



farnet

MAGAZINE



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Cover: Artist Retoque Retro from the "Mar de Fábula. Unha viaxe de 5 anos" ("Mar de Fábula. A 5-year trip") Exhibition. Mar de Fábula is an association dedicated to collect garbage from beaches. They collaborate with local artists who turn this trash into art to show the great amount of garbage that the sea returns.

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The Opole region in south-west Poland is a land of aquaculture, and an area where the FLAG is a major contributor to local development: benefiting fish farmers, anglers, restaurateurs, tourism and cultural operators, but also municipalities, residents, the environment and cultural heritage.



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The circular economy has become a buzzword of late, but it is time now to put words into action. Moving towards a circular economy is increasingly recognised as a necessary step to ensuring the sustainability of human activities – and fisheries and aquaculture are no exception.



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Sometimes stepping out of one's usual environment or into someone else's shoes can give a new perspective or sense of priorities. FLAGs might want to bear this in mind when considering whether it makes sense to initiate cooperation with other groups.



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The proposals for the new regulations beyond 2020 are currently being discussed. This is a good time, therefore, to reflect on what we have learned so far regarding the support provided by community-led local development (CLLD) under the EMFF.





Editorial

“Everywhere, FLAGs are making a difference by creating ‘virtuous cycles’”

In 2018, all the 368 FLAGs across the EU are finally in place. The process of selecting the last FLAGs has taken time but significantly less time than in the 2007-2013 period! This shows how much learning has taken place both at the level of the FLAGs and of the managing authorities since the CLLD approach in fisheries areas was first introduced under the EFF 10 years ago.

The reports in this issue are taking us from the wind-swept isles off the northernmost coast of Ireland to the ponds, lakes and traces of pre-historic monsters in the Opole region of south-western Poland, and to the bustling fishing ports of the Basque Coast in France. Everywhere, FLAGs are making a difference by creating “virtuous cycles”, where a small amount of funding (seed money, in the words of Seamus Bovard from the FLAG North in Ireland), combined with initiative, enthusiasm and volunteer work, can boost business within or outside fisheries and aquaculture, enhance the environment and strengthen other sectors of blue economy at the local level.

Recent FARNET work has shown that many FLAGs across the EU have been active in promoting sustainable management of local resources. A new challenge they are preparing to face is a transition to a more circular economy; an economy in which the value of products and materials is maintained for as long as possible and in which, thanks to re-use, recycling and synergies with other producers, waste and resource use are minimized. Some FLAGs already support projects aiming to recycle organic fish waste or old fishing gear, stimulate industrial symbiosis or raise awareness about sustainable local sourcing. Important synergies can be achieved when the circular economy is combined with social innovation to achieve both social and environmental ends, as for example in the Basque Coast FLAG, where the FARNET seminar on the circular economy will be organised in November 2018.

While it is generally accepted that FLAGs contribute significantly to their area's development, it is not always easy to measure the scale of this contribution or to demonstrate it with evidence. All FLAGs must evaluate the progress of their local development strategies, as well as their own work (community animation,

project selection, etc.). An interview with three experienced managers of LAGs and FLAGs shows that evaluation does not have to be complex and burdensome but can be a useful (and even enjoyable!) exercise, if well designed and started early on. The recently published handbook for LAGs and FLAGs on evaluating CLLD, developed jointly by the FARNET and FAME Support Units, provides many examples of simple to use, practical evaluation tools.

The different reportages highlight the inventiveness at work in different areas. Cooperation is a way to share the knowledge gained at local level with other communities and it does not have to be complicated: examples highlighted in the cooperation article show that it is best to start with simple activities developed jointly with neighbouring FLAGs. So, don't be afraid to start cooperation right away, it may bring you more benefits than you think!

Several local actors quoted in the Magazine share lessons they have learnt about CLLD: Jakub Roszuk stresses the importance of a broad approach to local development; Helle Breindahl and Anastasios Perimenis focus on the importance of community mobilisation and trust among all the people involved in the delivery chain. Yves Champetier calls for a “revolution” to remove bureaucratic barriers. Some of these concerns are addressed by the recent proposals for the post-2020 EU funding, which should allow greater flexibility and more freedom to Member States to shape EU support, potentially going a step further in empowering fisheries and aquaculture communities to tap into the benefits of the blue economy. This new framework and the 10 years' experience that FLAGs have been able to gather will help unleash the creativity and potential of local coastal communities even further.

Bernhard Friess

Bernhard Friess,
Director for Maritime Policy and Blue
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Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

A year in the life of a FLAG

OPOLE [POLAND]

From the pond to t

The Opole region in south-west Poland is a land of aquaculture, and an area where the FLAG is a major contributor to local development: benefiting fish farmers, anglers, restaurateurs, tourism and cultural operators, but also municipalities, residents, the environment and cultural heritage.

Do you know Niemodlin? It's a beautiful little town of just 13 000 inhabitants located in the Opole region, which is famous for its carp – “*the best in the world*”, proclaims the local mayor, Dorota Konciewicz. In fact, Niemodlin carp enjoys special protection status, awarded by the Ministry of Agriculture, and contributes significantly to the local economy and to the area's identify or 'brand' (“the region of the princely carp”) through an increasing number of cultural and promotional activities.

Every November for the last 15 years or so, the municipal cultural centre, modernised with the help of a grant from Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund (EFF), has organised an international cartoon competition on the theme of this precious fish. “*We receive more than 400 entries from all over the world*,” say Katarzyna Paszula, who manages the cultural centre, and Joanna Kardasinska, who runs the Niemodlin castle foundation. “*But the arrival of Axis 4 of the EFF and the creation of the FLAG have spurred more local and ambitious activities around the carp*,” they add.

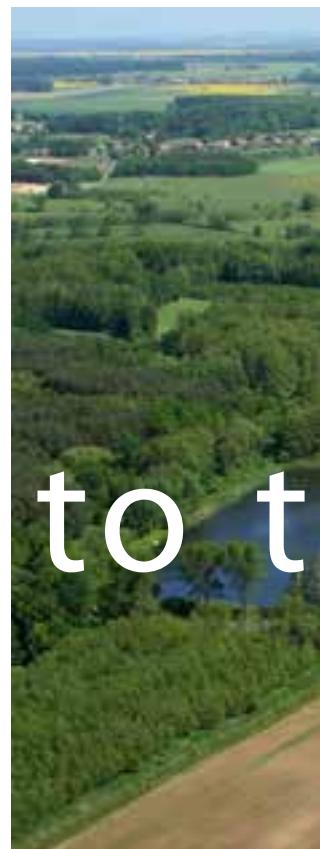


▲ Niemodlin castle.

Renovation of the castle began in 2015; its imposing Renaissance structure dominates the centre of the town and is also at the heart of a series of activities where the carp has pride of place. For the last three years, the town and the [Opole FLAG](#) have hosted a major carp festival in the castle's courtyard, while a restaurant will soon open in its cellars, offering a year-round menu designed around carp, trout¹ and other local fish. Promotional brochures, a mural and an exhibition of aquaculture objects have also helped to raise awareness of the sector.

The aquaculture theme fits the castle well, the grounds of which also include the Niemodlin fish farm, owned by the State Forestry Office. “*We manage 1 000 hectares of ponds, and produce 500 tonnes of carp annually, making us one of the biggest producers in Poland*,” explains Marek Adamus, Director of the fishery. The farm received support from Axis 4 of the EFF, which co-funded the purchase of equipment, the modernisation of storage tanks², and the creation of a fish shop. “*The Niemodlin fish farm played a fundamental role in the creation of our local action group*,” says Aleksandra Czerkawska, Administrative Director of the Opole Region FLAG.

It's the same story at the Krogulna farm which has 54 ponds, spread out over an area of 591 hectares, and it produces 400 tonnes of mature carp every year, as well as 40 tonnes of fry. The farm employs 22 specialists and has an annual turnover of around €1 million, giving a profit of €50 000. “*But the production of carp and fry is just one of the three pillars of our mission*,” says Janusz Preuhs, Director of the fishery. “*We also have an educational and an environmental mission, hence the direction that our projects have taken*.” At Krogulna,



he plate



▲ Ponds are part of the Opole landscape.



▲ Krogulna fish farm.



▲ Feeding fish at the Kotlarz farm.

the FLAG has funded three projects: one related to the purchase of equipment, another concerning the modernisation of tanks, and a third on developing tourism and leisure access to the site. Tourists, school children and residents can now see how the fish farm works, whilst also enjoying the area's local amenities, which still have significant potential for development, with plans to convert a water mill into a restaurant and aquaculture museum.

The carp festival was previously hosted at Krogulna, before it was moved to Niemodlin castle. "It attracted 3 000-4 000 visitors per day," says Janusz. "During the festival, we served 400kg of carp daily. However our December sales, in the run-up to Christmas³, represent the bulk of our turnover. During this period, we sell up to 30 tonnes of carp per day."

Angling

Aquaculture is a flagship sector in Opole: the 50 or so fish farms in the region produce 11% of Poland's carp and employ 120 professional fish farmers. But this activity is only one aspect of the local fishing sector, with the regions numerous water bodies also providing a haven for local anglers. Angling is an important activity for local fisheries communities, especially since the disappearance of commercial freshwater fishing in the 1970s, with angling permits constituting a significant part of income of many fish farms.



1 The 'Poliwoda' rainbow trout enjoys a regional appellation.

2 Once collected, the carp spend a certain amount of time in purification tanks before being shipped for sale.

3 In Poland, carp – like turkey in other countries – is the traditional Christmas dish par excellence.

What I have learnt from CLLD and FARNET

The president of the Opole Region FLAG, Jakub Roszuk, has been leading the FLAG since the previous period and has been involved in many FARNET activities. From that perspective he shares some reflections on CLLD and the role of FARNET in capacity building and networking of FLAGs.



FARNET Magazine: Are there specific features of CLLD that are most important to the FLAG strategy and its daily work?

Well, for me, the CLLD approach as a whole has many assets for local development, but its greatest benefit is to create synergies between the different players. In our area, fish farmers, anglers, processors and other producers, tourism operators and consumers have now been included in what I would call a partnership of synergies, and this is most important.

The second key aspect is local products: I have learnt from FARNET that you don't need to sell your fish in far off places. You can develop the local market and get at least as much value, often more in fact.

Another aspect that I realised from discussions with other FLAGs and CLLD experts is that public money should be seen as risk capital, to foster innovation. But you need to define a good viable project that minimises the risk. Many FARNET events, e.g. the Weiden seminar on aquaculture⁴, give us the opportunity to see many innovative and inspiring FLAG projects.

What other lessons have you learnt from FARNET events?

My general impression is that all FLAGs in Europe, whether inland or coastal, have many things in common and share the same concerns, but I have also realised that in many countries there is a broader understanding of local development. For instance, women, young people, even old people, can play an important role in EMFF CLLD, and this is something that we had not yet been aware of here. FARNET seminars give us a broader perspective and of course new ideas for our work at home. For instance, we would now like to develop pesca-tourism, to organise visits to fish farms.

What have you learnt on a more personal level?

First of all, I like the way FARNET runs its seminars – the interactive methodology. I also like the way the FARNET Support Unit makes you feel comfortable in expressing yourself. I have learnt to make public presentations in my limited English. I did it first in Thessaloniki⁵ and then in Jūrmala⁶. I felt good because of the open-minded atmosphere. Nobody judges anybody, it's the content of what you say that counts. FARNET events also give me a better understanding of the situation of fisheries and aquaculture throughout the EU. It's very important for us, locally, to be aware of future trends in the EU; it also helps me when I take part in meetings at national level, such as for the Programme Monitoring Committees.

The Opole branch of the Polish Anglers' Association has more than 24 000 members (11% of whom are under 16) and manages 9 000 hectares of water bodies – rivers, ponds and artificial lakes. It also has its own fish farm, which sells its production (100 tonnes/year, divided equally between carp, rainbow trout and other species) to restaurants, processors, or directly to consumers, as well as facilitating the restocking of water bodies.

Through the fish farm, the association establishes a direct link between aquaculture and recreational fishing. It also plays an important role in the FLAG, as well as being a project promoter in its own right. "Six projects were implemented in the 2007-2013 period, and another six are currently at different stages of development," says Wiesław Miś, Vice-President of the Polish Anglers' Association and President of the Opole branch. Many of these projects concern site development, leading to synergies with Axis 4, CLLD and LEADER projects implemented by municipalities⁷.

