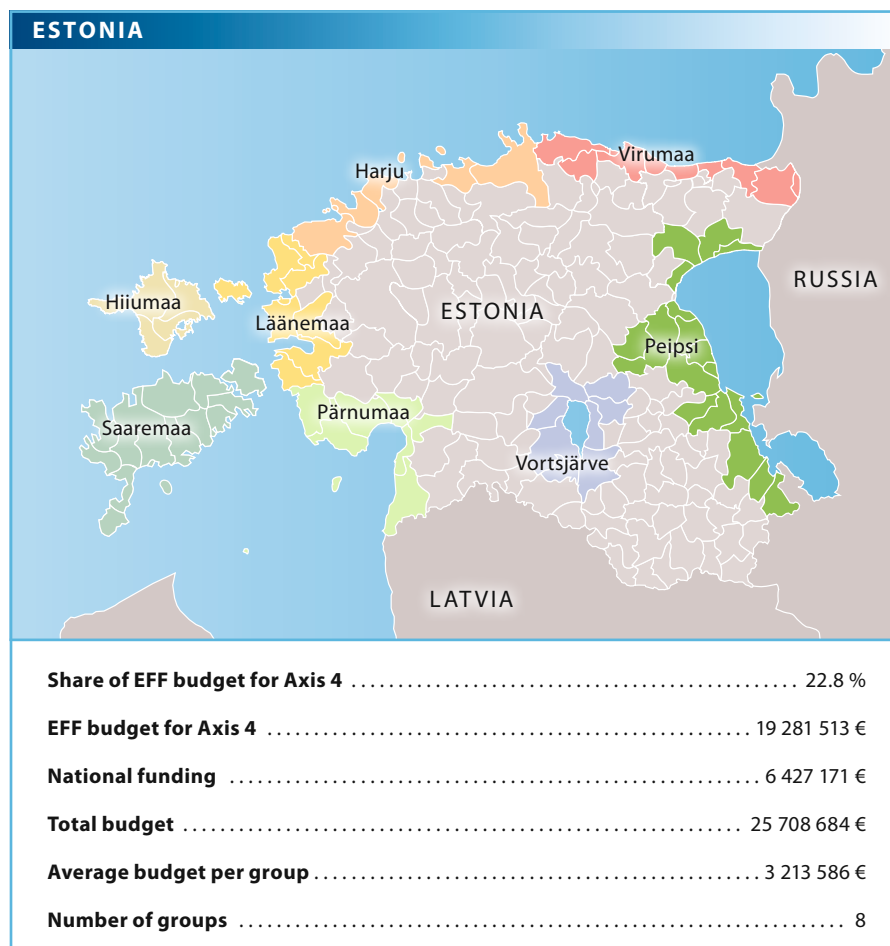
Communicating the vision and removing obstacles

The final part of the training aimed to develop the capacity of the management boards to communicate their vision to the local community and to other external interests. The modules on “action group work formats and negotiations” and “information and communication” were designed to strengthen the capacity of FLAGs to achieve this and to interact more professionally with external organisations in overcoming hurdles to implementing their strategies. “*The objective here was to help FLAGs to cope better with people who are against change and to remove barriers to realising their vision,*” said Eve Külmallik, who played in a key role in designing the training modules.

On completing the training, FLAGs were invited to submit their development strategies to the Ministry for the second stage of the selection process. The task of assessing the suitability and quality of the development strategies began in July 2009. Three groups have already had their strategies approved and began implementing their strategies in the autumn of 2009. The remaining five groups are expected to have their strategies approved by January 2010.

Creating short term wins

A priority for the fledgling FLAGs will be to achieve early successes, which will help to build confidence among the FLAG members and the wider community. Ms Külmallik believes that the module on project management has established a



good basis for this, as it helped FLAGs to develop procedures for assessing and selecting projects. “*Applying this learning in the early stages and implementing some pilot projects should ensure more successful strategy implementation,*” she suggested.

Building on and anchoring change

An underlying priority of the training plan was to prepare the FLAGs to become learning organisations and to be open to continuous improvement and learning. In this context, the Estonian Fisheries Network has already planned a future seminar about other opportunities that FLAGs can use to develop their fisheries areas (including other National and European funding opportunities).

