

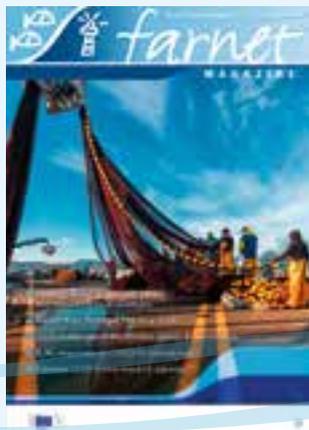


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MAGAZINE



- ▶ Looking ahead to the next period and rethinking local strategies
- ▶ Report from Portugal: The blue mark
- ▶ CLLD challenges in the Mediterranean & Inland areas
- ▶ FLAG responses to COVID-19 coronavirus
- ▶ Fisheries CLLD: a new research agenda



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Cover: Jesus Concepción Alvarado, East Cantabria photo competition

Authors:

Gilles van de Walle, Monica Veronesi Burch, Marta Edreira Garcia, Jean-Luc Janot, Arthur Rigaud, Sophia De Smet, Richard Freeman, Urszula Budzich-Tabor

Contributors:

Ewan Geffroy, Prody Mwemena, Soumaya Bouker, Margot van Soetendaal.

Production:

DevNet geie (AEIDL/Grupo Alba) / Kaligram.

Contact:

FARNET Magazine, FARNET Support Unit
Rue Belliard 40
B-1040 Brussels
+32 2 613 26 50
info@farnet.eu – www.farnet.eu

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Costa Brava FLAG was created in 2016 and covers the entire 175 km coastline of the province of Girona. The FLAG area is popular with tourists and its fisheries turnover represents 34 percent of the Catalan fishing sector.



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(Ericeira-Cascais, Portugal) The recovery of marine waste – plastics in particular – has become a major concern for fishers and residents of coastal communities near the Portuguese capital. Here, the circular economy is blue.



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Inland areas in Europe harbour a rich tradition when it comes to the exploitation of water-based resources. In terms of overall FLAGs, one in four is located inland, or houses significant inland fisheries or aquaculture activity.



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Declining fish stocks, heavy pressure on marine ecosystems from different economic sectors, pollution and the effects of climate change are all taking their toll on the long-term sustainability of fisheries in the Mediterranean. These challenges and their solutions demand a collaborative approach.



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Until recently, CLLD under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) has been largely overlooked by the research community. As we approach the end of what has been a second phase of CLLD in fisheries areas, a new research agenda is beginning to emerge.



Editorial

"I am eager to see this new generation of FLAGs launched and ready to build a resilient Europe from the bottom up."

2020 has been a year of change.

Change at European Union level: with a new European Commission and the launch of the Green Deal, aiming at Europe becoming the first carbon neutral continent by 2050.

Change at global level: with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, taking our societies and economies by surprise, and with far-reaching consequences still uncertain.

Change for EU programming: with 2020 being the last official year of the current European Structural and Investments Funds programming period.

So how do these changes interlink and how can we rip the most benefits from them? This European Commission is dedicating all efforts to support fishing and aquaculture communities to adapt and bounce forward from the Covid-19 crisis and to ensure a digital and green (or in this case blue) recovery; and as we begin a new programming period, new opportunities will arise to ensure that our resources are geared towards a more resilient future.

In the meantime, CLLD is steadily proving itself able to help rally the local community. As you will read in this magazine, FLAGs in many places have supported activities to mitigate the negative impact of the Covid-19 crisis. In some places, they sourced and distributed protective equipment to allow fishers and those employed in the industry to continue working in safe conditions. In others, FLAGs developed communication campaigns to support the marketing of local fish products, notably via direct sales. FLAGs and their voluntary boards also set up projects preparing for the rebuilding of local economies.

COVID-19 has thus highlighted, once again, the importance of well-functioning FLAGs. Given the scale of the challenges that lie ahead, all resources and possibilities have to be exploited to the fullest. We therefore need to ensure that CLLD can deliver its full potential. For this to happen, we need delivery systems which are flexible and fit for purpose, in other words, which allow local people to address their needs as quickly and effectively as possible.

Recent work by the FARNET Support Unit has highlighted some of the delivery issues faced in the past two periods and proposed solutions to overcome these. This work showed that many Member States have managed to set up systems that empower local communities, and there is no reason why a third generation of CLLD should not see supportive delivery systems in all EU Member States.

CLLD is very close to my heart. Indeed, one of my first public appearances as Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries was at the Post-2020 CLLD conference in December 2019. The energy, drive and innovation I saw there convinced me that CLLD is a powerful tool, not only to respond to the needs triggered by the rebuilding of shattered local economies, but also to bolster and encourage the innovation required to reinvent these economies and turn them into local drivers of the Green Deal and of a more sustainable fisheries and ocean policy.

Our fisheries and aquaculture communities need our help. They have in them what it takes to revitalise their local economies. Let's give them the support and the delivery systems to achieve this.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'V. Sinkevičius'.

Virginijus Sinkevičius,
European Commissioner
for the Environment, Oceans
and Fisheries

A year in the life of a FLAG

COSTA BRAVA [CATALONIA, SPAIN]

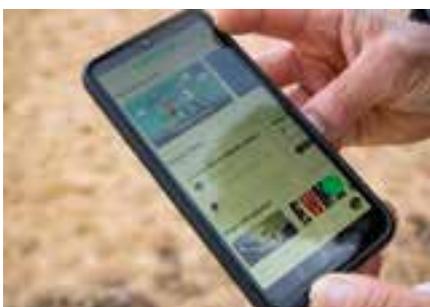
Preparing for the next period

Costa Brava FLAG was created in 2016 and covers the entire 175 km coastline of the province of Girona. The FLAG area is popular with tourists and its fisheries turnover represents 34 percent of the Catalan fishing sector. While the *cofradías*¹ are a driving force within the FLAG, members also include four municipalities, the private sector, cultural and research entities.

"When you bend down and pick up a piece of plastic from the sand yourself, it changes your life forever," says Teresa Ferrés. She's one of the promoters of *Mou-te Pel Mar*²: an initiative that uses a mobile app – TWINAPP – to organize and share meetups combining sport and a clean-up of the area. On her way to Gran de Palamós beach to meet two of the app's users and Miquel Ferrès, her brother, she explains, "Miquel came up with the idea. He's a fisherman and runner. In his fishing nets, he used to find the same litter he'd seen on the coast while out running the day before. Everything we don't take care of on land will finally end up at sea."



▲ Teresa Ferrés, promoter, *Mou-te Pel Mar*.



▲ *Twinapp*.

"It's a way to promote my passion while protecting my way of life: the sea," says Miquel, picking up pieces of polystyrene. When asked about how many people do plogging³ through the app, he takes out his mobile: "Well, the next one is in Buenos Aires... four people" he says, unsurprised. With support from the Costa Brava FLAG, the project started a clean-up campaign in four municipalities and meetings were held with political leaders to involve them in the initiative. "But the best way to involve people is through the clean-ups themselves," according to Teresa.

With a total budget of €4m for 2014-2020 period, the FLAG has so far supported 54 projects with more than €2.86m, from all



▲ *Master Peix participants*.

four axes⁴ that their Local Development Strategy foresees. Axis 2 of their strategy is about sustainability and conservation of environmental heritage and coastal areas: "In the future, the idea is to include these as a transversal theme, that must be part of every project we fund," explains Costa Brava FLAG Manager, Francesc Galí. The initiatives arising from the FLAG are not unfamiliar to Miquel: "I am also a *Master Peix*" he says, proudly.