Development projects

A former gravel quarry, bordering the small town of Lewin Brzeski (6 000 inhabitants) was converted into an artificial lake by the municipality and the local anglers' association. From the anglers' side, in 2014 Axis 4 of the EFF funded a new road, the installation of 30 fishing platforms and the construction of a large shelter, which serves as a meeting and social space. On the municipal side, the programme contributed half the cost (€225 000) of developing a lakeside beach, including a playground and fitness area, skateboard tracks and other sports facilities, as well as an impressive overwater boardwalk. "Fishing is very important for our community," stresses Artur Kotara, Mayor of Lewin Brzeski. "It attracts visitors, and the project partnership that we have established with the anglers' association has made the town livelier, more appealing and has improved the quality of life. And we haven't finished: we have other projects up our sleeves, and we will work on them together."



▲ Developments around Lewin Brzeski lakeside beach.



▲ Bogusław Luboń serves delicious local fish.



▲ This derelict water mill could become an aquaculture museum.

The same partnership approach between fishing and local development can be seen in Turawa, a municipality with two reservoir lakes: one covering an area of 22km², and a smaller lake of 20 hectares, which serves as an overflow for the first and is important for tourism and leisure.

"Like everywhere in Poland, the communist regime developed social tourism, so we inherited many collective buildings, which no longer met modern hospitality standards. They had to be renovated, and it was only with the arrival of LEADER and Axis 4 of the EFF, and often combining the two, that we were able to begin this work," explains Waldemar Kampa, the Mayor of Turawa, who took us on a tour of the smaller lake, along a new paved pathway, which now links many small shops, restaurants, holiday homes and waterside play areas that have recently been renovated.

Upstream and downstream

Jakub Roszuk, President of the Opole Region FLAG, underlines two elements of the group's strategy: *"Upstream, we wanted to improve development conditions for aquaculture businesses. Fish farmers needed better infrastructure and equipment. This work has largely been accomplished. Downstream, we also want to support businesses in other sectors, with tourism and hospitality seen as priorities for strengthening the local economy where aquaculture is a key asset."*

In the early 1990s, former mariner Bogusław Luboń bought an abandoned hangar on the shores of Lake Turawa, which he initially converted into a snack bar, frequented by fishermen and pleasure boaters. *"As business was good, even in winter, with the ice fishing, I continued fixing up the building in order to move in with my family,"* Bogusław recalls. *"In 2015, on the advice of Jakub Roszuk, I decided to turn it into a fish restaurant."* The local action group provided 60% of the total investment needed (€100 000) to bring the restaurant up to the desired standard and build a smokehouse. It now serves delicious dishes based on the four local fish species: carp, trout, pike-perch and catfish. *"And talking of catfish,"* Bogusław adds, *"I serve it in a stew, inspired by a tuna*

stew that I discovered in Portugal." His next project, proposed in the framework of EMFF CLLD, is to build a floating pontoon on which people can eat in the summer and fish on the ice in winter.

Other restaurants have also received, or will receive, support. Near Ozimek, the Wiench family built an impressive three-star hotel complex overlooking its 22 hectares of ponds. The hotel opened in 2014 and can already boast 5000 overnight stays a year, with visitors attracted by its popular restaurant, fishery and leisure area for angling. *"Our complex is closely tied up with fishing and fish,"* says 26-year-old Jasmin Wiench, who runs the establishment. *"Many of our customers come here for this, and every weekend we serve about 200 fish dishes, all locally sourced."*



4 *"Integrating aquaculture within local communities"*, Weiden, Germany, 20-22 November 2017 (https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/news-events/events/transnational-seminars/integrating-aquaculture-within-local-communities-weiden-20_en).

5 *"Boosting business along the fisheries supply chain"*, Thessaloniki, Greece, 18-20 Oct. 2016 (https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/news-events/events/transnational-seminars/boosting-business-along-fisheries-supply-chain_en).

6 *"Social inclusion for vibrant fisheries communities"*, Jūrmala, Latvia, 21-23 March 2017 (https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/news-events/events/transnational-seminars/social-inclusion-vibrant-fishing-communities-jurmala-21-23_en).

7 12 municipalities are members of the Opole Region FLAG.

The same local fish marketing strategy has been applied elsewhere in Ozimek. In 1998, dinosaur bones were discovered at an old mining site. In 2010, the municipality decided to develop the site and entrusted the DELTA association with the task of constructing a vast leisure and scientific discovery complex, known as 'Jurapark', which now attracts more than 200 000 visitors per year⁸. Fish is featured on the menus of all the park's restaurants, but the association recently decided to go a step further and convert one of the buildings into a dedicated fish restaurant. "We felt there was a strong demand," says Marek Korniak, Manager of Jurapark, "and since we have the supply on our doorstep, the choice was natural. The restaurant will serve only fish (trout, pike-perch and carp). Our chefs will be trained in the preparation of fish, and we will also offer cookery workshops for children." The FLAG will finance 50% of the €80 000 investment. The contract will be signed in June 2018, and work will begin in September.



▲ First cookery class at Kluczbork.

Cookery classes

Aleksandra Czerkawska, Administrative Director of the FLAG, provides an update on how procedures have progressed: "The first call for projects of the current period was launched in May 2017 and resulted in the selection of 23 projects. Of these, contracts have been signed with nine, while the remaining 14 are being examined by the regional managing authority. Following our second call, 15 new project proposals were submitted to the FLAG and are currently being assessed. In the meantime, we

have just launched a very important initiative: cookery classes. In a country where fish consumption per capita is one of the lowest in Europe, we feel that at this stage of our involvement, it's really important to develop know-how in this area."



▲ "From the pond to the plate".

OPOLSKIE (Poland)			
			
EMFF Budget	EUR		
	EU	National	Total
	2 550 000	450 000	3 000 000

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Between May and October 2018, the Opole Region FLAG will organise 16 cookery courses, focusing exclusively on fish (trout and carp). A series of six courses will take place in six professional colleges – the first took place on the 17 May at Kluczbork College (photo). A further ten courses will target restaurant cooks, with around a dozen chefs per session. The slogan of the operation is, 'Czas na rybe!' – it's fish time! – local fish of course. From the pond to the plate, the circle is complete. ■

⁸ DELTA manages two other similar parks in Poland, as well as a third one in Utah, in the United States.

Report

HOW MARINE RESOURCES ARE DRIVING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN DONEGAL, IRELAND

Blue growth

The North FLAG operates in Donegal, Ireland's most remote county, where it has rallied coastal and island communities around a series of fisheries, aquaculture, heritage and tourism projects. Here, local development is very much in keeping with the county's geography – at the interface between land and sea.

It is 8 o'clock in the morning. A dozen schoolchildren are waiting at the docks in Burtonport for the ferry that takes them on the 15-minute crossing to the island of Arranmore (population: 400), where they attend primary or secondary school. In this far-flung corner of Donegal, unlike elsewhere, children who live on the mainland go to school on an island. *"The teaching on Arranmore is excellent. It's more personalised. Lots of parents choose to send their children there, even though they have to take the boat across. After all, catching the ferry is just like taking the bus. And, as we say around here, Ireland is just an island off Arranmore."*

Fisherman Jerry Early is chair of the IIMRO⁹ and represents the island on the board of the [North Fisheries Local Action Group \(FLAG\)](#). As he takes us to Arranmore lighthouse – the site of a future flagship European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) Community-led Local Development (CLLD) project – he talks about the challenges facing the island, such as population decline, a shortage of young people, the need for high-speed broadband and the poor state of the island's roads. The FLAG has teamed up with other projects to fund a feasibility study on turning the lighthouse into a tourist attraction. The site has many positives – a commanding position and several outbuildings that could be converted into accommodation.



▲ Eimear Ní Mhathúna, head of the charity that manages Fanad lighthouse.

"The project ties in with our strategy. We need more tourists, but not too many. It's important to preserve what makes Arranmore special. The island has been passed down from our ancestors. It's our turn to develop it, but it's also our duty to leave it as we found it."

Nestled between the Atlantic Ocean and Northern Ireland, and marred by the uncertainty surrounding Brexit¹⁰, Donegal is the Republic of Ireland's most remote county. With its rugged hills and coastline, it is a place of jaw-dropping beauty.

But getting around is an arduous task. The county is only now beginning to exploit the features that make it such an attractive destination for tourists.



9 Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation.

10 Donegal has strong ties to Northern Ireland. Some settlements in Donegal are *de facto* suburbs of Derry across the border, and many people living in the county commute to Belfast for work.

Tory: portrait of an island community

Tory Island (or *Toraigh* as its Gaelic-speaking inhabitants prefer to call it) stands around 15 km off the coast of Donegal. It is home to Ireland's most northerly island community.

Although it is only Thursday, there are around 15 regulars in An Club, the local pub. And because this is Ireland, the musicians are in full swing. In this far-flung corner of Europe, it's comforting to find people so warm and friendly.

"Back in 2000, 80% of the people living on Tory were elderly," says Marjorie Carroll, head of the tiny island's (3.18 km²) development agency. "The opposite is true today. Younger people make up 80% of the population. There are around 30 children living on the island, and five new families have moved here in the past two years."

The population has stabilised since 2000, and there are now more young people than there used to be. The island's 150-strong community lives in a single village, stretching along the southern coast, which is gentler and much more sheltered than the sheer, rocky cliffs to the north.

In high season, two ferries carry people to and from the mainland. But in autumn and winter, there is only one ferry service – when conditions allow! Storms are frequent here in December and January, so when the ferry is out of action there is a helicopter service, in addition to a permanent coastguard presence for emergencies.

"Other than the usual struggles of island living, the quality of life here is unparalleled," says Daniel Cullen, a man in his forties who moved to the island after a seven-year spell in New York City. "My wife and I decided it would be the best place to raise a family." Daniel, like many other inhabitants of Tory Island,¹¹ is an artist. And like almost everyone who lives here, he also keeps himself busy with other things – like running An Club, which serves as both a pub and a community centre.

Given its diminutive size, the sheer number and range of services available on the island is astonishing. It has a pub, grocery shop, a post office, a social club, a health centre, a nursery (seven children), a primary school (11 children) and a secondary school (five teachers and six pupils!). The local development agency, which employs seven people, also acts as an administrative centre.

There are only three professional fishermen on Tory, fishing for crab and lobster. Tourism is now the island's biggest source of revenue, and visitor numbers are rising steadily. In 2017, some 25 000 people took the ferry to the island, which also boasts a hotel, three B&Bs and a handful of other accommodation providers.



▲ Tory harbour.

The North FLAG has awarded grants to two tourism and quality of life projects on Tory Island – a bike hire project, and signs for tourist attractions. The local co-op is also preparing funding applications for the renovation of the social club, benches and picnic tables, and a new men's shed group.

These small-scale projects will help boost the island's appeal and improve the quality of life of local inhabitants. But the development agency also has bigger ambitions, which includes the renovation of the lighthouse. Like elsewhere, the lighthouse on Tory has outbuildings that could be turned into accommodation for tourists. Other projects being planned include: installing high-speed broadband, setting up a call centre to provide new jobs, and opening a small fishmonger's.

All of this depends on making the island more accessible. *"We want the authorities to install a breakwater so we can keep the Ferry on Tory Island all year round,"* says Marjorie.

Much of the island's economy – transport, energy, waste management, schools, services and many jobs – is heavily subsidised by the State. To the outside observer, who might question whether sustaining an island community is viable, and whether the proposed projects are realistic, Marjorie and Daniel answer: *"Yes, it's a political decision. Tory is one of the last outposts of Irish culture. But what really matters is its inhabitants. They're determined not to give up. It's about identity and people supporting one another. That's worth more than all the money in the world."*

¹¹ The island is known for its artists. The "Toraigh school", founded by Derek Hill and James Dixon, is especially prolific. There are currently nine artists living and working on the island.

There are numerous islands off Donegal's coast, each with their own community and identity, and a shared language – Irish Gaelic.¹² The biggest island is Arranmore (22 km²). Other notable islands include Inishbofin (16.5 km², population: 180), which was the setting for a film about local fishermen's struggle for survival,¹³ and Tory (3.18 km², population: 150), which also has its own primary and secondary schools, and local development projects (see box).

"The North FLAG aims to assist coastal and island communities that have been hit hard by the loss of fishing rights and the resulting downturn in business," says Owen Doyle, FLAG coordinator. "We've supported around 80 projects to date across our four priority areas. Most have been economic development (75% – of which half was tourism related and half was fisheries/aquaculture related) and marine heritage (15%) projects. The remaining 10% have been split evenly between environment and training, as we've had very few applications in these two areas, but we're working to encourage more. In practice, of course, you can't really put labels on things. Everything is intertwined. All of the project promoters are connected to the sea in one way or another. Some are working fishermen who get financial support for their business. But we also have retired fishermen or sailors who run local charities and organisations. That's why we prefer to use the term 'coastal communities'. This is the first time (i.e. since EFF Axis 4) that an EU programme has considered the bigger picture in this way."