To consolidate the process of change in local fisheries areas, and to anchor the newly established procedures and practices, the Estonian Ministry of Agriculture and the National Fisheries Network will also provide ongoing training and support to nurture the development of the FLAGs. However Eve Külmallik believes that, “*some of the newly established FLAGs already view themselves as agents of change, as organisations with an important responsibility*

for fisheries resource management in their areas, which means they are already looking to their role beyond 2013. ■

CONTACTS

Estonian Fisheries Network Office

Jaak-Velori Sadul
+372 529 3586
jaak@maainfo.ee
www.maainfo.ee

Ministry of Agriculture

Eve Külmallik
+372 625 6285
eve.kylmallik@agri.ee
www.agri.ee/

Viewpoint



"Area-based development, a new opportunity for the fisheries sector"

Xavier Gizard,

Secretary General of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR)

Fishing, in its economic, social and cultural dimensions, is one of the bases on which the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) is founded. It is largely around fishing and related activities, such as maritime safety for example, that the regions have developed their solidarity, and come together to defend shared values and to safeguard their future. Despite the sector's relatively modest economic weight in terms of employment and wealth creation, fishing represents a tradition and way of life that the maritime regions are determined to preserve and promote.

This illustrates just how important the fisheries sector is to these regions, which for many years now have organised themselves to work together, exchange experience and good practice, and build partnerships. Throughout this, the regions have always maintained relationships of trust with Community officials, based on a shared recognition of the importance of understanding the particular situation of local fishing communities that, although rendered fragile by globalisation, remain an integral part of the way of life in coastal areas.

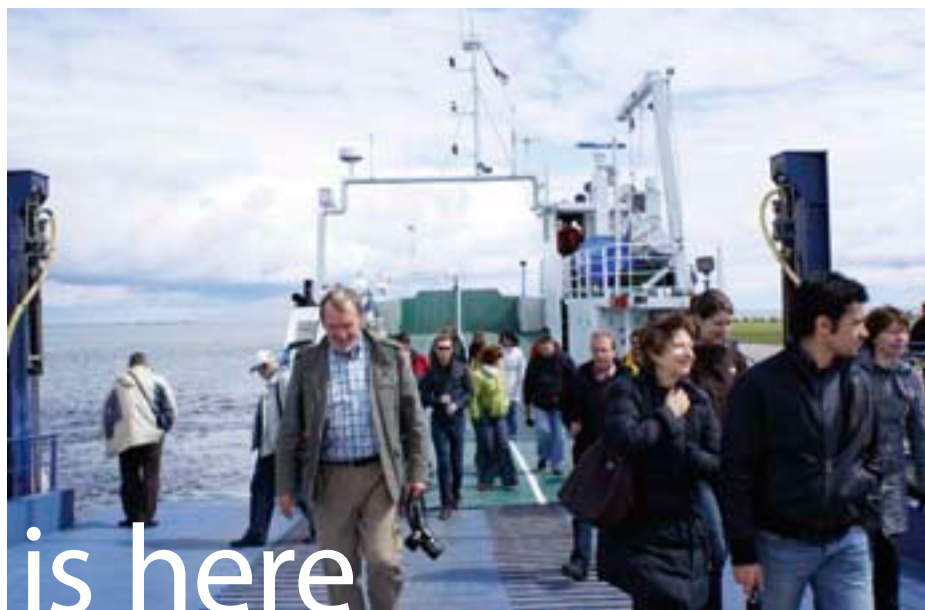
For these reasons, the CPMR welcomed with great anticipation the approach proposed by Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund, concerning the sustainable development of fisheries areas. Looking beyond the boundaries of market mechanisms and the protection of stocks, Axis 4 integrates the fisheries sector within the range of policies for regional development, thereby offering maritime regions a unique opportunity to safeguard the sector and make it more attractive to young people. Viewing the fisheries sector in the context of a more global maritime policy, without it being diluted as a result, can only be of benefit to the sector as a whole.

This is a difficult exercise as it calls into question the more traditional, sector-based approach of public policies. "Good hedges make good neighbours," is a phrase often cited to justify this former approach. Except that today, nobody can afford to live in isolation. Axis 4, by giving priority to an integrated approach to development, is innovative. It also entails risks as it is an approach that requires the support of all the actors concerned, who may not necessarily be prepared either to accept, or naturally inclined to apply such an approach as it often represents a genuine "revolution" in the way they carry out their activity.

