

GROUP 7: RIA DE VIGO –A GUARDA. GALICIA (ES-11), SPAIN AXIS 4 OF THE EUROPEAN FISHERIES FUND (EFF)

1.- Presentation and distinctive features of the territory

The Group Ría de Vigo-A Guarda, nº 7 covers the south coast of Galicia (NW Spain) including a total of 10 counties of the Vigo Bay and Baixo Miño: Cangas, Moaña, Vilaboa, Soutomaior, Redondela, Nigrán, Baiona, Oia, O Rosal, A Guarda.

The total coastline of these counties is 137 km and together they have a population of 135 720 inhabitants (4% of the Galician population), spread over an area of 404.4km². This area has one of the highest dependencies on the fisheries sector in Galicia as well as one of the highest rates of population density (336 inhabitants per km²– compared to the regional average of 93.75).

The historical context frames the industrial development of this area, characterized by three activities: fishing, the marine industry and the automobile industry. But mainly, the area is defined by the existence of a strong marine-industry cluster. In fact, fisheries activities act as an employment generator, with 11.3% of the active population working on a broad range of activities from small-scale to long distance fishing fleets as well as in shellfish gathering and aquaculture activities. Furthermore in counties such as Cangas and A Guarda employment in fisheries reaches almost 20% of the active population.

Nevertheless, other sectors such as tourism are also relevant, due to the geographical conditions of the area: a high number of beaches and tourist attractions, several outstanding natural parks and protected areas and up to 12 yachting harbours. And yet, Vigo's Bay is Galicia's most industrialized area: shipbuilding, canning and other marine industries together with the car industry have been the driving force of economic growth in this area.

Within the area covered by the FLAG there are seven Fishermen Organizations (Cofradías de Pescadores), and the area is organized into four marine districts with a total of ten fishing harbours. The fleet consists of 824 fishing boats: mainly small-scale fishing boats (631), aquaculture boats for mussels' rafts (111), coastal fishing boats (19) and long-distance fishing boats (37). Noteworthy in the above figures the clear prevalence of the small-scale fishing fleet, characterized by a family system of ownership which implies direct benefits from fishing boats. Additionally, shellfish gathering employs 2,198 workers (412 with fishing boats, and 533 gathering directly).

Another key aspect of the area, directly linked to the fishing activity, is the existence of important maritime heritage – both material and immaterial - from cultural facilities (marine houses, salting facilities, shipbuilding, lighthouses, etc.) to oral tradition and the presence of associations focused on recovering the maritime heritage and the traditional fishing boats.

Undoubtedly the maritime heritage is a socio-economic resource which can create employment and wealth in coastal communities through strategies of conservation, revalorization and the increase of knowledge and social sensitivity towards heritage.



2. Analysis of the territory

The fishing fleet in this area is facing serious difficulties derived from three key factors: a) the constant increases in imports; b) low prices for primary produce; and c) increases in operating costs, especially those linked to fuel. This decreasing viability of fishing and in particular of small scale activities including shellfish gathering, threatens their continuation and as such the livelihood of a significant proportion of the population in this area.

Moreover, the area has been particularly affected by the industrial restructuring of the last decades, and employment in the fisheries sector has recorded an almost 30% reduction over the last 20 years. Income levels in the FLAGs territory remain below the regional average and many employment activities such as fishing and tourism are temporary or seasonal contracts (42.8% of contracts compared to 36.6% at regional level). Women are disproportionately employed under short term contracts with over 51% of their contracts being temporary.

The area's high population density and the significant urbanisation and industrial pressure it faces have implied a serious environmental impact on the coastal and marine environment in the Ría de Vigo-A Guarda area. Poor water treatment systems and management of waste products from maritime activities have increased the problem of pollution which is not only responsible for the depletion of fisheries resources but also affects the value of such products.

As a whole, individualism prevails within the fisheries sector. Poaching has a strong presence and there is a lack of experience in incorporating fishery actors (which is a steadily aging section of society) into local decision making processes or the implementation of new initiatives of diversification. In this scenario, it is clearly necessary to diversify activities towards other alternatives or activities complementary to fishing that could increase the income of fishing professionals and the inhabitants of the coastal area in general.

In the context of these threats and weaknesses, the following strengths and opportunities have been detected:

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good natural environment, diversity and high quality of the seafood products with strong market demand. • Organizational and management experience of fisheries and its activities. • Perception by consumers of the high quality of the products of Vigo's Bay. • Perfect natural conditions for the development of aquaculture (mussels). • Skilful professional work by fishing net workers and shellfish gatherers. • Growing population • Certain sections of the population with high level of training and/or research. • Presence of important research centres such as the University of Vigo and the CSIC (centre for scientific research). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercialization strategies led by the sector which could help increase the added value of products. Exploitation of sub products and new species not commercialized until now. • Growing diversification in the demand of fisheries products. • New management plans and new commercial species. • Experience in the regeneration of productive areas. • Public funding for the fishing sector and coastal development. • New cultures and knowledge due to new residents in the area. • Potential to apply environmental technology to enhance the environmental quality of the area. • Potential to take advantage of natural and cultural resources while developing the area's tourism potential



3. Strategic actions

The SWOT analysis of this area has led to the development of certain priorities which will guide the projects implemented by this Group.

The overall strategy has a **strong marine focus** and is based on the premise of *The Sea as the Heritage of Coastal Communities*. It recognises that fishing activities, along with industry and services linked to the sea represent an important share of the economy of the territory of the FLAG, which in recent years is being threatened by market trends, regulation and the impact of the human activity on ecosystems. The strategy focuses on the development of the potential of the area and its cultural and technological richness, as well as its productive diversity.