Greencastle, in north-east Donegal, epitomises this interplay between fisheries, heritage and culture. The bustling white-fish¹⁴ harbour is the hub of the community. CLLD under the EMFF helped fund extension work on the docks to address a long-standing conflict between two competing user groups. *"There are many cruise ships mooring at Greencastle," explains deep-sea fisherman Cara Rawdon. "The dock was too short and too cramped. It was totally overcrowded. Passengers were disembarking right where our nets were, so there was a real risk that people could get hurt. And it was stopping us from getting on with our normal business. Things are much better now. The fishermen are happy with how the project has turned out, and they couldn't have funded it by themselves."* The FLAG



▲ Arranmore lighthouse.

provided 50% of the €100 000 investment needed to excavate and drain the site, lay the cement slab, build an enclosing wall, fit lighting and install net winding and transport equipment.

The extended dock also makes it easier for tourists to get to the Inishowen Maritime Museum & Planetarium, housed in Greencastle's former coastguard station and upgraded with FLAG funding. *"Both programmes were a trigger – seed money, if you like – and a reward for the hard work that the volunteers had put in," says Seamus Bovard, former master mariner and chair of the charity that manages the museum (12 000 visitors in 2017). "It's a way to bring more diversity to the harbour and to boost the town's appeal – just like the LEADER programme has long been doing in inland rural areas," explains the museum's Director, Gemma Havlin.*

Added value

Continue along the Inishowen peninsula from Greencastle and you come to Malin Head, the most northerly point on the island of Ireland. Here, the local fisheries cooperative operates 32 vessels out of the twin harbours of Malin Head and Glengad, chiefly fishing for crab in winter and lobster in summer. In 2017, the cooperative received FLAG funding for two projects: the building of a temperature-controlled bait warehouse (€27 500); and the upgrading of the lobster holding tanks (€54 600). *"Given that our turnover is €6.5 million,*



▲ Lobster pots at Glengad.

this grant might come as something of a surprise," admits Eddie Kelly, head of the cooperative. "But we wouldn't have been able to get many of our members on side without it. Some fishermen haven't yet understood that times have changed." As crab stocks decline, the Malin Head Fishermen's Co Op – like other fishermen elsewhere in Donegal – is focusing its efforts on delivering more added value.



12 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaeltacht>.

13 *Des lois et des hommes* (English: *A Turning Tide in the Life of Man*), a joint French and Irish production directed by Loïc Jourdain (<https://desloisetdehommes.com/2017/08/30/le-realisateur/>).

14 Haddock, whiting, hake, monkfish, etc.



▲ The new interpretation centre at Fanad lighthouse.

"We'd like to have our own processing facility, or perhaps team up with another factory elsewhere in Ireland – provided that our products are clearly marked for export to France."

Adding value is very much on fish farmers' minds, too. In Mulroy Bay, the Wilhaires have been farming mussels using the longline system since the early 1980s. *"In an average year we produce 300 tonnes. We used to sell all our stock in bulk, without adding value, but in 2017 we decided to start canning some of what we produced. The FLAG was the only place we could have got funding support."* They recently invested €25 000, including a €10 000 grant from the FLAG, to buy new purification tanks, a conveyor belt and a packaging machine. Consequently, the company, Mulroy Bay Mussels, now sells around 20% of its output via distributors to restaurants across Ireland.

Fort Kayaks

Further along the Inishowen coastal road stands the impressive Fort Dunree, which was built in 1798 to guard the most north-westerly point of the peninsula. The 20-acre site no longer serves a defensive purpose. Since 1990, it has housed a military museum, managed by the local community, along with a handful of other projects. Various projects at the site have received national and European co-financing under different programmes, including PEACE and LEADER. In 2017, it obtained €25 000 (80% of the total cost) from the FLAG to renovate a disused boat shed, and to re-lay the road leading to the small, cliff-lined bay where the building stands. The final stage of the project will involve extending the slipway. The FLAG approved the grant for this in April 2018. The renovated boat shed is currently leased to Inish Adventures, a firm that runs kayak excursions and expeditions. *"It's a win-win relationship,"* says John McCarter, chair of the charity that manages Fort

Fisheries in Donegal: a mixed picture

There are around 300 fishing vessels operating from Donegal. The county can be divided into three zones, each with contrasting fortunes, determined by species, boat size and target market.

In the north, the harbours around the Inishowen peninsula are home to both small in-shore fisheries and commercial fishing operations. The industry here is fairly prosperous, especially in Greencastle (whitefish) and in Malin Head and Downings (crab and lobster).

The situation is bleaker to the west, on the stretch of coastline looking out to Arranmore. Burtonport, once a thriving processing and freezing harbour, has fallen on hard times as cod stocks have declined, and since salmon fishing was banned in 2005. Many fishmongers' have closed down and the handful of processing plants that remain are hanging their hopes on hake and crab, even though the frozen crab market is under threat because of the prices Chinese consumers are prepared to pay for fresh crab.

Killybegs, to the south, is another world entirely. Ireland's 13 biggest deep-sea trawlers operate out of the harbour, along with a

small fleet of offshore vessels. The town has a thriving processing and freezing industry, specialising in species such as mackerel, herring and blue whiting for the European, African and Asian markets.

In 2013, Killybegs and Greencastle accounted for 62% of all fish landed at Irish harbours, bringing €113 million into the local economy, and the value of catches has risen sharply since 2010.



▲ "Seafood Shack" at Killybegs harbour.



▲ Renovated boat shed for kayaks at Fort Dunree.

Dunree. "Adrien and his kayak business bring people to the fort. And the fort, with its sea caves and cliffs, make the experience all the more special for Inish Adventures' customers."

Adrien is Adrien Harkin, the man who founded Inish Adventures. A former construction worker with a passion for rowing, he lost his job in Derry in 2008 when the financial crisis hit. Seeking a new career, he managed to persuade Greencastle council to let him use an abandoned salt-water pool and the adjoining buildings to set up a new business venture, Inish Adventures. The company has since gone from strength to strength, expanding from seven to 50 kayaks, taking school groups on educational excursions, and now operating all year round. The business employs 13 people in summer and serves customers from around the world. "*I want to make Inishowen the kayak capital of Ireland,*" says Adrien, who saw customer numbers spike by 30% last year. With €11 000 in funding from the FLAG, he was able to buy the equipment he needed to cope with his business' growth. In 2018, he will receive a further €21 000 (50% of the total cost) to build a pontoon to make docking easier.

"The EMFF CLLD scheme really is the best way to strengthen the relationship between fisheries, tourism, culture and heritage," confirms Jerry Gallagher, fish farmer and President of the FLAG.

This winning relationship is evident in Fanad, where another lighthouse was renovated in 2014-2015 and opened to the public in 2016. Besides the lighthouse, which commemorates the lives of the lighthouse keepers, some of the small houses in Fanad have been converted into high quality accommodation for tourists. Even more ground-breaking, however, was the decision to remove a vast, unsightly, disused fuel tank, and replace it with a cylinder-shaped building at a cost of €30 000 (50% funded by the FLAG). The construction work has only just finished. Once the building is fitted out, it will become a fisheries education centre, hosting lobster cage-making demonstrations and other activities, contributing further to the area's development. Like the other locations mentioned in this article, Fanad is part of the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW)¹⁵ – a route that has revitalised tourism in the west of Ireland. The site received another unexpected boost recently, when a major car manufacturer filmed an advert at the lighthouse. The added publicity undoubtedly helped push up visitor numbers from 17 000 in 2016 to 25 000 in 2017. Thirteen full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs have been created.

As a successful local development initiative, Fanad lighthouse could serve as a model for other lighthouses in Arranmore, Tory and Malin Head – although the FLAG will not be able to fund the construction and conversion work alone. "*Money is important, but what really matters is having communities that are willing to take on a project and run with it,*" says Eimear Ní Mhathúna, head of the association that manages Fanad lighthouse. "*Behind this project we have 60-or-so volunteers and hundreds of supporters. They understand that Fanad is an integral part of their culture and sense of identity.*" ■

NORTH (Ireland)			
Area: 2 688 km ² Population: 91 406 inhabitants Density: 34 inhabitants/km ²			
EMFF Budget			EUR
	EU	National	Total
	889 125	889 125	1 778 250

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¹⁵ The Wild Atlantic Way initiative was launched in 2015. The clearly signposted route guides drivers and cyclists to the main tourist attractions along the west coast of Ireland. (<https://www.ireland.com/articles/wild-atlantic-way/>).

People

Monitoring and evaluation: three FLAGs, three approaches

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are an integral part of a FLAG's work, not only because they are an obligation¹⁶, but because they are essential to allowing the FLAG to measure the extent to which it is achieving its strategic objectives and to understand what needs to be improved. Having identified good practice in evaluating CLLD, *FARNET Magazine* has asked three FLAG / LEADER LAG managers to share their experience in monitoring and evaluation: **Sarah Lamb** from the [Highlands and Moray FLAG](#) in the UK; **Marjo Tolvanen** from the SEPRA LAG, also managing the [South Finland / Etelä-Suomi FLAG](#), in Finland; and **Sabine Weizenegger** from the Oberallgäu LAG in Germany.



FARNET Magazine: How do you know that the projects supported by your LAG or FLAG are achieving results?

Sabine: First of all, I would like to stress that it is not only the funded projects that contribute to achieving the objectives of the Local Development Strategy (LDS). In our LDS we have defined three ways of achieving our strategic objectives: (1) through projects funded; (2) through project selection criteria (which serve not only to select projects, but also to improve their quality); and (3) through animation of the local community. The results of the latter two types of activities are more indirect and, therefore, harder to measure. We have to use qualitative and descriptive methods.

As for projects, during the selection process we define the expected contribution of each project to up to three objectives in our LDS. Projects that do not contribute to at least one objective cannot be funded. At the end of the project, the beneficiary has to submit a short final report describing what has been achieved. In previous periods, we also used a list of official indicators, but these were not very suitable to the LEADER/CLLD approach. Two possible areas of improvement: firstly, at present we have to equate the amount of funding to the objectives, which does not always make sense: there are small projects that can have huge impacts and vice versa; and secondly, we currently do not have enough capacity to systematically monitor the long-term effects, after the projects have been completed.

Sarah: As part of the application process we ask for a Project Plan. This works well as it prompts the applicant to think about all aspects of the planning and delivery of their project, including target outputs and outcomes. At this stage we capture both qualitative and quantitative information that we can then use to compare with actual results once the project is finished. We review the achievements of a project through our FLAG project monitoring and evaluation form. Projects of course vary. Some have immediate results, so only complete the M&E form once, while others only show benefits after the project completion date, so we ask them to complete this form yearly, usually covering a period of 3 years depending on the project. The results can be used not only to see how a specific project has performed, but when collated can also show the overall impact of funding on the area, and how well the FLAG is meeting its objectives, as set out in the LDS.

Marjo: We do not have a large number of projects, so our coordinator is in contact with project promoters quite often. As the project selection criteria are simple and contain clear targets, it is easy to evaluate progress. Results achieved are compared to the results that were expected at the project selection stage. At the end of each project, our coordinator meets with the project promoter and assesses what has been achieved. Each project promoter also prepares a final report.

Our board continuously monitors our activities and this has shown us, for example, that we have very few projects from the business sector, although this is an important objective of our strategy. As a result, we have changed the conditions of support to provide the maximum aid intensity to business-related projects.

¹⁶ see Common Provisions Regulation, art. 33 and 34.

**Sarah Lamb****Marjo Tolvanen****Sabine Weizenegger**

 **What M&E activities do you consider particularly useful and worth recommending to other LAGs and FLAGs?**

Sarah: In terms of the value of the information we are collecting, the FLAG Project Plan and the M&E form have worked extremely well for us. Don't forget to link everything back to the LDS. For example, if we were to look at the number of jobs created, which is a standard, straightforward result for many projects, LAGs/FLAGs could think about how to make it more relevant to their LDS. In the last period, the Highland LDS focused on adding value to fisheries products and diversification, so our targets were specific to jobs created in the processing and tourism sectors. You may want to link this further to specific target groups – jobs created in processing for young people, women, the unemployed, etc. This information can really paint a picture of the impact your FLAG is making.