Nevertheless, this approach offers the best opportunity to maintain and even develop fishing in coastal areas. The CPMR is firmly convinced of this and will do all it can to support this initiative, starting with an unflagging commitment to FARNET, which the European Commission has had the foresight to establish to provide support for areas set to benefit under Axis 4. The CPMR will make available to this network its extensive knowledge of fisheries areas and the experience acquired by virtue of its working groups specialising in Europe's maritime basins.

However, in mobilising this knowledge and expertise for the benefit of Axis 4, we must also be aware that it will be a long process, requiring a genuine learning approach on the part of the European Commission, the Member States, and the fisheries local action groups and their experts. Nothing would be more pernicious than to expect immediate results and to be too quick to judge the pertinence of this approach. I therefore appeal to all the public officials concerned to show patience and to act on the basis of situations as they present themselves and not as they would like them to be. ■

FARNET is here



▲ Participants in the Pärnu seminar arriving on Kihnu island.

The European Fisheries Areas Network (FARNET) Support Unit was established by the European Commission at the end of May 2009. Over the coming years this Brussels based team of ten experienced staff, backed up by twenty-one country experts, will work to strengthen the activities of all those people who believe that fisheries areas can develop a new and more sustainable future.

European fisheries and fisheries areas have been hard hit by the economic crisis, global competition and trends such as changes in fuel prices. But on top of this, they face especially grave environmental constraints. The European Commission's Green Paper on the Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) suggests that 88% of European fish stocks are being fished beyond the levels that give the highest sustainable yields and that, as a result, the size of the fleet may be two to three times that needed. Whatever one's view of these figures, it is clear that major economic, social and environmental changes are taking place in fisheries areas, and that different parts of the sector urgently need to work together with public authorities, private firms and local communities to find solutions. This is the essence and aim of the Fisheries Areas Network – FARNET.

Facing the challenges and seizing the opportunities

The advantage of the new measures for the sustainable development of fisheries areas in the European Fisheries Fund (Axis 4 of the EFF) is that they are sensitive to

the diversity and complexity of the fishing sector and its many links with the areas and communities around it. Axis 4 is based on the idea that there is no one "menu" of solutions that fits all areas – strategies must be designed "à la carte", albeit within a common framework, by those with the experience, the understanding and the commitment to solving the problem. Some challenges come from within the fisheries sector itself while others are more connected to the area (for example, remoteness or, conversely, population pressure). As a result, the most successful strategies for fisheries areas will often involve a crafted blend of sectoral and territorial measures.

However, a key question for all those involved is, how to design and develop territorial strategies and partnerships around a sector which is often (but not always) relatively small in economic and employment terms and is also often (but not always) face to face with other quite dynamic economic sectors (e.g. tourism, energy). This means fresh thinking and, above all, an innovative approach to developing the potentially strong linkages between fisheries and cultural heritage, environmental management and healthy and sustainable eating and living. There is

also an important window of opportunity for developing the role of fisheries partnerships within far broader strategies for integrated maritime policy and territorial cohesion – particularly during the next few years when nearly all EU policies will be under revision.

Creating a learning platform

The central aim of the FARNET Support Unit is to help those people who live in and/or care for fisheries areas to implement actions which explore these questions in practice.



▲ Paul Soto, director of the FARNET Support Unit, and Fokion Fotiadis, Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.

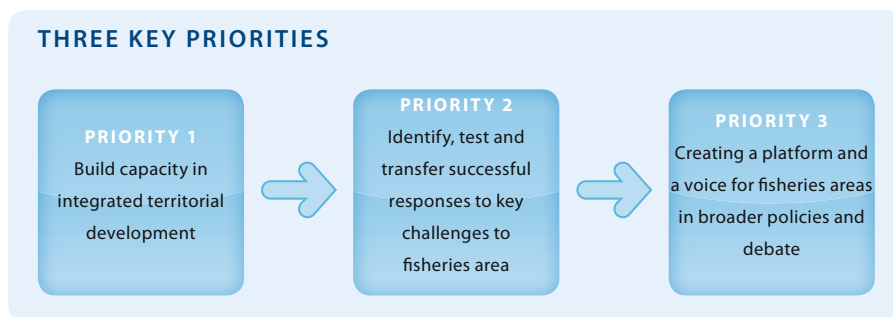
The Support Unit will assist in identifying what blend of strategies and measures work best in different contexts and what aspects can be transferred to other areas and to broader policies. The idea is to gradually build a platform which connects the growing knowledge and experience of the actors involved in FARNET – so that the network itself becomes a kind of “learning platform” for the sustainable development of fisheries areas.

