



# “Sailing Towards 2020”



2-3 March 2015

## Conference Report

**Over 450 participants (FLAGS, managing authorities, EFF Axis 4 project promoters, EU, national and regional officials, fisheries organisation representatives, NGOs, academics...) gathered at DG MARE’s “Sailing Towards 2020” conference held in Brussels on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2015.**

The event was organised to support the transition between the 2007-2013 and the 2014-2020 programming periods, aiming to showcase the results achieved by Axis 4 of the EFF as well as exploring the role that Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGS) can play to address broader challenges facing fisheries and coastal communities in the future. The conference consisted of 3 plenary sessions, 5 thematic workshops, over 30 thematic discussion tables, along with an exhibition of 42 projects supported by Axis 4 of the EFF in 2007-2013.



### DAY 1

#### ***Opening plenary session***

The conference was opened in plenary by **Mr. Karmenu Vella, European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries**. In his opening speech, he highlighted the impressive achievements of Axis 4 between 2007 and 2013, with over 800 million euros of public money allocated to strategies supported by 312 FLAGS in 21 Member States. Over 10 000 projects selected by the FLAGS had contributed to the creation of some 8 000 jobs and the maintaining of a further 12 500 and helped establish 220 new small businesses. This, he said, demonstrates how the European Union can help and encourage local communities. He ended by saying “Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) in coastal communities is the way forward”.

Mr. Vella’s introduction was followed by three high-level speakers: Renata Briano, Italian MEP and Vice-Chair of the EP Committee on Fisheries; Normunds Riekstins, Director of the Fisheries Department of the Ministry of Agriculture of Latvia; and Eleni Marianou, Secretary General of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR). This was then followed by a panel discussion with questions from the audience.

**Renata Briano**, expressed her appreciation of the participative, bottom-up approach of CLLD. She also said she would like to see FLAGS established around the whole EU coastline and hoped that institutions at all levels would recognise them as important governance actors. She added that it is crucial to change the image of fishermen who are often seen primarily as the main cause of environmental damage, rather than the victims that they often are.

**Normunds Riekstins**, representing the Latvian EU Presidency, said that FLAGS and representatives of the fishing industry must work together on a permanent basis to keep fisheries alive, to strengthen links between fishing and other business activities of the area and to increase the attractiveness of fisheries areas. He also stressed the importance of attracting the younger generation to the fishing profession, adding he would like FLAGS to focus on projects with “the smell of fish”.

**Eleni Marianou** from CPMR recalled the impact of the recent crisis on coastal and fisheries areas and the need for all actors to work together to support the creation of jobs directly and indirectly linked to fisheries and aquaculture. The start of the new funding period is a good time to capitalise on lessons learnt in the past and to take the opportunity of different funding streams available for local development. FLAGS, she insisted, can play a key role in developing smart synergies between different sectors and thus create new markets and new services.

During the panel discussion, responding to a question from the floor about the need for a stronger integration at EU level of the different funding streams available for CLLD, the Commissioner said that the different Commission services are working towards a better integration of different sectors and funds, and his own portfolio, which includes environment and fishing, could be an example of such integration.



This opening session also gave participants a taste of Axis 4 on the ground through the screening of two project videos. The [first video](#) illustrated a Finnish project from Kainuu-Koillismaa which had brought fishermen, aquaculture producers and processors together to develop the Kalatalo fish handling centre. The [second video](#) showed a Spanish project from the Huelva FLAG which had invested in developing fresh fishmeal for aquaculture from unsold fish from the local fish auction.

### ***Interactive exhibition: 42 projects in support of sustainable communities***

The first plenary was followed by an exhibition of Axis 4 projects. [42 projects](#) from around Europe



were presented at a series of 40 stands by the project promoters themselves and the FLAGS that had supported them. They had been selected from 200 local development projects submitted and grouped into 8 thematic clusters: shortening supply chains; adding value locally; enhancing the environment; improving the image of fisheries; linking fisheries with tourism; developing new activities from fisheries; making fishing areas attractive; and investing in people.

Participants had a chance to exchange with the different project promoters and FLAGS to understand the actions that had been undertaken, the challenges and opportunities they addressed as well as the results and lessons drawn from the different projects. European Commissioner, [Mr Karmenu Vella](#), also took the opportunity to visit the exhibition and witness first-hand the work of the FLAGS.



The exhibition also involved a chance for delegates to vote on their favourite projects, based on the added value they believed the projects had delivered to their local community, either in terms of economic benefits, environmental benefits or social benefits. And the winners, announced at the walking dinner in the evening, were...

- Economic prize: [Currican artisanal canning](#), Spain
- Environmental prize: [Aquamar, water quality](#), Poland
- Social prize: [Fish training for chefs](#), Poland

The exhibition also offered an [interactive poster area](#) where all participating FLAGS could share and comment on material, as well as a [“FARNET movie box”](#), which screened 8 FLAG-made films, selected from over 80 videos submitted by FLAGS.