However, be careful to keep things meaningful and do not overburden the applicant or yourself by collecting exhaustive information. We previously asked applicants to break down expected project beneficiaries by demographic group. We did this with the best of intentions, but it became clear that it was almost impossible for many project promoters to provide this information. We have since dropped this request at the application stage, and now only collect this information once the project has been completed and where relevant.

Marjo: It is very important that the expected project results are thoroughly discussed by the board at the project selection stage. This is done according to the LEADER principles, trying to reach a consensus (not an average of individual scores). Individual meetings with project promoters work really well. They make it possible to evaluate each project in a discussion and find out how the expected results were achieved in reality.

Sabine: Probably similar to all LAGs and FLAGs across Europe, we are very busy working with indicators, and some of them can give a good idea of what is going on. But with LEADER/CLLD, quantitative indicators have their limitations, because the added value is not easy to measure.

Therefore, I am trying to develop an approach that I call "storytelling evaluation". This method is highly qualitative and aims to show the effects in an easily understandable and entertaining way. The story is not so much a story of a *project*, but rather the story of a *process*. For example, in the beginning our LAG funded a lot of thematic hiking routes. I could try to guess how many jobs were created through these routes, but I think it is more interesting to see what has developed from these projects with the help of the LAG. We organised a common event to present all the thematic routes and later a common map was produced. Neighbouring LAGs became interested and after some years we had a cooperation project with a trail running through 33 rural communities in five participating LAG areas. There is now a certified hiking route, which has won a lot of attention and many tourism awards. We are now in the next phase, dealing with quality management. The creation of experience spaces and a project on environmental education are already in the pipeline. This story covers a process of twelve or thirteen years, in which trust has been built, actors have learned how to cooperate and creative ideas have been developed.

 **So far we have been talking about projects but how does your LAG or FLAG monitor and evaluate its own work – activities such as animation, communication with the community, processing project applications, etc.?**

Marjo: The main tool to monitor our on-going work is the quality management system, which SEPRA has been implementing since 2011. This system ensures that all the activities (community animation and information, project selection, own project implementation) are carried out according to the principles of LEADER/CLLD and in line with agreed procedures. We have a manual of procedures, which describes all our processes. The manual contains targets, e.g. how much time it takes to process a project, from the moment an application is submitted until it is selected by the board and forwarded for final approval (2 months). Another important tool is the weekly meeting of the SEPRA team, where we go through the list of all current activities, checking if deadlines are met, ensuring all documents are correctly filed, etc.

People



▲ Highland & Moray FLAG area.

SEPRA is also involved in a peer auditing system, which covers all the LEADER LAGs in Finland. It consists of a structured exchange on LAG activities with a visiting team from another LAG. The visit from the peer-auditing LAG takes a whole day and involves a face-to-face discussion, based on a special template, with the host team providing information, responding to questions, and sometimes referring to documents. The participants have to agree on a minimum of one action for improvement, with the host LAG making a commitment to carry out this action within an agreed timeframe. The visiting LAG is also supposed to identify at least one good practice from the activities of the host LAG.

Sarah: We carry out an annual review of the LDS, which includes animation and communication. We send questionnaires to applicants whose projects have been completed, asking them for feedback on their experience with the FLAG, and we also sent similar questionnaires to FLAG members at the end of the programme. As part of our evaluation we found there was very little interest coming from the aquaculture sector. Therefore, we identified ways to better targeting this sector, such as through attending industry events, and we also invited the Scottish Association of Shellfish Growers to join the FLAG. We have since funded our first aquaculture project!

Sabine: In our LDS we have included objectives for improving the LAG performance, covering participation and cooperation. Therefore, we monitor and evaluate our own performance just as we monitor and evaluate projects. Our action plan has three parts, each with its own evaluation indicators: (1) general activities of the LAG (with indicators such as number of board meetings, incoming project ideas, network meetings or press releases); (2) activities related to project support, animation and selection (with indicators such as percentage of cooperation projects led by the LAG); and (3) activities concerning "start projects" – initial activities already proposed in the LAG strategy, which lead to the development of new projects. We compare targets to performance on a quarterly basis.

 **Have you received any help with your monitoring and evaluation activities, such as from your managing authority (MA) or national network?**

Sarah: Our managing authority (Marine Scotland) has given FLAGs the freedom to devise their own monitoring and evaluation activities. This is great, as rather than having to follow a generic "one size fits all" approach, we are able to individually tailor our evaluation needs to our projects and LDS. Of course we still collaborate with the MA so that information being collected can complement what is being collected at a higher level.

Marjo: Our MA has provided us with a reporting format, which is quite helpful in framing our evaluation in a logical and strategic way. The national rural network has organised quality management training for LAGs and is facilitating the process of peer audits.

Sabine: The German national rural network has developed a very useful guidebook, which describes a variety of different methods of self-evaluation. Our MA has also organised seminars but has given us a lot of freedom concerning evaluation methods. However, sometimes people who have to deal with evaluation at different levels have very little knowledge, so despite the considerable effort made, we don't always get reliable results.

 **Your LAGs and FLAGs have a long standing experience in using monitoring and evaluation to improve your work. What lessons do you draw from this experience that you would like to share with our readers?**

Sabine: Start as early as possible to collect information on your activities, and remember it is not primarily for the managing authority but for you! It is often enough to develop a smart way of saving your data so it can be easily summarised (e.g. number of network meetings you initiated, press releases you wrote, project promoters you were in touch with). Keep your calendars, take pictures and save minutes of meetings, so that you can describe your processes later on. Try to improve your own performance – this also prevents you from getting bored by routine. Analyse your contribution to the added value of LEADER/CLLD. Do not be afraid of monitoring and evaluation. And most important, don't forget to apply common sense.



▲ South Finland / Etelä-Suomi FLAG area.



▲ Oberallgäu LAG area.

Marjo: Monitoring and evaluation is easy when the tools are in place from the beginning, so you need a good vision and clear criteria when writing your strategy. This is linked not only to projects but also to key LAG/FLAG processes and other factors that will need to be measured. It is not difficult to collect data and measure results as long as you know from the beginning what you want to evaluate. It is essential to include your decision-making board in the evaluation process. The board will need to know where your LAG or FLAG wants to go, what results you are trying to achieve and how the money should be spent. At least once a year you should organise a meeting where results are discussed and decisions made about the need to change either your practices or your strategy.

Sarah: The early stages of setting up a FLAG can be an exciting time, and sometimes you can be in a hurry to open calls for projects, not really thinking about evaluation, which is sometimes perceived as something that happens at the end. But it is extremely important that you take the time at the very beginning (not at the end!) to work out and design your processes for monitoring and evaluation. You should also really consider the usefulness of the information you're collecting. You don't want to overburden the applicant or yourself, so think quality over quantity. Also, take the opportunity to learn from other FLAGs and LAGs, to find out what has worked well in the past and what hasn't. We have been fortunate to work alongside an experienced LEADER team and have found this to be invaluable when starting the FLAG. ■

Read the FARNET Guide: '**Evaluating CLLD: Handbook for LAGs and FLAGs'**

This handbook is for LAGs and FLAGs funded from one or several of the four ESI Funds as well as external evaluators carrying out LAG evaluations. It aims to provide easy-to-use tools and methods, along with examples from different LAGs and FLAGs, that can serve as guidance and inspiration for evaluating CLLD.

https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/library/guide/evaluation-clld-handbook-lags-and-flags_en

Interviews conducted (in English) in May 2018.



Focus

▲ Art made from marine litter in the Costa da Morte FLAG area.

Local, green and circular

The circular economy has become a buzzword of late, but it is time now to put words into action. Moving towards a circular economy is increasingly recognised as a necessary step to ensuring the sustainability of human activities – and fisheries and aquaculture are no exception.

What is the circular economy?

The circular economy is a model of production and consumption that involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing and recycling existing materials. In this way, the life cycle of products and materials is maintained for as long as possible; waste and resource use are minimized; and when a product reaches the end of its life, it is used again to create further value.

In a circular economy, “growth” is redefined and economic activity is decoupled from the constant consumption of finite resources. Underpinned by a transition to renewable energy sources, the circular model builds economic, natural, and social capital. We can identify three main elements in a circular economy:

- > Designing products that use fewer – and sustainably sourced – raw materials and minimise waste and pollution (“eco-design”);
- > Keeping products and materials in use for as long as possible (sharing, reusing, repairing, recycling...);
- > Regenerating natural systems (composting, anaerobic digestion...).

Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) can play an important role in helping local communities move away from the traditional “take, make and dispose” industrial model and adopt practices that make more sustainable use of our planet’s resources – this was the opinion of 95% of FLAGs that responded to a FARNET survey in May 2018. Sixty-seven percent of FLAGs surveyed also indicated that they have earmarked support for this in their strategies.

So, what can FLAGs do in a world where resource depletion, pollution, deforestation and landfill are reaching worrying levels, and where consumer habits and vested interests in the current system result in resistance to change – both in terms of production practices and consumer choices?



▲ Mussel shells and tiles made from crushed mussel shells.

economies

Awareness-raising to change mindsets and behaviour

According to the results of the FARNET survey on the circular economy, awareness-raising actions are the most recurrent initiatives that FLAGs support to encourage a circular economy. Over a third of FLAGs responding to the survey indicated that they were funding such initiatives. A good example is the [Landing of Ulisse FLAG](#), in Campania (Italy), which is planning an awareness-raising campaign for fishermen, other stakeholders and the general public on the circular economy and, in particular, on the importance of reusing products and materials. Starting with a few pilot ports, the FLAG is also organising a project to sort and manage waste collected at sea, and to channel it to new uses, as well as putting in place training for young people on repairing fishing gear. Other FLAGs are also encouraging more sustainable behaviour in their areas, such as the [Alba FLAG](#) (Croatia), which is helping to pilot the installation of container boxes in its ports, to facil-

tate collection for recycling/reuse, and the [Granada Coast FLAG](#) (Spain), which is developing a project to collect plastic and metal objects found in fishing nets, and used motor oil from fishing boats, to be directed to relevant recycling networks.

However, changing mindsets and behaviour to improve product sustainability (i.e. adapting production processes) is also crucial to minimising their ecological footprint. Without such changes, the positive impacts of post-production measures, such as recycling, will be seriously undermined. More sustainable sourcing of raw materials is part of the answer, and a quarter of FLAGs indicated that they were supporting actions to improve this for products developed in their areas.

While the EU is already pushing ambitious targets for recycling and waste management, much remains to be done to drive sustainability at the beginning of the product cycle. Given their direct links with fishermen and aquaculture producers, FLAGs are well placed to foster more sustainable production practices, in particular fish. Local and sustainably caught fish

is a first step to supporting a more circular economy. The next step will be to ensure that the products developed from that fish generate as little waste and pollution as possible, be it in terms of energy, packaging or organic waste.

New uses for organic fish waste

A number of FLAGs are supporting initiatives to exploit organic waste from fisheries products. The [Pontevedra FLAG](#), in Galicia (Spain), has undertaken a study of expected discards from the local small-scale fleet once the landing obligation¹⁷ comes into force in 2019. By having a good understanding of the types and quantities of fish being landed but that cannot be marketed for human consumption, the FLAG hopes to find ways of capitalising on this raw material.



¹⁷ The 2013 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) introduced the obligation for fishing boats to land their entire catch, rather than discarding unwanted fish.



▲ Fish skin leather.

An issue identified by the study is the small quantity of "discards" expected, implying a potential lack of critical mass at local level, and therefore the need to cooperate, for example, at a regional level or with industrial players, if this resource is to be a reliable input to another economic cycle.

Circular economy – an EU priority

In December 2015, the EU adopted a circular economy package and action plan¹⁸. The actions foreseen include:

- > A reduction in food waste (goal to halve food waste by 2030);
- > Development of quality standards for secondary raw materials;
- > An eco-design working plan to promote reparability, durability and recyclability of products, in addition to energy efficiency;
- > A revised Regulation on fertilisers, to facilitate the recognition of organic and waste-based fertilisers and support for bio-nutrients;
- > A strategy on plastics, addressing issues of recyclability, biodegradability, and the presence of hazardous substances in plastics and marine litter;
- > Actions on water reuse, including a legislative proposal on minimum requirements for the reuse of wastewater;
- > A revised legislative proposals on waste, with a target for recycling 65% of municipal waste and 75% of packaging waste by 2030;
- > A binding target to reduce landfill to a maximum of 10% of municipal waste by 2030;
- > Measures to promote material re-use and stimulate industrial symbiosis;
- > Economic incentives for producers to put greener products on the market.

More recently, in January 2018, the European Commission adopted a new set of measures, including the aforementioned **EU Strategy for Plastics in the Circular Economy** to transform the way plastics and plastics products are designed, produced, used and recycled. The Strategy also highlights the need for specific measures, possibly a legislative instrument, to reduce the impact of single-use plastics, particularly in our seas and oceans.

In France and Finland, circular economy solutions have already been put in place for organic waste from the fisheries industry. In both countries, for example, FLAGs have supported projects to develop local tanning activities to make leather from fish skin. This has involved local training in the art of fish skin tanning, and working with fishermen to secure a supply of quality fish skin that would otherwise be discarded. Following cooperation with the **Ostrobothnia FLAG** on the provision of training for local women, the **Arcachon FLAG** in France now has a new home-grown star of fish skin tanning. Once trained, Marielle Philip hooked up with designers and is now a young entrepreneur selling her "**marine leather**" to fashion designers all over the country.

Apart from fish tanning, other innovative uses are also being made of fish "waste", including the production of pet food (supported by the **Lapland FLAG**, Finland) and **fish meal for aquaculture** (financed by the **Huelva FLAG**, Spain). The **North Sardinia FLAG** (Italy) is also cooperating with a French FLAG to encourage the use of organic fish waste in the cosmetics industry. Cooperation and knowledge exchange is vital if new economic models and products are to be conceived, launched and then replicated in other areas. A recent project, promoted by the **Central Finland FLAG**, involves the setting up of a **network** connecting all the different stakeholders at local and national level interested in improving the marketing of unwanted

¹⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52015DC0614>.



▲ Underused fish species turned consumer product.

fish. The idea is to combine project experience, institutions and knowledge to find economically viable solutions for managing raw material streams.

"She sells sea shells"

Shellfish producers are only too aware of the piles of shells that amass once their mussels, oysters and other delicacies are extracted and packaged into convenient consumer products. They take up space, do not tend to look or smell attractive, and require some sort of disposal, which implies time and money. So, what if shells could become a valuable resource for other products?

A number of FLAGs are working to turn this waste into a resource. In France, a number of FLAGs (from Normandy, Aquitaine, Occitanie...) have explored the possibility of converting ground shells into lime for agriculture or a supplement for chicken feed. The [North Sardinia FLAG](#) (Italy) has supported a viability study, business plan and launch of a new business, using [crushed mussel shells](#) to create objects ranging from kitchen tiles to jewellery. The [Opale Coast FLAG](#) (France) has helped a local company find a supply of scallop shells, which it uses to produce paving stones. These paving stones, which have a 30-40% scallop shell content, have the advantage of being more porous than standard paving stones, improving rain water infiltration and reducing the risk of flooding.

Identifying innovative project promoters, attracting investment and developing viable business models is not always easy, but experience shows that exciting opportunities are out there, just waiting to be seized. By inventing new ways

of working and managing our resources, local communities can contribute to safeguarding terrestrial and marine environments, which are ultimately fundamental to sustaining human activities and the quality of life we currently enjoy.

Tackling plastic waste

Every year, a million tonnes of plastic litter end up in our oceans¹⁹. With its [Strategy for Plastics in the Circular Economy](#), the EU is focusing on the most common, single-use plastic products and fishing gear, pointing out that, together, they account for 70% of marine litter in Europe. Fishing gear alone (nets, lines, pots, traps...) are believed to account for 27% of all beach litter and around 50% of the "great garbage patch" in the Pacific ocean. Designed-to-last fishing lines are estimated to take 600 years to degrade but only 1.5% of gear is currently recycled.

A number of FLAGs are helping their communities to reduce the amount of plastic that ends up in landfill or in Europe's seas, lakes and rivers, by instead extending, or finding a second life for such objects. As well as awareness-raising campaigns, projects supported include: initiatives to clean and [repair plastic crates](#) in fish auctions, so as to extend their life cycle (e.g. the [Mariña Ortegal FLAG](#), Spain); developing and trialling [bio-degradable meshes for mussel cultivation](#) (e.g. the [Arousa FLAG](#), Spain); recovering and sorting litter found in fishing nets; improving waste collection and recycling systems in ports; and research into new uses for old fishing nets (e.g. the [Basque Coast FLAG](#), France – see page 22) and other plastic waste from the sector.

There are many ideas emerging with regards to what to do with plastic waste from the fisheries sector. Nets can be repaired or, when no longer salvageable, can be transformed into new objects: baskets, place mats, football nets, clothing and garden furniture are but a few ideas that have been put into practice.

Some of these new products might be hand-made by local craft workers, or fishery sector workers diversifying their activities. This can be seen in some Spanish regions. For example, in the [Sidra FLAG](#)

area, where [two net-menders opened a craft shop](#) selling souvenirs and sport fishing items made from old fishing nets; or the [Anllons cockle pickers](#) in Galicia's [Costa da Morte](#), who learnt how to make baskets and net bags using recycled material from the fishing sector. Other uses might involve more sophisticated treatment of plastic waste, such as the project in Denmark, supported by the [Thy-Mors FLAG](#), to process expanded polystyrene into plastic granules that can be sold to the plastic industry for a whole variety of products, including new fish boxes.

For FLAGs, the challenge is to identify local entrepreneurs with the ideas and drive to make use of plastic and other waste products from the fisheries and aquaculture sectors – and to match them with the partners that have the necessary technical expertise (scientists, manufacturers, designers...) and funding to put their ideas into practice.

FLAGs as a catalyst for industrial symbiosis

Only a few FLAGs indicated that they had supported projects related to industrial symbiosis. This is perhaps not surprising, as the term is still unknown to many and often understood as a complex economic model. However, industrial symbiosis simply refers to the use by one company or sector of by-products – including energy, water, logistics and materials – from another, and many of the individual projects described above facilitate just that. As multi-sectoral public-private partnerships, FLAGs are uniquely placed to stimulate such mutually beneficial arrangements between different local actors and keeping the circular economy at the forefront of their goals and animation work can help to create more resource efficient and resilient local economies in Europe's fisheries areas. ■

¹⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0028&from=EN>.

Report

FISHERIES AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN THE CÔTE BASQUE – SUD-LANDES [FRANCE]

Circular (and social) economy

The Basque Coast Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) has helped to promote short supply chains for local fishery products. The group is now turning its attention to the circular economy, recycling and reusing nets and other used fishing equipment clogging up ports and warehouses – a project that combines environmental conservation, sustainable fisheries and the circular and social economy.

"It's a thriving enterprise right in the centre of town," says Christophe Arrondeau, from the Maremne Adour Côte-Sud Intermunicipal Community and member of the , as he explains the importance of fisheries in Capbreton. "We have around 80 fishermen operating 19 boats. The industry has created more than 120 direct and indirect jobs here. We have a bustling harbour, which is part of the town's appeal to residents and tourists alike." The docks at Capbreton harbour are lined with stalls where customers can snap up daily catches landed by local fishermen, including sole, sea bass, shellfish and squid. There are 19 stalls in total – one for each boat operating out of the harbour. "Fishing is the life-blood of the town," says Patrick Lafargue, president of the Capbreton fishermen's union. "It's vital to the economy, but it also helps build a sense of community. As soon as the sun comes out, people flock here from as far away as Toulouse, Pau and Bordeaux to enjoy the harbour."

Synergies between land and sea

"The stall project is a joint initiative of LEADER and Axis 4 of European Fisheries Fund," explains Mylène Larrieu, member of the FLAG and coordinator of the Pays Adour Landes Océanes Local Action Group (LAG), which also covers the area where the FLAG operates.²⁰ "We got funding from the EFF to research ways to boost fish sales through community-supported agriculture (CSA)²¹ – a model that had previously worked well in rural areas inland. Fishermen were keen to explore this new outlet but hadn't examined the business model in detail. Through Axis 4 we were able to develop a feasibility study to help Capbreton's fishermen to harness this new opportunity and deliver local catches to other parts of Côte Basque – Sud-Landes, away from the coast."

"The population has risen sharply here in recent years – up 20% in just 20 years – but the fisheries sector has yet to benefit from this demographic dividend," says Patrick



▲ Direct sale stall linked to a specific boat.

Laclédère, Mayor of Capbreton. "Direct selling is a big step in the right direction. In the summer, it makes up 70% of sales, while fish auctions account for 30%. The opposite is true in winter. The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) Community-led Local Development (CLLD) scheme is a prime opportunity for fishermen to follow the example of local farmers and push direct selling to new markets, especially bigger catering outlets such as school canteens and retirement homes. The Maremne Adour Côte-Sud Intermunicipal Community's



▲ Mural decorating "Le Comptoir du Pêcheur", a co-operative shop that sells local products in Saint-Jean de Luz harbour.

school dinner service already sources one-third of its food locally. There's no reason why we couldn't do the same with fish. But first we need more local processing."

These "land-sea" complementarities which already existed between LEADER and Axis 4 of the EFF have been further strengthened in the current period, and are now moving into and combining circular economy and social economy.



▲ Direct sale shop in Ciboure harbour.

Social economy

"The social economy is one of the main thrusts of the Adour Landes Océanes LEADER programme," explains Mylène Larrieu. "We're supporting two key projects in this area."

API'UP is a Capbreton-based recycling and eco-design charity, founded in 2012, which provides work opportunities for people excluded from the job market. This social enterprise collects waste and designs and makes furniture using recycled materials.

However, for technical reasons, it cannot yet recycle all of the waste it collects. So, API'UP has launched a new project called "LOOP" – a circular economy technology resource centre – to push waste recovery and recycling even further, especially when it comes to plastic waste from the ocean. The charity received funding from LEADER to carry out initial research for the new centre.



20 The area covered by the Basque Coast FLAG roughly aligns with the Bayonne Maritime District – the registration district for the 100-or-so fishing boats operating out of South Aquitaine's ports (Capbreton, Anglet, Bayonne and the Adour estuary, Saint-Jean-de-Luz/Ciboure and Hendaye). The region is divided into two *pays* (or lands) – Adour Landes Océanes and Montagne Basque – each with its own LEADER programme and each actively engaged in fostering links between land and sea within the FLAG.

21 See FARNET Guide #8: '*Marketing the local catch*', page 25.



▲ Used fishing equipment clogging up the port of Capbreton.



LEADER is also funding research into the feasibility of a new recovery and recycling centre for unused construction materials, known as "Soli'Bât". Behind the project is **Compagnons Bâtisseurs**, an organisation that promotes and supports self-build projects across much of France. In the first project of its kind in South Aquitaine, the organisation will recover materials from building companies and builders merchants and then donate or sell them for use in social housing renovation schemes.

"It's a three-part strategy," explains Jacques Alvarez, Vice-President of Compagnons Bâtisseurs de Nouvelle-Aquitaine and circular economy lead for the LEADER group. "First, we give these materials a new lease of life to help reduce the amount of waste produced. It's hard to imagine just how much stone, wood and tiling, as well as radiators, plumbing parts and joinery off-cuts, are left behind once a building is finished. Second, we recycle these items for socially useful purposes such as supported self-renovation projects,²² construction training centres, back-to-work schemes and other similar local projects. And third, we provide employment opportunities for people who are training or returning to work. It's very much a virtuous cycle."

"Both projects were prime candidates for funding," adds Mylène. "They're innovative, they involve the full cross-section of the local community and they offer a much-needed opportunity for rural and coastal development. Plus, there are obvious synergies between API'UP and Soli'Bât."

Lasting solution

The Basque Coast FLAG has embarked on a similar path, this time recycling and reusing fishing equipment that clogs up ports and warehouses – and even some public litter bins. "Look at that," says François Gallet, joint FLAG coordinator, based at the area's Fisheries Committee,²³ pointing to an unsightly container overflowing with discarded nets on the otherwise very picturesque street that runs alongside the harbour at Saint-Jean-de-Luz/Ciboure. "Waste like this has become a real problem here. It's the same issue in Capbreton, where abandoned nets are taking up space on the docks. It's a nuisance for everyone, including fishermen, whose storehouses are getting clogged up with rubbish. It's high time we came up with a lasting solution."

"And the solution has to be lasting," stresses François, as various temporary solutions have been trialled over the years. "In the 2000s a deep-sea fisherman – who has now passed away – took the initiative and began sorting and repairing abandoned fishing equipment such as nets, purse-seines, life jackets, ropes and motors collected from harbours in the Basque Country, Landes and even further afield in Aquitaine. Between 2005 and 2014, he filled several containers with used but still serviceable fishing equipment, which were sent to local fishing communities in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Gabon, Haiti and Senegal. Later on, the same person teamed up with a waste broker firm to recover dismantled nets, although they weren't reused locally. The contract came to end in 2014 when the fisherman died, and used net and equipment collections stopped."

In that same year, 2014, representatives of the Basque Coast FLAG attended a national EFF Axis 4 meeting and a FARNET seminar, where they learned about **Atelier des Gens de Mer**, a project supported by the **Marennes-Oléron FLAG**. The social enterprise leading the project, Navicule Bleue, provides employment opportunities (net repair, boat maintenance, etc.) for injured and disabled fishermen.²⁴

"In 2016, a Basque Coast FLAG delegation, comprising representatives of the Fisheries Committee, the Bayonne Pays Basque CCI and Adeli (an environmental social enterprise from Saint-Jean-de-Luz), travelled to Oléron to meet with the managers of Navicule Bleue," continues François. "That meeting really sealed the deal for us, so we carried out a feasibility study and started putting our own project together."

22 Supported self-renovation projects are a key aspect of the organisation's work, providing on-site technical support for individuals interested in renovating their own homes. (<http://www.compagnonsbatisseurs.org/autorehabilitation>).

23 The Fisheries Committee (CIDPMEM 64-40) is the representative body for professional marine fisheries along the coast between Hendaye and Capbreton. The committee has a broad remit: promoting and representing the interests of the profession, providing information about the economy, providing technical support for fisheries' activities, issuing opinions and proposals and improving working conditions in the sector (accident prevention, health and safety, vocational training and storm insurance).

24 https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfs/cms/farnet2/sites/farnet/files/miniplenary1_social-enterprise.pdf.



▲ Examining used fishing nets for recycling.

Circular economy

The project, launched in May 2018 for a one-year trial phase, involves the collection and dismantling of used and abandoned nets. There are also plans to offer net repair and assembly services to local ship owners. The initial investment is estimated at €68 000 and the project is being backed by two partners: the Bayonne Pays Basque Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), which runs Saint-Jean-de-Luz/Ciboure harbour and is the lead entity behind the project, and Adeli, a local social enterprise that employs around 60 people who would otherwise struggle to find work, involving them in various public works including maintaining the harbour. The equipment will be collected and sorted in a dedicated facility at the harbour.

A second, parallel project – this time led by a local start-up in partnership with the University of Pau and Pays de l'Adour – aims to determine the chemical composition of the plastic found in nets and identify companies that might be interested in purchasing it as a raw material.

"A net is made up of three parts: a floating rope, a submerged rope and the net itself," explains Nicolas Susperregui, the second joint FLAG coordinator. *"The ropes and floats have a longer lifespan, so they're retained and reused. But the plastic net wears out quicker and can become torn, so it needs to be recycled. The first job is to take the net apart. Then we have to work out the chemical composition of the plastic it is made from, as this will determine how it can be recycled. That's why there are plans to buy an infrared spectrometer under this sec-*

ond, parallel project, to analyse the plastic content so that the dismantled nets can be sorted for different potential uses. The project will also produce 'data sheets' to make the plastics easier to sell."

"The project will involve six FTEs and add a new string to our bow," says Pierre-Yves Fautras, Director of Adeli. *"We'll gain new expertise and be in a position to offer more highly skilled work, for example in assembling new made-to-measure nets and operating forklift trucks – something our project needs and a skill that's in demand in the job market more generally."*

The project could find outlets for its products through its involvement in a movement known as 'Basque California'. *"We're part of the Ocean Living Lab²⁴, a cross-border cluster of major firms and start-ups specialising in board and mountain sports on both sides of the French/Spanish border,"* says Sébastien Le Reun, head of Saint-Jean-de-Luz/Ciboure port operations at Bayonne Pays Basque CCI. *"The universities of Bordeaux and Bilbao are also planning to open a research centre at Fort de Socoa in the near future, which should give us a real opportunity to find new applica-*

tions for recycled net plastics, such as innovative textiles and 3D printing filaments."

"Overall, the future looks bright for fisheries on the Atlantic coast," says Serge Larzabal, President of CIDPMEM 64-40 and of the Basque Coast FLAG. *"EFF Axis 4 and the EMFF CLLD scheme have made a real difference by fostering greater recognition for the sector's people and its produce. We've come a long way since we launched our study on strengthening the fisheries sector back in 2007. The first few years were tough, but we've managed to rally professionals to the cause and change how the sector is governed, bringing local authorities in coastal and rural areas into the fold to promote the industry and its produce. The interplay between fisheries and the circular and social economies shows how fisheries have become fully integrated into local communities."* ■

²⁴ <http://www.openlivinglabs.eu/livinglab/ocean-living-lab>.

BASQUE COAST FLAG (France)				
		Area: 1 568 km ² Population: 317 576 inhabitants Density: 202 inhabitants/km ²		
EMFF Budget	EUR			
	EU	National	Regional	Total
	1 050 000	60 000	990 000	2 100 000

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Cooperation

Big stories begin with a small step

Sometimes stepping out of one's usual environment or putting yourself in someone else's shoes can help to give a new perspective or sense of priorities. French philosopher, Paul Ricoeur's sentence says it all, "The shortest road to yourself is others". FLAGs might want to bear this in mind when considering whether it makes sense to initiate cooperation with other groups.

"Cooperation... well, it's complicated", "we would like to but it is not our priority", this might be the reality check you get when broaching the subject with some FLAGs. Indeed, in many cases FLAGs feel cooperation projects demand time, resources or administrative competences that they don't have. True, cooperation projects can be challenging to set up. However, they can also be simple and effective if they start small, are targeted and developed through progressive steps...

With the examples described below, we hope to convince you that cooperation is probably easier than you think, that it starts at home by taking a step back... and that you're possibly the missing partner of a cooperation project being set up right now, somewhere in Europe.

Cooperation starts by taking a first step outside your local partnership and asking the question, "is someone else out there facing a similar challenge? And have they found a solution?" Cooperation projects don't need to start on a large scale. Every house starts with a single brick, and welcoming a FLAG, LEADER LAG or other CLLD type partnership to your area to exchange on a specific issue is always a good start. Taking community members to see how things are done elsewhere can be even more enriching. Indeed, allocating time and resources to exchanging

with other FLAGs can also be the stepping stone to developing a more systematic and focused cooperation approach in your group.

When talking to your neighbours suddenly leads to cooperation with partners from the other side of the planet: the example of FLAGs in Aquitaine (France)

The French region of Nouvelle Aquitaine has four FLAGs, all on the Atlantic coast and facing similar sectoral, environmental and programme implementation challenges. One of these FLAGs is new (selected in 2016), and so regular contacts and cooperation between the Aquitaine FLAGs has helped to soften the learning curve for this CLLD newcomer.

The next step in cooperating at this geographical level was to identify common challenges and issues that would benefit from exchanging experience and acting collectively across areas. After initial contacts, the Aquitaine FLAGs took the initiative to organise a workshop to explore collaboration possibilities related to the circular economy. The discussions, supported by FARNET's geographic expert for France, aimed to bridge knowledge gaps in how to get stakeholders involved and how to identify and organise the collection of a sufficient quantity of materials to support new economic activities.



▲ Fishermen in the Marennes Oléron FLAG area.

This first meeting helped the FLAGs to identify what each of them could bring to such a project, and to match needs and resources.

Hosting the social enterprise, Navicule Bleue, in its area and already supporting several fishing gear repair and recycling projects, the Marennes-Oléron FLAG could share the 'entrepreneurship aspect' of designing a socially inclusive economic activity around the circular economy. The [La Rochelle FLAG](#), with a specific challenge linked to mussel production, had launched a feasibility study on the recycling of plastic waste from mussel farms and its upscaling potential. The two other FLAGs, Arcachon and Basque Coast, had valuable experience to share in coordinating different actors to develop integrated systems for collecting, sorting and re-using waste (e.g. recycling plastic oyster farming pouches to produce plastic elements for car interiors).



▲ Cooperation in the La Rochelle FLAG area.

Part of the added value of pulling these elements together was the discovery that certain FLAG stakeholders were involved in larger regional and national circular economy initiatives, which they could then link up with in a coordinated manner.

Taking part in such regional cooperation workshops triggered the [Arcachon FLAG](#) to set up a dedicated cooperation working group at local level. The FLAG had already planned to do this, but it took a collective exchange, and being outside of the 'daily routine', for the idea to finally take effect. The objective was two-fold: firstly, to help manage the increasing number of requests for visits and exchanges, as the FLAG board did not have time to deal with all of them. This working group, composed of sector representatives, now screens the requests and prioritise them according to objectives and availability. Secondly, it helps coordinate efforts to

identify cooperation opportunities and assistance offered by the European cooperation office of the regional administration. For Arcachon, cooperation is opening up new and bigger horizons: having started small, at regional level, they can now engage more confidently with requests coming from the other side of the planet! The FLAG recently hosted a Japanese delegation, interested in learning more about their professional training and careers structure. A formal cooperation on promoting careers in aquaculture and environmental management is now being planned.

Lessons from Northern Irish dune management help to improve Latvian seaweed data collection.

This story starts with the [Laukiem Jūrai FLAG](#), situated in central Latvia, close to Riga. It extends for about 75km along the Gulf of Riga, an area which, like many Bal-

tic coastlines, is experiencing a number of challenges, including coastal erosion. As a LEADER area since 2007, it was already involved in a cooperation project focusing on dune management, with partners in Northern Ireland, Finland, Estonian and Latvia. Each partner worked on their own specific dune management issue, with the collective support of partners, sharing resources and ideas to tackle each other's challenges. For the Laukiem Jūrai FLAG, a recent priority has been addressing seaweed proliferation and learning about methods and strategies to clean beaches and restore tourism attractiveness.



Because of its involvement in the previous cooperation project, the FLAG had observed similar situations elsewhere, and could apply simple short-term measures it had previously witnessed, such as investing in a special tractor to clean the beaches without damaging the dunes. However, more interestingly, the cooperation also triggered a longer term project, involving collaboration between all six Latvian FLAGs. This project, directly inspired by their previous transnational cooperation, includes a data collection campaign and a scientific study aimed at assessing the frequency and volume of seaweed “tides” along the coast, and the potential to sustainably harvest and exploit this resource. With a budget of €50 000, the project will produce a public report and open-access data for researchers and businesses interested in developing seaweed related activities. The first results are expected to be published by the end of 2018. You can read more about this project on the FARNET website²⁶.

Cooperation can be complex, so strive for simplicity!

Of course, cooperation between different FLAGs, and especially in other Member States, can be more complex than individual projects involving stakeholders from just one FLAG area. For this reason, it is important to keep cooperation as simple as possible. It is usually good to start nearer home, with partners that speak your language and operate in a similar context. Keep objectives as concrete as possible and start with actions that can, realistically, be implemented in a relatively short timeframe. Bilateral study visits can also be a simple but effective way of initiating more ambitious cooperation in the future.

Are you the missing piece of a great cooperation project? There's only one way to find out...

Both the FARNET Support Unit and our partner network, the ENRD (European Network for Rural Development) Contact Point, have put together a series of tools and resources you can use to identify, promote or suggest cooperation topics, as well as to identify CLLD groups looking to cooperate on similar topics.

So, if you are not cooperating yet but are motivated to do so by this article, or if you have a cooperation idea you would like to share, explore these different links:

- > FARNET collects and promotes cooperation proposals on its website https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/on-the-ground/cooperation/ideas_en. These are based on the **Cooperation ideas template**, which FLAGs can complete with the support of the FARNET team and their cooperation experts.
- > The “Cooperation Overview” on the FARNET website page offers a summary of how cooperation is organised in every Member State, along with links to a cooperation factsheet for each country.

> It also provides links to guidance documents and search tools, including the ENRD’s database of cooperation projects and ideas, searchable by topic, area and calendar. We invite you to take a look at the website: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld/clld-partner-search_en.

FLAGs interested in finding partners for a specific cooperation project can use the partner search facilities on the FARNET website or on the website of the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD). ■

²⁶ FARNET Good Practice: Seaweed assessment and management plan along Latvia's coast: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/on-the-ground/good-practice/projects/seaweed-assessment-and-management-plan-along-latvias-coast_en.

Perspective

Positioning fisheries CLLD for the future

Having passed the midway point of the current implementation period, FLAGs are now busy supporting thousands of projects across fisheries and aquaculture areas. In parallel, the proposals for the new regulations beyond 2020 are currently being discussed. This is a good time, therefore, to reflect on what we have learned so far regarding the support provided by community-led local development (CLLD) under the EMFF. What does CLLD take, what does it bring, how could it be improved and where should it go next?