Master Peix is another project supported by the Costa Brava FLAG. Organised by the Promediterránea Foundation, fishers are trained as communicators, becoming guides and educators on the fish landed and traditional seafood. Once trained, the



▲ Blanes port.

fishers participate in the region's gastronomic shows. Some 27 local women and men undertook intensive courses, each lasting a month. They then took part in 40 events in 2019.

"During the shows, it becomes clear to the public that fishers are the connection between you and the fish you eat," says another *Master Peix*, Conrad Massaguer.

This aligns with one of the main focus of the Costa Brava FLAG, which is the cultural and gastronomic value of local fisheries products. Education and training of fishers can help to promote this, and also serve as motivation for developing local companies.

Local firm, *Grenyal*⁵, offers gastronomic tourism packages based on local products. Grenyal CEO, Roser Vall-Ilosada, describes the setting as she cooks some white prawns: "Thanks to the FLAG, the cofradía of Blanes, which was already a tourist attraction, built this dish preparation room where we can taste their products." The project's preparation room enables tourists to taste local products.



▲ Roser Vall-Ilosada, CEO, Grenyal.

According to the cofradía's Manager, Xavi: "It's a good way to publicize high-quality and sustainable products like this, and white prawns are much more affordable than red shrimp. Climate change has caused an increase in white prawns, so it's interesting making them popular to eat." "We're putting on three times more events than last year,"⁶ says Roser. "Now we employ three people full-time, but our team of collaborators is around 30, all local professionals. We have to value what we have."



- 1 In Spain, *cofradías* (fishermen's guilds) are public law organisations that operate in an exclusive geographical area and represent the interests of the fisheries sector as a whole.
- 2 "Move yourself for the Sea" in Catalanian.
- 3 The term "plogging" comes from the fusion of the English term jogging with the Swedish expression "plocka upp", which means 'to collect'. The concept was born in Stockholm in 2016, to merge sport with respect for the environment. Currently, it is practiced in more than 100 countries and some 20000 people reportedly go out plogging.
- 4 The four axes of CLLD Strategy of Costa Brava are designed to be as broad as possible and to encompass most local projects. The axes consist of: competitiveness (1), sustainability (2), local development (3), education and training (4).
- 5 <https://www.grenyal.com/qui-som-3/>
- 6 <https://www.blanescostabrava.cat/es/oci/el-grenyal-aula-gastronomica/>

Networking for biodiversity protection

The underwater canyons of Cap de Creus are the most important area for dolphins in Catalonia⁷. When the NGO SUBMON noticed that 80 percent of dolphin sightings were linked to trawlers, on whose nets the dolphins fed, cooperating started to make sense.

The entire trawler fleet of the *cofradías* of Roses and Llançá are involved in “Tramuntana Dolphins” – a study project on the bottlenose dolphin population. The dolphins breed in Cap de Creus and are protected by the Habitats Directive⁸.

“Dolphins are an umbrella species: taking care of them means protecting everything underneath, from the fish they feed on, to the ecosystem where they live,” explains Carla Álvarez, SUBMON Project Manager. “Without cooperation with the fishers, studying this interaction would not have been possible.”



▲ Carla Álvarez, SUBMON project manager.

The Costa Brava FLAG-funded training of the fishers includes safety measures for interacting with cetaceans; how to record the sightings; and taking pictures of the GPS location and the fins that biologists use to identify each specimen. “We also held participatory workshops involving fishmongers, encouraging them to mark local fishers’ catches with the project’s seal” says project technician Irene Albert de Quevedo.

Within the project framework, two of the vessels also took part in a marine litter pilot programme: “Two scientists from the NGO boarded our boats to identify the type and origin of the plastic found in

their nets. Now everyone knows, but we have been drawing attention to this problem for more than 20 years,” says Jaume Caball, captain of one of the vessels.

Salvador Manera is no stranger to the problem of plastic. “I am an artisanal fisherman, as is my whole family. I’ve been finding plastic in the ocean for years. A friend recommended taking a theatre course in Gerona. After five years, I decided to create my own show telling the story of my experience. That’s how *Pescaplàstik*⁹ was born.”

The show tells the story of a fisherman who finds that overfishing and marine litter prevent him from doing his job. “The problem with the play was the lack of educational content. That was where I found the FLAG could help me,” recalls Salvador, surrounded by the workshops’ material. Working with the Costa Brava FLAG, Salvador developed a guide and four informational workshops related to fisheries and marine litter. “For one of the workshops, we use films that require virtual reality glasses. Using 360° cameras we recorded: fisheries on a trawler; a purse seine; a tuna boat; an artisanal fishing boat; and a fish auction.”

The workshops, which are requested by municipalities, schools or private companies, are carried out in groups of up to 80 people (adults and children). “In 2019, we held 50 events throughout Catalonia, and we already have 20 shows booked for 2020,” he says, wearing his “trawler-suit”.

Costa Brava cooperation at all levels

- > Regional cooperation: Costa Brava FLAG participated in the creation of the women’s association, *Dones de la Mar*, with the Delta del Ebre FLAG and the Catalan Federation of *Cofradías*.
- > National cooperation: It also collaborated in the *Cerco Cataluña-Euskadi* project with the Basque FLAG, sending Catalan purse seine vessel owners to the Basque Country to learn about their Producer Organisation for small pelagic fish, with a view to setting one up for Catalonia.
- > Transnational cooperation: The FLAG led two transnational projects:
 - The *NorWedMed* Project, for the valorisation of local fishery products from the Northwest Mediterranean Sea. Collaborating with Spanish, French and Italian FLAGs to make a cookbook in four Mediterranean languages.
 - The FLAG promoted and co-financed the attendance of trawlers from all over Catalonia at the Danfish International Fair¹⁰ in Denmark in 2019, to exchange knowledge between the Danfish business organisation – leader in fishing technology – and Mediterranean fishing boat owners.
- > European level: Costa Brava FLAG has attended three FARNET transnational seminars since its creation and its three cooperation projects were presented by the Regional Authority at the Managing Authorities Meeting in Brussels in October 2019.

Capitalising on the area’s natural and cultural heritage

The natural parks of Cap de Creus and the Medes Islands are popular tourist attractions of the Costa Brava, where scuba diving has long been a key economic activity. There, the Association of Underwater Tourist Centres of the Costa Brava¹¹, the oldest professional diving association in Spain, promoted a project on sustainable development of diving activities in 2019. Fourteen free courses for instructors from the Association’s 36 diving centres took place.



▲ Association of Underwater Tourist Centres offers divers free courses on sustainable development.



▲ Josep Lluís at the "Maram" centre.

"Environmental protection is a Corporate Social Responsibility¹² issue for us. We work in protected areas, some of which are where the populations with the greatest use of artisanal fishing are born. Bad management can impact fisheries – an activity we must respect," states the Association's President, Genis Dalmau. "The first step was training our instructors, who are responsible for any environmental damage caused by their clients."

The 12-hour courses included modules on the supervision of divers and in communication. "The divers descend after we teach them about the habitats and show them species identification cards. Offering a more complete service allows us to make more money while passing on environ-

mental values," explains Raquel Gómez, one of the instructors trained.

"The maritime nature of Catalan society is being lost. Capitalising on all of our potential was the main motivation for launching the Catalonia Maritime Strategy 2030¹³ in 2018," says Director General of Fisheries of the Generalitat of Catalonia, Sergi Tudela. "FLAGs play an essential role, for example, making people feel closer to the sea again."

And with this goal, the Fish Interpretation Centre, "Maram"¹⁴, in L'Escalá opened its doors in 2009. The Fish Interpretation Centre brings people closer to the world of fishing in a visual and interactive manner. Maram, created thanks to the Euro-

pean Fisheries Fund (EFF), subsequently updated its facilities and teaching material, using FLAG money. "Informing people about local fisheries heritage is why we decided to turn this space into an interpretation centre," says Trinidad Agundez, Secretary for Cofradía de L'Escalá.

"Everybody knows about our interest in promoting local fish and traditional dishes," adds Cofradía fisherman Josep Lluís. For instance, participating in L'Escalá Gastronomic Fair¹⁵. I love my village, a proud "fishing village", but those cannot be just words: we need to give value to our fisheries heritage ourselves." ■

COSTA BRAVA (Spain)



Surface area:
360 km²

Population:
171 936 inhabitants

Density:
479 inhabitants/km²

EMFF Budget	EUR		
	EU	Regional	Total
	3 044 045	537 185	3 581 230

CONTACT
GALP Costa Brava
 c/o Ms. Francesc Galí
 c/Moll Pesquer, s/n
 17230 Palamós, Spain
 Tel.: +34 659.68.54.00
 gerencia@galpcostabrava.cat – www.galpcostabrava.cat

7 The peninsula of Cap de Creus is located at the northeast point of the Iberian peninsula and is in large part protected by the Cap de Creus Natural Park (in Catalan: Parc Natural del Cap de Creus), the first maritime-terrestrial park in Catalonia covering most of the territory of eight municipalities.

8 Council directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora

9 <https://www.pescaplastik.com/>

10 Danfish Business Organization

11 www.submarinismocostabrava.com

12 The term of Corporate Social Responsibility is a voluntary business self-regulation policy that aims to contribute to societal goals, such as environmental protection. https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/sustainability/corporate-social-responsibility_en

13 The Maritime Strategy of Catalonia approved by the regional government, establishes a maritime policy taking into account all activities with an impact on Catalan maritime space. Its four scopes of action up to the year 2030 include: sustainable development; the protection of marine ecosystems; citizen's involvement; and innovative governance.

14 Centro MARAM (<https://www.visitescala.com/es/museos/centro-dinterpretacion-del-pescado-maram>)

15 L'Escalá Gastronomic Fair was a FLAG project promoted by the municipal Economic and Tourism Development Agency through which a group of local fishers promoted traditional fish dishes in September 2019.

Report

THE 'BLUE' CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The blue mark

The recovery of marine waste – plastics in particular – has become a major concern for fishers and residents of coastal communities near the Portuguese capital. Here, the circular economy is blue.

You'll often find Ana Pêgo walking with her head down. 'Hey! Can you see those fossils in the stone there?' she calls out, pointing to white marks etched into the flagstones along the harbour esplanade at Cascais. She can't help herself: nothing on the ground – whether good or bad – escapes the scrutiny of this marine biologist, who, over the years, has become a champion of beachcombing, the cleaning of beaches, turning her passion into a practical purpose.

Over the years, Ana has combed the beach to collect hundreds of items of plastic waste – bags, toys, straws, sim cards, phone batteries, e-cigarette filters – before sorting, cleaning and arranging them into pretty installations of decorative objects, which she then displays in schools and libraries, on café tables and social networks, in any place, real or virtual, where she can raise awareness of what she calls the 'new invasive species' of the ocean. 'My aim is to mix science and art to reach as many people as possible and make them aware of the real environmental catastrophe that is plastic. All these playful objects help people to visualise the scale of the disaster.'

Her project is called [Plasticus Maritimus](#) and includes a [Facebook page](#), a [book published in nine languages](#) and an environmental education programme for children and their teachers. 'I concentrate on the teachers now, because the project is getting bigger and bigger and I can't respond to all the requests from schools. Teachers have a great multiplier effect, but they're not too sure how to approach the subject



▲ Ana Pêgo displaying the plastic objects she finds on the beaches.



▲ Waste collected by fishermen awaiting treatment in the port of Cascais.

of maritime ecology with their pupils. I give them all sorts of advice, especially on how to identify the origin of waste. Beyond the rubbish that people leave behind at the beach, all this plastic comes from both the land and the sea, from roads swept by rain, from industrial activities of course, but also from accidents on the sea. This printer cartridge, for example, comes from a container that fell from a ship off the Azores. The currents carried parts of the cargo all the way here. The tragedy is also that as it (very slowly) disintegrates, the plastic turns into fine particles that are swallowed by the fish we eat, and these 'nano-plastics' then end up in our bloodstream!

Sustainable local development

With this project, Ana recently won third prize in the Yves Rocher Foundation's [Terre de Femmes](#) competition. Her personal initiative could be a valuable asset for local development supported by European funds. 'I'm trying to convince Ana to submit a project under our fourth call for proposals,' says Marcia Mendes, coordinator of the A2S Association ([Associação para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável da Região Saloia](#)), which is recognised by the Portuguese government as an interme-

diated body for the management of European funds for rural and coastal areas of the western periphery of Lisbon ('Região Saloia'). A2S manages a LEADER programme inland and the [Ericeira / Cascais FLAG](#) on the coast.

The FLAG includes 2 municipalities (Mafra and Cascais), 3 public bodies, and 11 other collective players including 3 local fisheries organisations. The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) currently finances around ten projects in the sectors of fish and seafood sales, tourism and the 'blue' circular economy. 'Until now, we have only funded one project in this last area, but there are others in our region that may not have been financed by us, but have every reason to be showcased, supported and better known at European level.'

The blue mark

Designed between March and September 2019, the 'Blue Circular Postbranding Project', supported by the FLAG, draws inspiration from the 'Fishing for a Waste Free Sea' project promoted by the Ministry of the Sea since 2017 and developed by Docapesca, the Directorate-General for Fishing Ports and Auctions, in partnership with the Portuguese Marine Waste Association.

But the new project goes further, in addition to collecting and disposing fishing waste (nets and plastic), it will also recycle it into sustainable items (initially boots, clothes, oilskins and fishing outfits) 'with an environmental, social, visual and responsible consumer impact,' explains Isabel Farinha, professor of marketing at Lisbon's Universidade Europeia and initiator of the project as part of the UNIDCOM research unit.

'The implementation of the blue circular economy model with the participation of civil society, of the fishing community, of political and corporate interests, aims to transform the waste that is discarded every day into something new and valuable. This is the idea behind "Postbranding" – I came up with this term, because what we want to do is to give these products a second life, a second "brand",' says Isabel Farinha.



'We're trying to promote a transparent and integrated process of circular economy that strengthens socio-economic development based on the "I buy what I own" principle. We want to create an industry based on a resource that is harmful for the ocean, transformed into new products with a strong ecological character. Sustainability is an ethical and creative eco-design process built around a high level of quality and environmental awareness.'

Initially designed by and for the fishers of Ericeira, the project was extended to Cascais due to unexpected circumstances: *'In December 2019, Storm Helena almost completely destroyed Ericeira's port infrastructure,'* says Sonia Seixas, biologist at the Universidade Aberta, who is responsible for the coordination of the project. *'We realised that without the port there was no project, so we turned to Cascais.'*

So, in January 2020, the project team organised a meeting in Cascais between the fishermen, the municipality, the inter-municipal waste treatment company Tratolixo and Dopesca. Collection bins were installed at the port, and premises provided next to the fish auction market. Everything was ready for the launch event on 16 March, when along came COVID-19 and the lockdown that followed. At the time the article was written (May 2020), the Blue Circular Postbranding Project was still in the starting blocks. *'I have no doubt about the success of the project, at least as far as we're concerned,'* says Paulo Pina, president of the Association of Professional Fishers of Cascais, which has around a hundred members.

'The younger fishermen are very sensitive to the environment, to sustainable fishing, and very conscious of the problem of marine waste. And working with biologists motivates them even more.'

'This coronavirus is really bad luck!' says Sonia Seixas. *'We were 100% ready: the fishermen are ready to go, and the quantitative and qualitative surveys that we have carried out confirm that the project is viable.'*



▲ Fernando Teixeira and the new range of FAPIL products made from recycled plastic.

Fapil

Combining viability, practicality and sustainability is something that Fernando Teixeira knows well. He is the CEO of FAPIL, a company which specialises in the manufacturing of household products made of plastic. *'When my father founded the company in 1975, he was already a real stickler for the environment. After his death in 2018, we began to think about new products made from plastics that "came from the sea and should not go back", with the aim of breaking the usual cycle of waste – dumping at sea, landfill or incineration. We searched all over the world and found suppliers that could provide us with recycled plastic pellets.'*

This new raw material produced from recycled ropes, nets and other plastic waste from the maritime sector has enabled FAPIL to develop a new range of some thirty products using a minimum of 20% recycled material, which it is about to launch. *'They are 10–20% more expensive but their texture has a unique "organic" feel due to the recycled materials used. This is a way for us to go upmarket and start exporting to northern European markets.'*



▲ Recycled plastic pellets from ropes and fishing nets.

ERICEIRA / CASCAIS (Portugal)			
		<p>Surface area: 95 km²</p> <p>Population: 80 860 inhabitants</p> <p>Density: 852 inhabitants/km²</p>	
EMFF Budget	EUR		
	EU	National	Total
	1 462 918	258 162	1 721 080
<p>CONTACT GAL Ericeira/ Cascais A2S – Associação para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável da Região Saloia c/o Márcia Mendes Mafra Business Factory Avenida Primeiro de maio, n.º1 2640-455 Mafra – Portugal www.a2s.pt – geral@a2s.pt</p>			

Skeleton Sea

'Portugal has seen a lot of progress on marine environment in recent years. But plastic waste remains a huge problem, like everywhere else in the world, and we need to find use for it in order to get rid of it,' stresses Xandi Kreuzeder, a German surfing fanatic who lives in Ericeira, a site recognised as a 'world surfing reserve' since 2011. Xandi has also been involved in the blue circular economy that attracts an increasing number of people here: his *Skeleton Sea* project creates large sculptures out of marine waste, some of which have gone all over Portugal and even around the world (during the 2011–12 Volvo Ocean Race). Some 1 200 schoolchildren have taken part in his environmental education programme, funded by EEA grants (awarded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway).

We'll leave the last word to Xandi: 'Young people are now really conscious of the problem, to the point where they are educating their parents. And that makes me optimistic!' ■

FLAG strategies and support, fit for purpose in the face of change

As FLAGs start looking towards the next programming period, a new reality that few people imagined has taken hold: a global pandemic, known as COVID-19. The outbreak initially saw communities confined to their homes and halted fishing and aquaculture activities in many areas across Europe. However, the lasting effects of COVID-19 on fishing communities and society in general are yet to be seen, as people start to rebuild their businesses and reimagine how society and its activities are organised.

What *has* been made clear, is that local development strategies **must support local communities to be resilient** in the face of external shocks and **strategies should be flexible** if they are to allow FLAGs to react to changing needs on the ground. As the financial crisis of 2008 radically changed the context in which most FLAGs were operating, so COVID-19 has, again, changed the playing field.

The collection of examples below show how certain FLAGs managed to redirect their support to meet new and urgent needs that were unexpected at the beginning of the period. This might provide food for thought as FLAGs prepare their post-2020 strategies.



▲ Distribution of personal protective equipment.

REDIRECTING BUDGET AND ANIMATION EFFORTS AND IN THE FACE OF AN EMERGENCY [SPAIN]

As the coronavirus broke out in Spain, threatening the continuity of fishing activities, the [Basque](#) FLAG reacted quickly to the lack of basic health and safety equipment such as masks, thermometers and disinfectant gel. The FLAG facilitated their acquisition where possible and distributed certain supplies to its fleet. It worked closely with the area's fishing organisations, an NGO and the regional government, also supporting a project to adapt fish handling protocol in its main port. This helped guarantee social distancing measures, allowing fish to be landed, sold and distributed.



▲ Mario Belo Pedro, Quinta Quanta Business CEO, working with halophytes plants. Project supported by Oeste FLAG.



▲ Local fisherman shows his fish.

MARINE PLANT FARMER DIVERSIFIES QUICKLY INTO PRODUCING HAND SANITISER [PORTUGAL]

Sanitising hand gel was in short supply in the [Oeste FLAG](#) area during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, thanks to prior FLAG support for a project to farm coastal plants for essential oils, a business could use its facilities to diversify into making hydroalcoholic hand sanitising gel. Local farmers provided the company with pumpkins, which were fermented to produce the alcohol required for the sanitiser. The farm produced 50 litres of hand sanitiser per week during the crisis, while maintaining its coastal plant farming and essential oil production.

MOBILISING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA TO SUPPORT THE SECTOR [ITALY]

[VeGAL FLAG](#) launched an awareness campaign on [Facebook](#) promoting the consumption of local seafood through [video testimonials](#) with local fishers. To support these fishers and other local businesses, the FLAG also promoted [direct sales](#) by indicating when local producers would be active and where they were making deliveries. Consumers could follow the initiative using the Facebook hashtag [#IoMangioloItaliano](#). The FLAG board [met remotely](#) to organise the campaign and approve new projects that could mitigate the effects of COVID-19.



▲ Fish vending machine.



▲ Fisherman in Gran Canaria.

CONTACTLESS BUYING AND SELLING OF FRESH FISH [SLOVENIA]

[Posavje FLAG](#) came up with an innovative system allowing consumers to buy fresh seafood without having to come into contact with other people. In the town of Krško's market, a [vending machine system](#), originally put in place to allow for 24/7 access to fresh fish, enabled consumers to buy variety of seafood products during the crisis, while maintaining social distance.

CREATING A LOCAL DELIVERY NETWORK THROUGH WHATSAPP [SPAIN]

During the lockdown, many consumers on the island were unable to access their usual sources of seafood. As a solution, [Gran Canaria FLAG](#) created a WhatsApp group connecting producers and consumers. The group allowed consumers to order fresh fish, and fishers to deliver orders to specific collections sites. The FLAG is also supporting the further development of this initiative into a more permanent digital platform for the future.



▲ Consumer picks up her fish from the fisherman thank to Fisch vom Kutter online portal



▲ Kavala, Greece.

ADAPTING AN EXISTING FLAG PROJECT TO BETTER RESPOND TO NEW NEEDS [GERMANY]

The [Fisch vom Kutter online portal](#), which connects consumers with local fishers, was a long-running [Baltic Sea Coast FLAG](#) project. It proved its value more than ever as the COVID-19 crisis hit. Activity on the site increased, and fishers who would previously only market a small percentage of their fish directly, turned to the portal to sell their entire catch. In addition, alongside the project's usual delivery sites, Fisch vom Kutter introduced a mobile truck to deliver fish when open-air markets were closed.

BOOSTING TECHNOLOGY AND BREAKING DOWN BUREAUCRATIC BARRIERS [GREECE]

To mitigate the impact of the pandemic, FLAGs in Greece used teleconferencing tools to maintain project calls and project selection processes. To alleviate pressure on both the FLAG and project promoters, several FLAGs ([Pilio](#), [Thessaloniki](#), [Kavala](#), [Dodecanese](#) and [Aitoliki](#)) also extended submission deadlines. By extending the project selection process, the FLAGs were aiming to encourage project proposals linked to overcoming new challenges presented by the pandemic.



▲ Takeaway service in the face of confinement.



▲ Costa Brava FLAG area.

A TAKEAWAY SERVICE IN THE FACE OF CONFINEMENT [FINLAND]

As confinement was introduced in Finland, a [fish processor](#) based in the [Central Finland FLAG](#) area worked with a local restaurant to offer a [takeaway service](#) to local residents – thanks to support from the FLAG. The collaboration maintained a fisheries supply chain during the crisis, allowing local fishers to sell their catch to the processor. This, in turn, provided the restaurant with the fish required for its takeaway service.

DEVELOPING A POST-PANDEMIC STRATEGY [SPAIN]

Looking to the future, [Costa Brava FLAG](#) initiated a series of remote meetings to discuss how its strategy could be adapted after the pandemic. The objective of the [virtual meetings](#) was to bring together ideas and solutions to the new challenges posed to the area as a result of the pandemic. The meetings were also aimed at increasing the visibility of the FLAG and the area's fishing sector and moving forward with the selection of projects that would benefit the local community. ■

People

The story so far and the shape of CLLD's future

With the start of the next programming period just around the corner in 2021, we wanted to hear about the current status of CLLD and how it will shape future plans. A representative from a FLAG, a National Network and a Managing Authority share their stories so far on how preparations for the next period are going and what lies ahead for each of them.

VeGAL FLAG (Italy) – strengthening its environmental focus as it looks to the future

Close to the historic city of Venice, the VeGAL FLAG area attracts up to 40 million tourists per year. Antonio Gottardo is the FLAG President.

“VeGAL FLAG has an area of around 784 km² and a coastline of around 83 km. Geographically, it's diverse, including river areas, agricultural land and coastline. Our FLAG's membership team represents almost all the fishing and livestock sector in the area, and we expect it to be the same in the next programming period.

“The objectives of our Local Development Strategy this period were to maintain and create jobs; strengthening the role of fishing communities in local development and governance; and supporting the development of fishing and aquaculture activities. Our projects mainly involved fisheries and aquaculture companies, thus boosting economic activities.

“In the current period, new Sites of Community Importance (SCI) for protecting turtles and dolphins were defined without much scientific basis. These SCI areas disrupt fishing activities. We worked with local fishers and neighbouring FLAGs in Friuli and Emilia Romagna to establish areas within the SCIs where fishing activities are at risk of being interrupted. Thanks to this collaboration, smaller areas were designated, allowing fishing activities to continue and researchers from scientific institutes to go onboard fishing vessels.



▲ Antonio Gottardo, President of VeGAL FLAG.

“In the next programming period, our focus will be similar. Our local strategy has always been concerned with maintaining jobs and supporting businesses. Traditional fishing activities provide subsistence living, so we try to stabilise the number of people employed in the sector and encourage fishers to diversify their incomes by integrating with other sectors, such as ecosystem services or livestock farming. This maintains the viability of small-scale fishing and aquaculture.

“Another way of boosting employment and income diversification is to link the fishing sector with sustainable tourism. We try to connect the strong Venetian tourism industry with fishing as a unique form of cultural heritage, taking into account Venetian knowledge, trades and crafts handed down for generations. It will also be important to highlight fishing-related locations like waterfronts and fishing villages, adding them to tourists' itineraries. A current call aims to select projects that identify and designate “fishing heritage villages”.

“Previous sustainable tourism projects have often been about standardisation of services, locations and supply. We now want to do more work on uniqueness and biodiversity – aspects that distinguish the Italian coast. The environmental impact of such projects is enhanced through fishers' continuous monitoring of the coasts and lagoons, showing that the industry can play an active role in safeguarding the sea.



“Supporting companies to grow and take advantage of new opportunities creates economically and socially active businesses that enhance the local area. What’s needed are projects that complement improved infrastructure; for example, making the most of ports and fish markets. There needs to be more networking between operators; research into technological innovations; and support for marketing. As a FLAG, we can stimulate the design and management of all of these. Among the projects we’ve selected are initiatives for the valorisation of “moeche”¹⁶ through local restaurateurs, information campaigns at points of sale and participation in trade fairs.

“Awareness of environmental issues in national and local authorities has increased. This already has an impact on which projects are selected and this will continue into the next period. VeGAL FLAG sees two big opportunities for fishers. Firstly, ecological monitoring activities should be part of a fisher’s job when they are out at sea. Putting this into practice successfully requires a number of steps, including changing the mindset of fishers, training them and creating more links between fishers and researchers. Secondly, using biodegradable gear has to become the norm. Currently, only a few aquaculture producers and fishers are using innovative gear. There is still a big role for the FLAG to play here, and we can support this by encouraging research into biodegradable gear and getting more fishers to use it.

“In preparation for the next period, a series of activities promoted by the National Network of FLAGs at local level is underway. FLAG meetings were held in Noto and Chioggia in July and October 2019, where FLAG representatives came together to discuss and reflect on the next period. An evaluation of the current programme is ongoing and we continue to develop suggestions for future improvements.

“As we have already spent our CLLD budget for this period, we risked having a gap between this period and the start of the next. We solved this by applying to manage other funds provided under EMFF measures. After consulting with our intermediate body, the Veneto region, we can now support projects outside of CLLD, but ones that allow us to maintain contact with the same community and sector. These include initiatives around collecting marine litter and promoting the use of biodegradable material for fishing and aquaculture.



▲ Erko Veltson, Estonian National Network.

Estonian National Network ready to continue their good work

National Networks (NNs) come in various forms, such as being a department within the Managing Authority, or being an external agency funded by “technical assistance” from the EMFF. Whatever their composition, most NNs have similar goals, including capacity building and networking activities, exchange of knowledge and best practice/project ideas and improving the information flow between the Managing Authority (MA) and the FLAGs.

In Estonia, where there are eight FLAGs, the Fisheries Information Centre (FIC) is a long-term project funded by the EMFF and it carries out the tasks of the NN. Erko Veltson works for the FIC.

“The FIC was started during the Axis 4 in the previous programming period. The Centre deals with the whole fishing sector including aquaculture, fisheries, trawling, and more. The FIC coordinates: cooperation between the fisheries and the aquaculture sector; fishermen’s organisations and researchers; and relevant studies and pilot projects.

“When the FIC was created, it was separate from the NN working with CLLD. In 2015, the Ministry decided to combine the FIC with the NN. I am one of two members of the NN working at the Centre handling CLLD. An evaluation of CLLD commissioned in 2019 says that the FIC is working well, and that cooperation with the sector and coastal fisheries is very good.

“At the end of each year, the NN prepares the next year’s Action Plan and budget. The Action Plan lists activities, training sessions, events and publications for the following year, along with an indication of the budget that will be devoted to each item. When the Action Plan and budget are ready, the FIC’s council reviews and approves both of them. The FIC’s council includes one member representing the FLAGs, giving FLAGs a voice in the decision-making process. I expect the FIC’s format will be the same in the next period, as well as the activities it funds, as they will still be needed.

“We began preparing the next period’s Programme last year. FLAGs have been continuously involved in this process. A summer seminar was held for FLAGs in July 2019. There have been frequent round tables, most recently last November. Representatives from the FLAGs have also been taking part in our sectoral working group meetings – the last one was held in October 2019.

16 During mutation, crabs lose the carapace, taking on a tender and soft consistency. These are called *moeche*, a term derived from the Venetian dialect.

“Collaboration with the FLAGs is going well. To enhance this relationship in the upcoming period, the FIC could provide coaching or mentoring to FLAGs to develop some innovative ideas together. Although cooperation with the FLAGs is good right now, I hope we can increase this, leading to more links between fisheries entrepreneurs and research institutions.

“For the next period, we are focusing on: the blue economy; marine aquaculture; environmental sustainability; better management of fish stocks; and invasive species. The MA and NN have agreed on these topics, following the priorities set by the European Commission.

“In my opinion, an improvement could be made to the project rules on transnational cooperation. By this, I mean that we should harmonise the rules between Member States to make it easier to carry out cooperation projects with FLAGs in other countries. Unfortunately, as an NN, we can’t do anything about this.

“I don’t know what our NN will do about transnational cooperation between Baltic states in the next period. For now, we have one transnational project concerning seals and cormorants with Finland, Sweden and Germany. As an NN representative, I will help the FLAGs communicate with each other. I hope to see more of these types of projects in the future because they bring people closer and produce bigger results. Cooperation is crucial, not only at the FLAG level, but also at the MA and NN level.”

The Slovenian Managing Authority working towards improving the delivery system

Managing Authorities (MAs) are national administrations that programme and oversee the implementation of European funds such as the EMFF. MAs set the broad objectives of the programme and specify the rules and procedures of spending the money.

Bety Breznik, PhD, is from Slovenia’s MA, where there are four active FLAGs and a lot of interest from the fisheries sector.

“We faced a lot of delays when we first began because we changed from a ‘1-fund system’ to a ‘3-fund system’ with different rules for each fund. CLLD is now going well. External experts evaluated our implementation of EMFF during this period. While the evaluation identified initial obstacles, linked to administrative burden and long decision-making processes, it also concluded that our implementation seems to have overcome these obstacles and is working well.

“Looking ahead to the next period, some improvements will be introduced to the delivery system, as it’s important that the delivery system works well for all the stakeholders. We want to establish a simple and transparent system, involving all the relevant bodies in designing the system right from the beginning to avoid blockages. This means discussions engaging the Paying Agency, the FLAGs and all relevant participants – such as representatives from sectors including fisheries and aquaculture, tourism, educational, NGOs, women, vulnerable groups, the municipal level, and scientific and research institutions.



▲ Bety Breznik, Slovenia Managing Authority.

Taking into account the administrative complexities of the current period, and the expected delays in launching other European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), our MA will use the opportunity to set up mono-funded FLAGs, as opposed to three funds together. Multi-funding will still be possible under other Funds (EAFRD, ERDF and ESF), but EMFF will support self-standing FLAGs. This will give FLAGs the ability to proceed more quickly and to be more goal-oriented, according to the needs of the sector and the local area, and allow the best possible absorption of EU funds.

“Reflections on the future shape of fisheries CLLD in Slovenia are well advanced and there are already concrete ideas. The Slovenian MA may even allocate more funding to CLLD and target new inland areas. It’s estimated that as much as one third of Slovenia’s EMFF allocation for the next period could be dedicated to CLLD, although there are still discussions about this. We are considering setting up a National Network for fisheries CLLD and there could be one or two new FLAGs in the north-eastern part of the country.

“Existing inland FLAGs will be encouraged to concentrate their strategies on adding value; the promotion of local products; cultural and natural heritage; and, of course, the conservation of the sector (including the creation of jobs and businesses, and promoting stakeholder cooperation). We expect the coastal FLAG to continue its current focus on diversification; cooperation projects with other sectors; preserving tradition and natural and cultural heritage; environmental activities; and waste reduction projects.

“Our MA has already started working towards the first draft of the EMFF Programme and appointed a working group that includes FLAG representatives. In autumn 2019, we began supporting FLAGs to prepare for the next period by organising three workshops for the FLAGs to help them develop their SWOT analyses and prepare future strategies. We are in constant contact with the FLAG managers to discuss all open issues (for example, difficulties on the local level, such as understanding legislation) and help with animation, meetings and training. ■



▲ Rural Development Initiative FLAG, Poland.

CLLD in inland areas

Inland areas in Europe harbour a rich tradition when it comes to the exploitation of water-based resources. In terms of overall FLAGs, one in four is located inland, or houses significant inland fisheries or aquaculture activity. The richness and diversity of the often centuries-old traditions adds to the appeal and interest of European inland areas.

This article provides an overview and establishes the various profiles of inland FLAGs in Europe. It also explores their main challenges, along with some of the ways these have been met. Lastly, it looks at the rationale behind selecting inland FLAGs, as well as prospective opportunities for the next programming period.

What is an inland FLAG?

Defining what constitutes an inland FLAG is difficult, but necessary to allow for coherent analysis of FLAG activities. For the purpose of this article, we define an inland FLAG as one which predominantly operates in the interior of a country. Therefore, we are excluding coastal FLAGs, even though they might house freshwater/brackish coastal lagoons or lakes. Indeed,

the existence of these freshwater bodies are usually not the main feature behind the existence of the majority of FLAG in coastal areas.

Using this definition, we have identified 93 FLAGs active in European inland areas in 10 different Member States. These FLAGs represent 25 percent of the total number of FLAGs and are mostly located in the Eastern part of Europe. In terms of size,

inland FLAGs usually cover larger areas than coastal FLAGs, with an average size close to 4400 km² (while the average EU FLAG size is 2300 km²).

In terms of employment levels, aquaculture is the main job provider when it comes to fish-related activities, representing close to 45 percent of jobs, followed by commercial inland fishing (around 30 percent of jobs) and the processing sector at around 20 percent. The prevalence of aquaculture jobs is specific to inland FLAG areas compared to coastal ones. Conversely, inland FLAG areas have less availability of processing jobs (15 percent less than coastal FLAGs on average). This is related to two trends observed in inland FLAG areas: the importance of direct sales of whole fish from farms (especially those around ponds and small lakes); and the processing of fish products by the small-scale fishers themselves (who are considered 'producers' in our data, not processors).

Table 1: Overview of key figures for inland FLAGs

MS	No. of Inland FLAGs	Average Surface area (km ²)	Average Population (per FLAG)	Average Total Employment in Fisheries (FTE per FLAG)	Av. of Fishing (FTE per FLAG)	Av. of Aquaculture (FTE per FLAG)	Av. of Processing (FTE per FLAG)	Average Total Public Budget Allocated to each FLAG for 2014-2020
BG	3	1 534	25 188	77	0	45	32	3 000 000
DE	14	1 259	113 574	232	92	380	107	448 810
EE	2	2 855	28 134	389	232	6	152	2 931 559
FI	6	2 3958	313 064	282	154	51	76	1 036 766
GR	1	607	14 905	14	14	0	0	1 500 000
LT	9	2 653	63 835	176	29	45	207	1 126 517
PL	26	1 823	94 925	140	63	110	56	2 236 406
RO	19	1 387	83 578	306	241	85	35	2 656 368
SE	10	12 874	184 231	63	39	3	32	1 740 594
SI	3	1 049	87 312	15	1	12	8	1 338 330
Total	93	4 382	11 3182	153	49	67	32	€1 719 638

Standing at around €1.7 million, the average budget of inland FLAGs hides a high level of disparity, with budgets as low as €400 000 for some German inland FLAGs, and as high as €3m in countries such as Bulgaria, Estonia and Romania (see Table 1).

In terms of geographic distribution, Figure 1 shows a clear east/west divide in Europe, with all inland FLAGs located east of the Rhine and an additional concentration around the Baltic area. Poland has the most inland FLAGs (26), followed by Romania (19) and Germany (14).

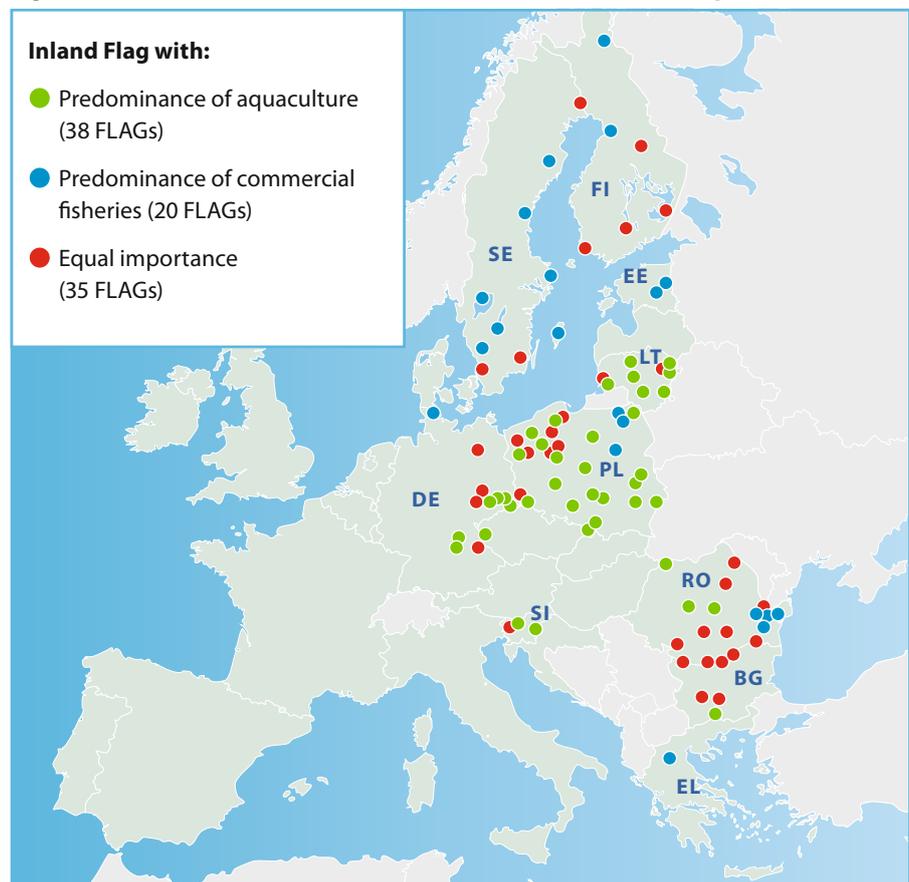
**Figure 1: Location and classification of inland FLAGs in Europe**

Table 2 highlights: that strong commercial inland fisheries are mostly found in the north of Europe; extensive pond farming is the defining feature of German and Polish inland FLAGs, with some additional regional peculiarities, e.g. lake ice fishing in Lithuania, Estonia and Finland, an emerging fishing sector in post-coal mining landscapes in Saxony (DE), or else, the massive and centuries-old fishing community along the Danube river in Romania. Also, inland fishing operations are undertaken almost exclusively by small-scale fishing vessels using passive gear, except on the larger Finnish or Estonia lakes.

Table 2: sectoral specificities of inland FLAGs at Member State level

Member State	Commercial inland fishing	Aquaculture (extensive, pond based)	Aquaculture (trout, others,...)	Fish processing
Estonia	XXX	X	X	XXX
Lithuania	X		X	XXX
Finland	XXX		X	X
Sweden	XXX		X	XX
Germany	X	XXX	X	XXX
Poland	X	XXX	XX	X
Slovenia			XXX	X
Greece	X			
Romania	XXX	X	X	X
Bulgaria			XX	X

Focus: Polish FLAGs and fish farming: a true love story

Poland is one of the largest EU producers of carp, and carp farming in ponds has a long tradition. These centuries-old production systems are not only an important source of food, but also provide valuable environmental services by contributing to local biodiversity. The main issue for Polish fish farmers remains strong seasonality of consumption, hence, income. FLAGs have been extensively promoting carp (and other inland fish) as year-round dishes, rather than just at Christmas. Three quarters of Polish FLAGs are inland. In the western part of Poland, the [Barycz Valley FLAG](#) supports a wide range of mature and integrated business development activities, [involving fish farmers](#).

Further south, the [Opole FLAG](#) hosts more than 20 small-scale fish farms supporting 100 direct FTE jobs (see article in [FARNET Magazine 16](#) and the [video](#)).

As the name of the [Carp Valley FLAG](#) suggests, traditional carp fishing and the famous Zator carp are part of cherished cultural heritage. In the south-east, [Fruit Trail FLAG](#) and the [Roztocze FLAG](#) areas are well-known for thousands of ponds, where carp, trout and sturgeon are intensively produced. In addition, local branches of the Polish Anglers' Association are involved in most of the Polish inland FLAGs and have collaborated on many CLLD projects, helping, for example, to [promote environmentally-friendly methods of freshwater fishing](#) through exchange of experience and good practices between one Finnish FLAG and two Polish FLAGs.



▲ Opole region.



▲ Carp Valley.

Involving inland fishing communities in the management of fish resources

The status of the resources exploited by local fishing communities varies significantly across areas. In some, the number of professional fishers is proportionally too high for the available fish stocks, especially around big lakes hosting semi-industrial fishing fleets (e.g. in Estonia, Lithuania) and in some rivers (e.g. Danube). Water pollution and the increase in anthropogenic obstacles (e.g. dams) also contribute to a decline in productivity of inland waters. Conversely, some freshwater species (e.g. vendace, perch and cyprinids) remain 'commercially' untapped by local fishermen in Nordic and Baltic countries.

Due to the enclosed nature of inland waters, conflicts can be acute between different users (professional fishers, recreational fishers, fish farmers, nature conservationists, nature water sports providers, etc.). There is often a lack of integration of fisheries with the rest of the area (usually rural) and a lack of networking opportunities due to the marginal importance of fishing in the local economy.

As a response to these issues, several inland Baltic FLAGs have helped local fishers' associations cooperate with Managing Authorities and scientists to implement river basin management plans (see the [Nyköping River management plan](#), SE); monitoring and poaching surveillance projects (see [North Kurzeme FLAG's project](#), LV); and valorising underused species (in [Sweden](#) and in Finland with the [Vakava network](#) and the "minced fish" project). By improving the equipment accessible to small-scale fishers (harbours, docks, processing units, etc. see [Hästholmen port](#) project example, SE), FLAGs contribute to maintaining jobs in this sector and a certain cohesion, while sometimes acting as a mediator of conflicts between the various stakeholders who benefit from these water bodies (see [Lake Vättern FLAG's project](#), SE).



▲ [Barycz Valley Partnership](#).