In particular the strategy is aimed at:

- the preservation of the economy of the fisheries sector by strengthening its competitiveness and the improvement of the productive potential (33% of the budget)
- preserving and improving the environmental quality of its ecosystem (29.5% of the budget)
- the search for diversification alternatives, in particular those that valorise the areas's cultural heritage (15% of the budget)
- It also looks to promote a more participative approach to local development and resource management while strengthening equal opportunities and social cohesion. Interestingly, 10% of the budget is dedicated to communication and awareness-raising.

Priority Axis 1: Strengthening the competitiveness of the marine sector: fishing, shellfish gathering and aquaculture: to maintain the productivity of the sea by improving commercialization strategies and searching for new ways of sustainable valorisation of marine resources.

Goals:

- To contribute to maintaining and increasing of incomes.
- To contribute to job retention.
- To contribute to the strengthening of social and economical links between the sectors present in the coastal areas.

A budget of €1 227 600 (33% of the total budget of the FLAG) for an average of 15 projects.

Examples of projects:

- Strategies of commercialization of seafood products.
- Market studies of seafood products within the group area.
- Creation of a joint commercialization system (joint point of sale, involving several entities of the sector)
- Valorisation of new species and seafood products.

Priority Axis 2: Economic promotion: the creation of employment and economic opportunities through diversification.

Goals:

- To contribute to the creation of employment.
- To achieve generational replacement in sectors linked to the fishing and the maritime-industry.

The budget for this strategy is €558 000 (15% of the total budget).





Examples of projects:

- Comprehensive valorisation of the maritime heritage (e.g. inventory of heritage).
- Recovery of a "boat with cultural interest" for training in navigation, environmental awareness and maritime culture.

Priority Axis 3: To improve natural environment and environmental quality: To promote strategies to increase the knowledge of coastal and marine ecosystems in order to promote regeneration, environmental conservation and sustainability of productive activities.

Goals:

- To contribute to the maintenance of the productive potential of the sea.
- To contribute to improving environmental quality and habitat conservation.
- To contribute to the maintenance of employment and income of maritime sector.
- To contribute to strengthening social and economic ties among sectors.
- To contribute to raising the environmental awareness of the population.

20 projects are planned with a total budget of €1 907 400 (29.5% of the total)

Examples of projects:

- Recovery of the bottom of the Bay and improvement of shellfish areas productivity.
- Environmental evaluation of marine environment of Vigo's Bay for a Galician marine strategy: AVALMAR.

Priority Axis 4: To promote the upgrading of maritime heritage as a way towards social cohesion and new employment opportunities.

Goals:

- To contribute to the maintenance of cultural heritage in general.
- To contribute to the maintenance and creation of employment.
- To contribute to social cohesion and intergenerational communication.
- To contribute to the strengthening of social and economic ties among sectors.

A total of €558 000 (15% of the total budget) are used to develop an average of 15 projects.

Priority Axis 5: Promotion of cooperation and equal opportunities: Fixing sectoral and inter-territorial cooperation as a tool for developing coastal areas and promoting the integration and participation of disadvantaged collectives into the different spheres of social and economic life.

Goals:

- To contribute to social cohesion and intergenerational communication.
- To contribute to training and socio-economic integration of collectives.
- To contribute to creation of employment and income.

A total of €93 000 (8.3% of the total budget) for almost 7 projects.



Priority Axis 6: To contribute to social revitalization and participatory management of economic development: Social participation is considered as the main engine for territorial development and the search for alternative measures to improve the quality of life in local towns; to show population the collection of heritage and environmental wealth; training in local planning; exchange of successful experiences, reinforcing cohesion ties, education and habitat enjoyment.

Goals:

- To contribute to social cohesion and intergenerational communication.
- To contribute to training and socio-economic integration of collectives.
- Employment creation.

Part of the budget devoted to “Dissemination, awareness-raising and training of Coastal Action Groups” is used to achieve these objectives: €372 000 (10% of the total budget)

Projects examples:

- Employment of audiovisual tools to assist local development.

4. Structure of partnership and involvement of local actors

The Ría de Vigo-Baixo FLAG partnership was set up by bringing together those entities interested in participating through the creation of a working group made up of the O Morrazo Foundation, the O Baixo Miño Foundation, the Mancomunidad of Vigo (collection of municipalities), Cemma, the Fishermen’s association of Cangas and the Cangas Local Development Agency.

The process was gradual and included representatives from the following sections of society: fisheries sector, environment, women, trade unions, entrepreneurs, culture.

To develop the FLAG’s strategic plan a “technical commission” was set up, which included representatives from the following entities:

- Local Development Foundation “O Morrazo” (Public foundation to boost cooperation between the public and private sector in order to promote the local economic resources of the area)
- Local Development Foundation “O Baixo Miño”
- Mancomunidade (collection of municipalities) de Vigo
- County de Nigrán
- Cemma (Coordinator for the Study of Marine Mammals)
- Association of Swordfish in A Guardia
- ORPAGU (Long-line Fisheries Association)
- Cies Artesans Cooperative
- Technical team of the professional fishing organisations of Baiona, Redondela, Arcade, Moaña
- Association of Pedra Oliveira de Vilaboa’s shell fish gatherers
- People responsible for the professional fishing organisations de Baiona, Aldán e Cangas e
- Ría de Vigo Association of mussel farmers



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