In order to do this, the European Commission is funding the Support Unit to carry out seven core functions and provide three basic tools. One of the most distinctive aspects of the FARNET Support Unit is that it has a major responsibility for providing direct hands-on support for groups and administrations for the setting up and running of the programme and partnerships. Other core functions include identifying and promoting good practice, supporting transnational cooperation, analysing the state of play of Axis 4, identifying and promoting the needs of actors involved in FARNET, providing information, and ensuring good communication between national networks and administrations.

To carry out these functions the FARNET Support Unit will rely on three “core tools”: a website, based on an interactive stakeholder tool being developed within the European Commission; a series of publications, including the twice yearly FARNET Magazine, an e-newsletter every two months, and practical handbooks or dossiers on issues concerning the sustainable development of fisheries areas; and finally, it will organise a series of events, including three transnational seminars, two training seminars and one European conference per year.

Building capacity through targeted support and exchange

Just as a good local strategy is more than a simple list of measures and projects, so the Support Unit has adopted four key principles, which will guide the way it implements its activities.



1. Its activities will be based upon *listening* to the real problems and aspirations of people on the ground. Direct interaction with groups and administrations, a series of focus groups for stakeholders in the different countries and a genuine partnership with national networks will help to ensure a closeness to the real issues;
2. The Support Unit will work with territorial and thematic teams to *build capacity* on the ground by promoting learning organisations and by facilitating exchange and cooperation between actors across Europe;
3. To avoid stand-alone actions, activities (cooperation, good practices, publications, events) will be organised into *linked chains* targeted at agreed thematic and territorial priorities; and
4. Particular attention will be paid to the conditions for *transferring and extending* good practice, both horizontally to other areas and vertically into wider policies – rather than simply identifying and promoting apparent successes.

In addition to these principles, three key priorities have been agreed with the European Commission for the Support Unit's work:

During the first year, the Support Unit will concentrate heavily on its first priority of capacity building, with the aim of helping all local fisheries groups to be in place by the autumn of 2010 with high quality strategies and balanced, competent partnerships. Direct support will be targeted at those countries that are furthest behind. Similarly, transnational cooperation will focus on twinning and mentoring between more experienced and less

experienced groups, with good practice case studies, events and publications providing methodological support.

In parallel but at a lower level of intensity, the Support Unit will start on its second priority of identifying successful responses to the key challenges facing fishing communities and exploring the potential for transfer to other fisheries areas. It will take several years for the groups to be able to present hard evidence of results so in the early stages this activity will focus mainly on “promising” responses.

Finally, under the third priority, the Support Unit will start building two-way bridges between some of the innovative pilot responses promoted by Axis 4 and the broader European and national debates on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, EU Integrated Maritime Policy and Cohesion Policy and on the EU's future budget or financial perspective. This will involve creating a core group of recognised experts in these issues, producing a series of articles in the magazine and organising workshops and debates.

Activities foreseen for 2009/2010

Based on these principles and priorities, the following include some of the most important activities planned for the first year:

- > Seminars and training workshops in Estonia (June 2009), Italy (September 2009), Poland (November 2009), Romania (Spring 2010), Spain (March 2010 and on the occasion of European Maritime Day in May 2010) and the UK (early 2010);

- > A series of publications, including: a leaflet introducing the Support Unit, a guide on getting started for local groups, support material for administrations, a guide on transnational cooperation, mentoring and twinning, six newsletters and two editions of the FARNET magazine;
- > Launch of the FARNET website;
- > A report on the state of Axis 4, with factsheets on all 21 Member States involved. Focus groups in all 21 countries;
- > The establishment of communication channels and a regular series of meetings with national administrations and networks. ■



CONTACTS

The Support Unit welcomes direct contacts and visits from actors involved in fisheries areas.

FARNET Support Unit

36-38 rue Saint Laurent – B-1000 Brussels
Tel +32 2 613 26 50 – info@farnet.eu
ec.europa.eu/fisheries/farnet

FARNETwork

> **Official Launch of FARNET and first meeting of Managing Authorities**

On 15 October 2009, representatives of all 21 Managing Authorities and the national networks implementing Axis 4 were invited to Brussels to discuss how they can work together in developing effective strategies for the sustainable development of fisheries areas. This was followed by a reception addressed by Fokion Fotiadis, the Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries at the European Commission, marking the official launch of FARNET, and opening the doors of the Support Unit to all stakeholders concerned with fisheries areas.