Viewers had a chance to vote on the best FLAG-made video, to be announced on day 2 in the “Neptune” awards. The winning video was screened in plenary and the awards presented by Ms Lowri Evans, Director General, DG MARE. The gold, silver and bronze winners went to...

- [“Cabaz do Mar”](#), a short chain marketing scheme from Portugal
- [Supporting fishermen 2.0](#), two direct sales projects using ICTs and social media in Italy
- [Embarquez avec pesca](#), a project to promote pesca-tourism in France.

### ***“Networking on Vitamins” thematic table discussions***

Participants then moved to one of 40 thematic tables of their choice to delve deeper into themes of specific interest. These tables were also grouped in clusters, corresponding to those of the exhibition and included themes ranging from direct sales, to obtaining environmental certification, to renewable fishing fuel and pesca-tourism. Around 30 of the proposed themes were taken up in discussions, allowing participants to explore ideas and make contacts which other FLAGS and delegates with a similar interest. A number of these discussions also led to [proposals for future cooperation](#).



## ***Potential for new horizons***

The day was concluded by **Ernesto Penas Lado, Director for Policy Development and Coordination, DG MARE**. He said that the future success of CLLD in fisheries areas depends on finding new paths of growth beyond the current scope of Axis 4. He mentioned, in particular, the opportunities of connecting the fisheries sector to its land base, supporting more innovative actions, tapping into Blue Growth, sustainable sources of energy and mitigating climate change, as well as creating jobs and fighting against poverty and exclusion. He also pointed out the new perspectives offered by the possibility of multi-funded CLLD strategies, since the EMFF alone cannot address all the challenges facing fisheries and coastal communities. He insisted, however, that it can act as a lever to explore new, more ambitious ideas. Finally, he encouraged feedback from Axis 4 stakeholders, saying that the European Commission wants to hear what has worked and what hasn't, and what the EC can do to support them.



## **DAY 2**

In her opening address for Day 2, **Elisa Roller, Head of Unit A3: Structural Policy and Economic Analysis, DG MARE**, recalled that when first launched, Axis 4 may have seemed unrealistic or even utopian compared to the more traditional forms of sectoral, top-down approaches to development. However, the programme has been successful and now the time has come for a “qualitative leap forward”. Ms Roller called for strategies to be more ambitious, innovative and cover a broader scope. Indeed, after several years of operation, she pointed out, FLAGS now have a better understanding of their areas’ strengths and weaknesses and should be focusing on maximising the added value of the territorial approach.

Ms Roller said competitiveness, added value and diversification remain important goals, but that they need to be placed in a new context. She mentioned five new challenges which also bring new opportunities for the development of coastal communities, and which would be the focus of discussions on the second day of the conference. These five challenges are:



- The local consequences of the reform of the CFP.
- Raising awareness of the potential of “Blue Growth” and the innovation potential it could bring to coastal communities.
- Climate change and the need to shift towards a low-carbon and more climate-resilient economy.
- The absolute necessity to create employment and to combat poverty, with job insecurity and unemployment having increased significantly in many territories.
- Capitalising on the opportunities opened up by the multi-fund approach to Community-Led Local Development.

Each of these topics was briefly presented by an expert and the participants split into five working groups to develop creative ways for FLAGS to address these challenges, as well as proposing recommendations for managing authorities on how to facilitate this.

## ***Messages for the future***

During the feedback session, the key messages from the five working groups were presented by members of the FARNET Support Unit and commented on by a panel of five stakeholders representing different levels of Axis 4 implementation: **Elisa Roller** from DG MARE; **Pierre Hébert**, Head of Bureau of Structural Policy, Directorate for Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture, France; **Nicolas Fernandez Muñoz**, Cádiz-Estrecho FLAG and Secretary of Conil Fishing Organisation, Spain; **Giuseppe Scordella**, Adriatico Salentino FLAG, Italy; and **Joy Collins**, Hastings FLAG, UK.



Some of the key messages from the discussions, including some for the managing authorities were as follows:

**The local consequences of the reform of the CFP** (Expert: Rosa Chapela, rapporteur: Gilles van de Walle)

- Discards is a big issue for the FLAGs but they need guidance and examples as to what they can do in that field.
- FLAGs will continue to involve the fishermen in the marketing of the catch.
- EMFF programming and CFP reform implementation need to speed up.

Elisa Roller agreed that the reform had taken a long time to agree with Member States but that it was now time to proceed quickly. She encouraged managing authorities to go ahead with rolling out the programmes even if the OPs have not yet been approved, and to make sure there will be no gap between the two periods. Pierre Hébert added that several issues are now incorporated in a single fund which makes discussions more complicated.

**“Blue Growth”** (Expert: Christoph Le Visage, rapporteur: Yves Champetier)

- FLAGs are well aware of the potential of Blue Growth and are already undertaking several activities (training, etc.) in that direction.
- FLAGs can and should be much more involved in coastal development.
- Promote FLAGs as hubs to connect and empower Blue Growth actors.