These were some of the questions that fuelled the debate at the “[Beyond 2020](#)” conference, organised by DG MARE in Tallinn last October, which subsequently fed into [discussion papers](#) prepared by the four panellists: Helle Breindahl, Manager of the Djursland FLAG, Denmark; Anastasios Perimenis, Director of the Lesvos FLAG, Greece; ; [Susana Rodríguez Carballo](#), Director-General of fisheries development in the region of Galicia, Spain; and Yves Champetier, member of the FARNET Advisory Board. A big thank you to each of them for their thoughts and contributions!



▲ The panel of speakers.

What does CLLD take?

Realising the full potential of CLLD requires time, significant investment and a determination on the part of all those involved.

CLLD takes time

CLLD is not a quick-fix or a one-shot solution to specific local problems. CLLD aims to trigger long lasting changes in the areas and communities where it intervenes, and this takes time. Helle Breindahl, LAG/FLAG Manager from the area of Djursland, in Denmark, breaks this down further:

> Time to set-up and gain the trust of local people (and of the administrations in charge of the programme).

- > Time to consolidate that trust and keep local people engaged and involved in the longer term.
- > Time to build the capacity in the FLAGs and social capital in the community.

CLLD takes commitment

The fact that it takes time also means that a high level of commitment and determination is required, on the part of all those involved: from the decision makers at EU/national/regional level to those in charge of the implementation on the ground. In this respect, DG MARE deserves much credit for its commitment to supporting networking among FLAGs and the admin-

istrations involved in implementing CLLD under the EMFF.

Regional or national administrations have a key role to play. If those in charge of CLLD (at the political or administrative level) do not believe in, or are not committed to ensuring the success of the programme, it is destined to fail. In this respect, civil servants bear considerable responsibility, especially in terms of avoiding administrative blockages or payment delays, which can completely undermine efforts at local level.





At local level, committed staff, chairpersons and board members are what makes the difference between just a FLAG and a successful FLAG. As highlighted below, much relies on the involvement and dedication of individuals driving the implementation of the local strategy, many of whom are contributing on a voluntary basis.

CLLD takes trust

Trust is a key ingredient of CLLD, and this trust has to be nurtured at all levels. As mentioned above, delivery systems can make or break a programme and much of the complexity of ill-suited delivery systems can very often be traced back to a lack of trust between the different stakeholders in the delivery chain. CLLD implies the devolution of decision-making power to the local level. This is key to fostering ownership and to promoting innovation. However, devolution requires a relationship of trust between the parties concerned: administrations have to trust local stakeholders to invest their budgets appropriately; and local stakeholders have to trust the administration to endorse their decisions and ensure the speedy processing of administrative requirements. Trust must go both ways, which takes time and comes from a true understanding of the principles at work behind CLLD. It is worth pointing out, however, that no system is fool proof, and studies have shown that error rates within CLLD are no higher than in other, more centralised types of



"FLAGs allow for the emergence of projects that would have been very difficult to develop had the groups not been present on the ground, especially collaborative projects that do not always happen naturally in the fisheries sector."

Susana Rodríguez Carballo,
Director-General of Fisheries
Development in the region
of Galicia, Spain.

programmes, so there are no reasons not to trust this method.

CLLD takes a new name, at least under the EMFF...

As a concept, Community-led local development is clear, in the sense that it spells out what the intervention is trying to achieve. However it does not really work as a brand and does not reflect the dynamism behind that locally led development. It also translates badly into other languages. Reaching out to local stakeholders and motivating them to take risks and find innovative solutions for their areas requires a dynamic attitude, and hence a dynamic name. A name that can become a brand for thriving coastal communities.

What does CLLD bring?

True to the nature of CLLD, its added value is varied and diverse, and comes as much from the way it is implemented as from the projects it supports. Indeed, the community outreach (or "animation") activities of FLAGs, and the fact that their local development strategies are drawn up and implemented by a broad partnership of local stakeholders, is crucial in terms of mobilising citizens to address the specific needs of different types of coastal and fisheries areas in Europe. The elements presented below are not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to highlight those that emerged from the discussion and papers stemming from the [Beyond 2020 event](#).

Online sales

Loestamospescos

The Costa da Morte FLAG from 7 regions of Galicia (fishermen & more than 100 Galician processors), to develop and pilot an online sales platform.

COSTA DA MORTES FLAG

NORTHERN DEV UK

RESULTS AFTER 36 MONTHS:

- 12 new jobs (+17%) created
- 25% more job satisfaction
- Three companies created
- 4 new products developed

SUCCESS FACTORS:

- Project based on local needs
- Having an officer to make things happen in the action
- Connecting and networking
- Working and social media
- A focus on involvement of local communities
- Building trust, trustworthiness

TOTAL PROJECT COST: €1.1M

+ 117 jobs, + 8.27 TON

▲ Karmenu Vella, European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, admires FLAG projects.

A bridge between two worlds

For Helle Breindahl, Djursland LAG/FLAG manager, FLAGs act as go-between or brokers between two very different worlds: one of "funds, rules, indicators and regulations"; and one of "local people with a wide range of challenges, projects and ideas". The gap between these two worlds should not be underestimated, and FLAGs offer the opportunity for them to connect with one another in a mutually beneficial way. Local people get access to funding and support, while policies manage to achieve their objectives and reach those most in need. Most panellists at the Beyond 2020 event agreed that many local projects would not have materialised without FLAG support. Amid growing calls for EU policies to demonstrate their added value for citizens, FLAGs also play a critical role in interpreting or translating sometimes bureaucratic funding streams into real-life projects that touch and are visible to citizens.

More sustainable projects/results

Panellists were also impressed by the potential of CLLD to achieve longer lasting results than other forms of funding. CLLD improves the fit of projects to local needs and infuses a sense of local ownership. It is also designed to be flexible and capable of adapting funding to changing circumstances. In addition, being close to the ground means that it is better able to engage with hard-to-reach or marginalised groups in the community (e.g. young people, women, people with

disabilities,...). And last but not least, projects selected by FLAGs are meant to reinforce each other and contribute to the local development strategy, which takes a broader and longer term perspective.

A burst of local energy

Throughout the EU, FLAGs mobilise the energy and drive of thousands of local stakeholders. All FLAGs rely on good will and the pro bono involvement of stakeholders from the fisheries and aquaculture communities, who take part in the work of the FLAG through their decision-making boards or general assemblies. This vast mobilisation is a testimony to the relevance of FLAGs to local communities and represents a real added value.

A gateway to the blue economy

The majority of the EU population live in coastal areas. However, pressure on coastal zones is likely to increase further in the decades to come, given their attractiveness in terms of quality of life, but also their growth potential. This is likely to exacerbate user conflicts over natural resources. FLAGs can play a role in helping to mediate between these different interests, while also fostering greater economic diversification in coastal areas, thereby reducing dependence on certain resources. FLAGs can ensure that coastal communities not only benefit from but are also drivers of the blue economy.



"The increasing dependence on natural resources calls for diversification of coastal economies."

Anastasios Perimenis,
Director of the Lesvos FLAG,
Greece.



"CLLD can help turn around the negative trend affecting SSCF and rally entire communities behind the local fleet so that their issues become the issues of the community."

Helle Breindahl,
*Manager of the Djursland
LAG/FLAG, Denmark.*

A helping hand to the fisheries and aquaculture sectors

While the different points mentioned above could apply to any local action group, by focusing on a specific sector (fisheries and aquaculture), FLAGs also generate a specific added value for this part of the community. In particular, FLAGs can:

- > Open up new prospects for the more fragile segments of the sector i.e. small-scale coastal fishing (SSCF), artisanal and family fishing. On average, around 40% of projects supported by coastal FLAGs directly targeted small-scale coastal fisheries. FLAGs are helping this segment to become more competitive by working on improving the added value of local production. They are also supporting fishermen to find new ways of using their skills without leaving the maritime environment (pescaturism, tourism hospitality, marine environmental monitoring,...).

- > Shake up a conservative community. FLAGs also help to establish links between the fisheries/aquaculture sector and the other local sectors. Through its involvement in the multi-stakeholder partnership and the animation activities of the FLAG, the fisheries sector is fully integrated, along with other stakeholders, in the local development process. This in turn leads to improved local governance, as it ensures a seat at the table for fishermen/fish farmers when decisions are made on local economic development. It also pushes fishermen to take a more active role in discussions concerning the sustainable

use of marine resources and supports the emergence of collective projects, which does not always happen naturally in the fisheries sector.

funding on a few areas where the needs are more acute, and where the FLAG has developed an effective strategy and can make a real difference.

What could be improved?

The picture so far: 368 FLAGs selected, thousands of stakeholders mobilised, more than 15 000 local projects supported (including those from the 2007-2013 programming period), and yet we can and should do better.

Having reached the midway point of the second period of local development under the fisheries fund, we can now identify some of the issues that are preventing CLLD from reaching its full potential. From speaking to FLAGs, managing authorities and national networks, here are a few of the key bottlenecks we have identified:

Insufficient funds at FLAG level

Without a sufficient budget, FLAGs are unable to run their activities properly. As administration and animation costs are proportionate to the total FLAG budget, FLAGs require a minimum budget to be able to afford proper management and animation. A minimum budget of €2 million of public money is usually recommended as a threshold for a properly functioning FLAG.

A common mistake of managing authorities is to spread the available budget too thinly. Keeping the €2 million threshold in mind, it is counterproductive to try to cover the whole coastline of a country if the budget required is not available. It is much more advisable to concentrate the

Economies of scale in terms of administration can be achieved by joining forces with LEADER, but this should not be used as an excuse not to properly resource FLAGs. It is vital to ensure that, in cases where a LAG also manages a FLAG, sufficient capacity and funds are devoted to engage specifically with the fisheries/aquaculture community.

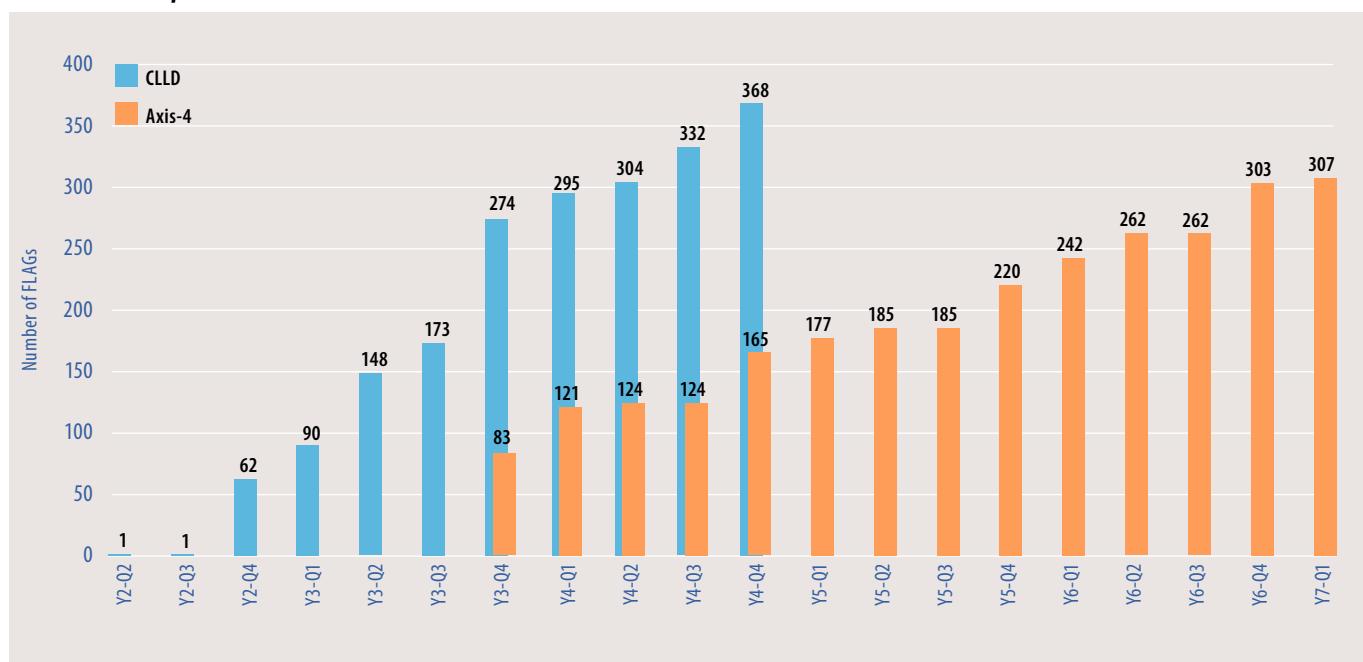
In addition to sufficient funding being available, the FLAG's budget should also come free of any obligation to find additional public co-financing. It is not the role of the FLAG or local stakeholders to look for public co-financing to be able to support projects. This should be secured at the programme level and attributed to each strategy that the Member State administration selects.

Dysfunctional delivery systems

As mentioned above, delivery systems can make or break a programme. Having to wait several years for the FLAG to become operational, while trying to keep local stakeholders interested and motivated, can be a difficult task for FLAG managers, especially if they are not even getting paid.

Having to wait several months to know whether a project can be supported or not, and then wait again to receive an advance and/or the final payment, while also being snowed under by paperwork; this can really drain the enthusiasm of project promoters and even result in projects being abandoned.

FLAG selection process – all MS



"There is a need for a real 'revolution' in the implementation methods."

Yves Champetier,
FARNET Advisory Board.

The reality does not have to be like this, however. Some systems are already working significantly better than others and the FARNET support unit would like to work with all CLLD stakeholders to identify and share best practices and to improve CLLD delivery in the future.

Loss of momentum and capacity

FLAGs work hard to mobilise the community. They rely heavily on good will and on the voluntary involvement of community members. Without this local mobilisation, FLAGs would not succeed. It is, however, extremely difficult to maintain this momentum over a prolonged period, and it is next to impossible when the capacity of the FLAG disappears due to a gap in funding between two programming periods.

A conscious choice must be made by the responsible authorities to support FLAGs to remain active in the transition period between implementation periods. In this respect, the approach taken by the region of Galicia could serve as a model for how to avoid this problem. The Galician authorities did not wait for the approval of the operational programme (OP) to start the FLAG selection process: they used a two-stage approach, starting with the selection of candidate FLAGs, whom they then provided with preparatory support to develop and present their strategies. Then, once the OP was approved, the second selection process was opened, which led to the final selection of the FLAGs and approval of their strategies within two months of the OP adoption. A timeline

for selecting and launching the 2014-2020 FLAGs is available as a [good practice method](#) on the FARNET website.

From the graph below, we can see that in the 2014-2020 period, FLAGs were selected at least a year earlier than in the 2007-2013 period. However, there is room for further improvement, as many FLAGs still experienced a significant gap in between the two periods, and many of the selected FLAGs were not actually operational or in a position to select projects for a long time after their official selection date.

What does the future hold?

This second period of implementation of CLLD under the EMFF already represents a significant advance on the first period. FLAGs have been launched faster than in the last period and, along with administrations and local stakeholders, now form a more mature network.





▲ Discussing FLAG projects at Beyond 2020 conference.

There are four years left to implement projects in this period. These four years must be used to the full to achieve the objectives of the local strategies. FLAGs must continue to embrace innovation and new challenges, mobilise project promoters, dynamise local partnerships and support a maximum of local projects. It is also worth drawing attention to the fact that, with EU support, coastal and fisheries dependent areas can now look to the future with confidence.

FARNET, which includes the entire community of people engaged in implementing CLLD in EU fisheries and aquaculture areas, should aim to reach commitment levels close to 100% by 31 December 2021.

In the meantime, we must also start preparing for the post 2020 period.

At EU level, discussions have already started on the broad lines of European policy for the next programming period (2021-2028). The European Commission has shared its proposals for the future of the European Structural and Investment Funds. It is now the turn of the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers to discuss these proposals, and to agree on the broad policy orientations, the overall EU budget (the multi annual financial framework), and the different regulations by the end of 2020.

All this takes place in the context of Brexit, ongoing security threats, migration issues, and climate change, all important factors in shaping the political landscape in the years to come. Europe is also experiencing a rise in populism and a disaffection of citizens towards the EU, linked in particular to the emergence of new social and economic divisions arising from globalisation and the opening of both internal and external borders.

FLAGs must be aware of this macro environment and the need to develop strategies that address local but also global issues. If the funding gap between the two periods is to be avoided, it is important that FLAGs start to reflect now and devise "novel" and innovative strategies for the future. FLAGs have learned much over the last decade. The know-how that has been accumulated should allow them to do more and to do it better. In some cases, the scope of FLAG interventions will need to be revised to ensure more coherence; in others, partnerships will need to be adapted to better embrace the challenges of the area and open up new development opportunities. In this respect, the recent FARNET guide on evaluating FLAG work will be a useful tool to help draw the lessons of the past and prepare for the future.

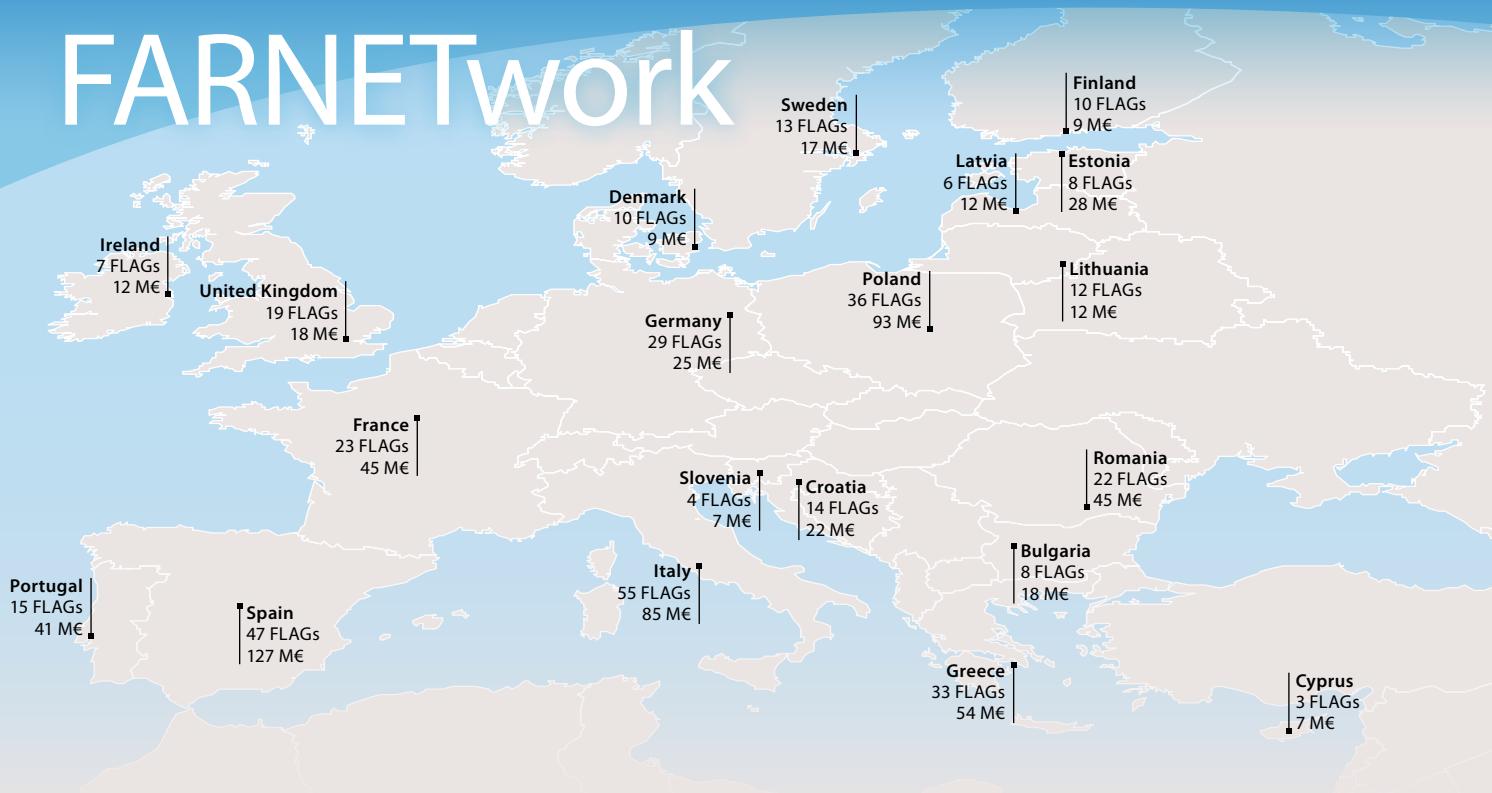
The world is evolving rapidly and local strategies must take account of the new

challenges facing coastal and fisheries areas. In many areas, the work of adding value to local products and improving local supply chains should be further developed. In other areas, the work of experimenting with different responses to new challenges and opportunities must also be continued. Issues of particular interest in this area include:

- > Smart coastal areas: how connectivity and new technologies can open up opportunities for both the territory and the primary sector (fisheries and aquaculture).
- > Climate change: how local actors can become the drivers of local initiatives to reduce environmental impacts and support the transition to a low carbon, low impact society.
- > Blue economy: how the fisheries sector and other local stakeholders can benefit fully from the development of the maritime economy and ensure that blue growth does not develop at the expense of coastal communities.

Ultimately, what the future holds for FLAGs will largely be determined at local level. In many areas FLAGs are now well-established entities that have gained the trust of their communities. This social capital, which has been built up over time represents a major added value of CLLD and maintaining this local energy and momentum must be a priority for the future. ■

FARNETwork



Information collected by the FARNET Support Unit as of May 2018

FARNET latest publication

Guides

FARNET Guide #15:

Evaluating CLLD – Handbook for LAGs and FLAGs

This handbook is for LAGs and FLAGs funded from one or several of the four ESI Funds as well as external evaluators carrying out LAG evaluations. It aims to provide easy-to-use tools and methods, along with examples from different LAGs and FLAGs, that can serve as guidance and inspiration for evaluating Community-led Local Development (CLLD).

https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/library/guide-evaluation-clld-handbook-lags-and-flags_en

FARNET Guide #16:

Strengthening local resource management

FLAGs are in a strong position to support and encourage more inclusive local resource management processes. This guide is divided into five thematic factsheets to help FLAGs contribute to the development of a bottom-up approach to local resource management and support the conservation of local resources based on their specific contexts.

https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/library/guide-farnet-guide-16-strengthening-local-resource-management_en

Report

Providing information on present and future EMFF support to small-scale coastal fisheries through FLAGs

Calls for greater levels of support to Small-Scale Coastal Fisheries (SSCF) have been on the rise but it appears that Member States and stakeholders are not taking full advantage of the numerous existing funding possibilities under the EMFF in favour of SSCF. FLAGs are one of the possibilities offered by the EMFF to reach out to SSCF and, in practice, the SSCF sector is the natural partner of most FLAGs. Still the extent to which FLAGs have been supporting SSCF is unclear. This report aims to provide an indication of the level of support provided by FLAGs to SSCF. It is based on a survey which has been carried out among FLAGs from both the EFF and EMFF periods which were asked to assess the level of support channelled to SSCF through their Local Development Strategies (LDS).

https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/library/technical-report/providing-information-present-and-future-emff-support-small-scale-coastal_en

CLLD in practice



Blue Care: combating marginalisation through fisheries (Ostrobothnia FLAG, Finland)

"Take care of the Ocean and the Ocean will take care of you". This project has adapted the concept of Green Care to provide a therapeutic experience through work in an outdoors, marine environment. Getting immersed in the world of fish will, it is hoped, turn some difficult lives around.



Keeping FLAGs in action between programming periods (Galicia, Spain)

The Regional Government of Galicia offers an inspirational example of how to plan CLLD implementation in advance to ensure FLAGs remain operational from one programming period to another. This has helped to safeguard the local dynamic and credibility built up by the FLAGs and ensure funds are quickly available for new projects in the new period.



Teaching young people about fisheries (Galati FLAG, Romania)

One of the main needs identified by the Galati FLAG in their fisheries area was to strengthen the linkages between fishermen and the younger generation. Indeed, fishermen believed it important to ensure that traditional fishing know-how and their passion for the profession were passed on to the next generation.



Detecting toxic microalgae (Mediterranean Pyrénées FLAG, France)

Oyster farms on the Leucate lagoon are regularly affected by toxic phytoplankton, leading to economic losses, especially during the high season around Christmas. In search of a solution, shellfish farmers teamed up with a biotech start-up to test a new, quick and easy way to detect toxic marine microalgae and anticipate its proliferation.



Boosting a seaweed business on the Irish offshore Islands (West FLAG, Ireland)

West FLAG supports business development among some of the most marginalised and remote communities in the country, including offshore islands and native Irish speaking communities where a seaweed company has grown from one to four employees.



Publications Office



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