> **Capacity building in Bulgaria**

In September, the FARNET Support Unit was actively involved in assisting in the roll-out of the Bulgarian Axis 4 programme, which was approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food on the 30 March 2009. The FARNET Support Unit provided training for national and regional ministry staff on the process of implementing Axis 4, and in late September, John Grieve from the FARNET Support Unit and Ministry representatives undertook 1-2 day visits to each designated area to inform and motivate stakeholder involvement in developing local groups and in preparing their declarations of interest.

> **Advising on the FLAG selection process in Italy**

On 17-18 September 2009, the FARNET Support Unit was invited to a seminar organised by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries for the 14 regions implementing Axis 4 of the EFF in Italy. Members of the Support Unit met with around 40 regional representatives and took them through the key steps required for selecting high quality areas, groups and strategies. Regional participants also had a chance to raise some of their problems and questions with representatives of the European Commission. This kind of event is very helpful in finding ways of overcoming some of the specific difficulties Member States are facing in implementing Axis 4 and in streamlining the calendar for setting up the groups.

FARNET Agenda

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE
October 15 2009	Official launch of FARNET	Brussels (B)
November 2009	Training seminar	Poland (PL)
	Handbook on setting up local groups	
December 2009	Launch of FARNET website	
March 2010	Transnational seminar	Spain (E)
Spring 2010	Training seminar	Romania (RO)
	Handbook on twinning, mentoring and transnational cooperation	

Profile

NAME: Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund (EFF)

OBJECTIVE: The EFF may co-finance local projects for sustainable development and improvement of the quality of life in fisheries areas, complementary to other EU financial instruments.

IMPLEMENTATION: Twenty-one Member States implement Axis 4. An important innovation in the implementation of this axis is the emphasis on the territorial approach.

TARGET AREAS: "Fisheries areas" are areas with a sea or lake shore or including ponds or a river estuary and with a significant level of employment in the fisheries sector. The Member States select the eligible areas according to the following criteria: they should be small local territories (less than NUTS 3) that are coherent from a geographical, economic and social point of view. Support should be targeted either to sparsely populated areas or those where the sector is in decline or those with small fisheries communities. Member States can add further criteria for the selection of the areas.

RECIPIENTS: "Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs)", i.e. a combination of public, private and civil society partners jointly devising a strategy and innovative measures for the sustainable development of a fisheries area. FLAGs are selected by the Member States on the basis of criteria defined in their operational programmes. It is expected that at least 200 FLAGs will be created across the EU.

ELIGIBLE MEASURES: Strengthening the competitiveness of the fisheries areas; restructuring, redirecting and diversifying economic activities; adding value to fisheries products; small fisheries and tourism infrastructure and services; protecting the environment; restoring production damaged by disasters; inter-regional and trans-national cooperation of actors; capacity building to prepare local development strategies; and the running costs of FLAGs.

NETWORK: All the stakeholders concerned with Axis 4 are organised around a "European Fisheries Areas Network (FARNET)", permitting wide dissemination (through seminars, meetings and publications) of innovative projects implemented for the benefit of fisheries areas and fostering transnational cooperation. The network is coordinated by the "FARNET Support Unit".

DURATION OF THE PROGRAMME: six years (2007-2013) for approving projects, although payments can continue to be made until 31st December 2015.

EUROPEAN UNION ASSISTANCE: Priority Axis 4 has a budget of €567 million of EFF funding for the period 2007-2013, to which must be added national public co-funding and private investment. It represents just over 13% of the overall EFF budget.

Subscribe

To receive the FARNET magazine or the FARNET newsletter, please send your contact details (name, organisation, address, e-mail and phone number) to: info@farnet.eu

Send us your news

FARNET publications are resources for all those engaged in building a more sustainable future for Europe's fisheries areas. Please send us news and information on your activities which might be of interest to other groups or actors working in this field. In particular, we would like to hear about your successes and achievements, important events and announcements, and also your ideas or proposals for exchanges or cooperation with other fisheries areas.

info@farnet.eu

ISSN 1831-5720



9 771831 572004



Publications Office



European Commission
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries