

How to encourage and select good quality local strategies¹

What do the regulations say?

The EFF Regulation says:

- “The groups shall propose and implement an *integrated local* development strategy based on “a *bottom up* approach in agreement with the managing authority” (Article 45.2)
- “The operations under the local development strategy shall be *chosen by the local group* and shall correspond to the (*list of eligible*) measures.”
- “The majority of the operations shall be led by the private sector” (Article 45.4)”

The Implementing Regulation also adds that the strategy must:

- “be integrated, be based on the interaction between actors, sectors and operations and go beyond a *mere collection of operations or a juxtaposition of sectoral measures*”
- “be consistent with the needs of fisheries areas particularly in socioeconomic terms”,
- “prove its sustainability”,
- “be complementary to other interventions made in the area concerned” (all IR Article 24)
- The criteria (in the regulations) “shall constitute a minimum and may be supplemented by specific national criteria”.
- “The procedures shall be transparent, provide adequate publicity and ensure competition where applicable, between the groups putting forward local development strategies.” (IR Article 23.5a)

What to look for in a high quality strategy?

- Does the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the area (SWOT) really take account of long term needs, challenges, threats and opportunities (who has carried out this analysis and how, what is the quality of the supporting information about fundamental changes in fishing, the main economic sectors, the environment and the social make up of the area)
- Does this analysis reflect the opinion of the main actors in fishing communities and other stakeholders? How have they been involved in designing the plan? (one way information, formal consultation of views, involvement in working groups preparing the plan, negotiation of priorities, objectives, budgets.....). Have the opinions of the weaker members of fishing communities been taken into account?
- Is there a shared vision of the future of the area and of the priority axes for development? Does this vision respond to the main challenges faced by fishing communities and areas?
- Do priorities and objectives of the local development strategy reflect the needs of the territory, the vision?
- Are the actions and the resources assigned to them sufficient to achieve the priorities and objectives in the strategy.

¹ Advice given in the official working document prepared for the conference on the implementation of Axis 4, “The sustainable Development of Fisheries Areas”, held on 25-27 January 2007 in Seville, Spain. Full document: http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/meetings_events/events/archives/events_2007/250107/working_doc_en.pdf

- Are there methods and systems of coordination which ensure synergy with the other axes of the EFF and with other Community Instruments to obtain maximum leverage for the area?
- Can this strategy be sustainable in the sense that private and public actors are committed to develop it over the long term? Have the risks of failure and conditions of success been assessed realistically?

It should be noted that early results from the intermediate evaluation of other programmes points to the fact that it is important to go beyond formal, paper compliance with these kind of criteria towards implementing them in reality on the ground.

What to avoid?

- A purely mechanical SWOT analysis which simply lists some of the most obvious “symptoms” of the problems faced by an area
- A formal consultation exercise where local people are invited to a public meeting and “informed” about the plan.
- No real vision of the long term future of the area or a vision which only reflects dominant interests (property....)
- The objectives of the strategy simply repeat those in the EFF regulation. There are no clear priorities set
- There is simply a list of unrelated actions and the funds assigned to them do not correspond to the priorities.
- There is potential overlapping and duplication of actions funded by different programmes. There are no methods or forums within the area to ensure an effective division of labour and complementarity between actors and programmes.
- There is a very high risk that the pilot activities will not be adopted by mainstream actors in or outside the area