Pierre Hébert reminded the audience that Blue Growth goes far beyond economic issues; it is also a cultural and social matter. Yves Champetier added that FLAGs must be partners in Blue Growth decisions and projects, as they are guardians of the fisheries identity of the territory and this identity must not be lost.

**Climate change** (Expert: Bill Slee, rapporteur: John Grieve)

- There is a clear recognition among FLAGs of the importance of climate change for fisheries areas.

- Many ideas emerged in the discussion (biofuel for boats, the positive role that carp ponds can play in water management etc.)
- FLAGs could facilitate awareness-raising and networking and help build a toolkit for engagement.
- National administrations should adopt climate change legislation.

Giuseppe Scordella added that his FLAG is active in studying new species entering the Mediterranean Sea due to climate change. Nicolas Fernandez Munoz added that fisheries communities are willing to co-manage natural resources but they feel alone. According to Pierre Hébert, we must find the right balance between local development and sustainable development and be aware of potential collateral effects.

**Creating employment and combating poverty** (Expert: Michel Laine, rapporteur: Monica Veronesi Burch)

- There is still much potential in the fisheries sector to create employment, in particular by adding value to local products.
- It is necessary to improve the image of fisheries and related activities, and make them more attractive to young people.
- Delivery systems need to be simpler and more flexible to facilitate FLAGs to support effective local development.

Joy Collins pointed to fishers as heroes in her local community and explained how they have brought them together with local education bodies to mentor and offer role models for unemployed youth. Nicolas Fernandez Munoz insisted that the fisheries sector offers poor economic opportunities, so there is a great need for diversification. He highlighted the coastal route that has been developed in his FLAG area, the [Millennium Tuna Route](#), linking fisheries, tourism, cultural and natural heritage, as a good way to support diversification while capitalising on local fisheries.

**The multi-fund approach to CLLD** (expert: Ryszard Kaminski, rapporteur Urszula Budzich-Tabor)

- A creative pilot project with integrated project funding could help showcase the opportunities for FLAGs to use the multi-fund approach to CLLD
- Ideally there would be a single strategy, a single application procedure and a single, online reporting system.
- The need for less bureaucracy, more harmonized rules, more trust!

Elisa Roller pointed out that from the EMMF OPs received so far, there is some good news about multi-funding opportunities, but also some bad news. Managing authorities, she reported, have tended to see the coordination of fisheries CLLD with rural CLLD (under the EAFRD) as very appropriate but CLLD plans for the ERDF and ESF have emerged to a much lesser extent.

## **Conclusions**

**Director-General of DG MARE, Ms Lowri Evans**, concluded the Sailing Towards 2020 conference by pointing to the steep learning curve that FLAGs and managing authorities had undergone and the significant capacity building that had taken place to make Axis 4 a success. She then went on to highlight a series of key messages:

The EMFF operational programmes (OPs) received by the Commission show that Member States are taking Community-Led Local Development seriously. Early estimates suggest that many Member

States are planning to allocate approximately **10-15% of their EMFF budget to CLLD**, which could see increased budgets for the 2014-2020 period.

However, the late adoption of the Fund has meant delays in the submission and therefore in approval of the OPs. Ms Evans insisted on the importance that existing EFF FLAGs maintain their dynamic to see through the transition to the EMFF. This means that **managing authorities need to work hard to ensure that the calls for proposals begin now**. Waiting for the adoption of the programmes is not a precondition, Ms Evans insisted, congratulating those Member States that had launched their calls for FLAGs even before the adoption of their programmes.

Ms Evans then turned her attention to future objectives, and in particular **better delivery of the programme**:

- The need to study the implementation challenges carefully to see what can be improved.
- The importance of clarifying the delivery roles of the managing authorities and FLAGs (the new legislative framework should help but more work is still needed at the level of each Member State).
- Ensuring greater diversity in the local partnerships – she reminded participants that the local partnerships can no longer be dominated by a single interest group, even though the fisheries sector will continue to play a central role in FLAGs and it was important not to lose these stakeholders in the move towards better balanced partnerships.
- Supporting better quality projects. While the challenges in 2007-2013 were setting up the FLAGs and building awareness and capacity, the challenge for 2014-2020 will be on ensuring better quality projects, which have added value and concrete results.

Finally, Ms Evans pledged the **ongoing commitment of the European Commission**, highlighting a number of key actions:

- Continued support to bring together stakeholders as a network, allowing the exchange of good practices and innovative ideas between peers from all around Europe.
- Engagement with the other Funds to ensure that Community-Led Local Development is taken up by all European Structural and Investment Funds.
- Ongoing dialogue with Member States and the FLAGs to learn from their experience and try as far as possible to introduce ways to simplify delivery, promote better access to the Funds by beneficiaries and to ensure good value for money through quality projects on the ground.

#### Video Conclusions



#### Event Video