Another common challenge for many inland FLAG areas is the depredation by cormorant populations. Affecting both fishing and aquaculture resources, a transnational cooperation project on sustainable solutions to limit the impact of cormorant and seal depredation was launched in 2017 between Denmark, Estonia, Finland and Sweden. For the time being, the project mainly involves coastal FLAGs, however, several inland FLAGs in Lithuania, Estonia and Finland have expressed interest in joining the project.

Preserving the social capital of local communities by building on its traditional values

The issues faced by inland FLAGs are both social and economic. Most, especially in Bulgaria, Romania and Lithuania, are dealing with demographic challenges: low birth rates, human migration, population ageing, low employment rates, loss of local traditions and know-how. The number of fisheries businesses is declining, further affecting the attractiveness of the sector. On top of this, there is a lack of investors in these rural areas; a lack of infrastructure or modern equipment along the fishing sector value chain; and tourism potential is often insufficiently exploited.

To preserve cultural heritage and identity in inland areas and capitalise on it, FLAGs have focused on supporting activities designed to promote local cultural traditions. These initiatives include organising cultural events (e.g. [FISCHTival](#) and [Holm](#) projects in Germany and cooking workshops in [Slovenia](#)); bolstering local cultural attractions (museums and exhibitions, such as [Tirschenreuth FLAG's projects](#) in Germany); promoting traditional fishing and local products (fish festivals in [Lithuania](#) and [Estonia](#)); and educating future generations of fishers ([extracurricular activities for youth](#) in Romania).

FLAGs can work with the community to develop a favourable environment for maintaining local businesses and attracting new talent. An example is [Barycz Valley Partnership FLAG's \(PL\)](#) series of interconnected activities building the capacity of local businesses, including fish farmers, restaurants, educational and recreational service providers, and encouraging them to cooperate. On a cross-border scale, a [cooperation project](#) started by eight LEADER LAGs-FLAGs from Estonia, Finland and Latvia helps rural entrepreneurs develop links with similar businesses in neighbouring countries, while involving young people who could take over the business.





▲ Finnish fisherman introduces professional fishing in Northern Lapland.

Focus: local challenges and the attractiveness of the fishing sector

In Finland, beyond the issues of generational renewal and declining profitability of inland fishing activities, challenges can be quite different from one FLAG to another.

In the [Central Finland FLAG](#) area, local stakeholders complain about the lack of handling facilities at ports. Indeed, the FLAG Manager confirms, *“there are new fishers, but it isn’t easy for them to start here, because they have to land their catch in non-ergonomic conditions. The long distances between fishers and fish-processing companies is a major problem in our area. Fishers often have to sell their catch without gutting or processing, so the value of the catch is lower. In addition, as winters become milder due to global warming, our traditional ice fishing is greatly affected, causing a loss of income for many businesses throughout the value chain”*.

Similarly, in the [Kainuu-Koillismaa FLAG](#), only two small fish processors are settled in the area. All the potential added value along the processing value chain is gained outside the region. More targeted support for small and medium sized fish processors would sustain the whole local fishing sector.

Conversely, in [Lapland FLAG](#) area (northern Finland), there is no problem with local fishing infrastructure: harbours and fish handling facilities have been modernized or are in good condition. These facilities are owned and maintained by municipalities, who improve and develop these facilities by investing in machinery and renovations, partly funded by the EMFF and national budgets. With local fishers as the driving force, an important part of

the FLAG’s work is to help municipalities apply for this funding which comes from the other parts of the EMFF. The Lapland FLAG hosts 3 000 km² of lake area suitable and available for commercial fishing, and, according to scientific studies and expert estimates, the sustainable catch in commercial fisheries could be tripled or even quadrupled. According to the FLAG Manager, *“the demand for our high-quality fish is strong in southern Finland, bigger that we can meet now, due to the small number of fishers. Good demand means good prices and profitability, so one could imagine that young people would find a fishing career attractive. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Thus, one of the FLAG’s main challenges is to promote inland fishing jobs and enhance the image and reputation of these professional activities.”*

To remedy this, the FLAG funded the production of six videos showcasing local fishing and modern fish handling techniques, while promoting the fishers’ exceptional work environment (available on [YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGPvkvBlcw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGPvkvBlcw)). A recruitment project co-led by the Municipality of Sodankylä and Lokka Fishermen’s Cooperative, sees experienced fishers guide and train newcomers. So far, 30 people have shown interest in the training, and six young men have started commercial fishing. This is encouraging for the local FLAG Manager, who said: *“Some of the new ones were not native Laplanders. There are now 11 new inhabitants in Sodankylä – occupational immigration from southern Finland to Lapland!”*

Greening local habits through innovation, education and cooperation

Most inland FLAGs have identified a need to raise the local population's awareness regarding environmental protection and climate change, which severely impact most watersheds. In north east Germany, the [Inland Fishing Mecklenburg Lake District FLAG](#) supported an [innovative aquaponics](#) project the "Tomato-fish" business, aiming to reduce the environmental impact of fish farming through symbiotic production of fish and tomatoes. In Romania, [educational activities](#) like waste management training and eco-camps, have been set up for young people in the [Galati FLAG](#) region, teaching them about preserving the [Lower Prut Floodplain Natural Park's](#) sensitive ecosystem.

Reducing the carbon footprint related to imports while promoting local products is one of the objectives of the [cooperation project](#) between Slovenia's three inland FLAGs. After establishing a national quality system for products from Slovenian fish farms, they developed a quality label to provide assurance to consumers and encourage them to choose local over imported fisheries products.

Vision for the future

Inland FLAGs form an important part of the EU FLAG community and play a significant role in supporting local fisheries and aquaculture. The FLAGs contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage; the education of young people about environmental issues; and encourage innovative ideas and multi-sectoral initiatives. Through these actions, FLAGs help to alleviate global issues faced by rural areas, including depopulation, water pollution and pressure on local fish resources.



▲ Green local habitats.

This article has highlighted the benefit of setting up a FLAG in inland areas where fishing and aquaculture are historically and culturally rooted. It is, however, important to consider the economic and social critical mass represented by the fishing/aquaculture industry in these inland areas to rationalise the implementation of a FLAG. To advocate for establishing a FLAG rather than a LEADER LAG, fishing and other related activities must be an essential feature of the area. In some regions, multi-funded local action groups may best suit the interests of rural and fishing communities. In the current programming period, around 27 percent of inland FLAGs are multi-funded (mostly in collaboration with the LEADER programme). This proportion could increase significantly for the next programming period, which would make sense in rural areas where synergies between fishing and rural communities are strong. Multi-funding could be used for developing local food products, linking fish and farm products (e.g. with the EAFRD); creating touristic packages (bed and breakfast accommodations near fishing spots (ERDF)); or for retraining of tourism workers (ESF).

Looking ahead to the 2021-2027 programming period, opportunities for inland FLAGs include cooperation possibilities with other similar inland areas; and undertaking exchanges of experience and best practices mainly focused on aquaculture and freshwater resources conservation. FLAGs have also indicated that they will aim to create better links between the fishing sector and the tourism industry; improve guidance for professionals seeking diversification; and better market freshwater fish species.

Inland and coastal FLAGs reflect different realities, but often share the similar global challenges. As such, inland and coastal communities have much to learn from each other. Joining them through a network like FARNET, transforms FLAGs into a great tool for addressing maritime, coastal or continental issues at a local level. ■

Cooperation

Tackling common challenges together in the Mediterranean

Declining fish stocks, heavy pressure on marine ecosystems from different economic sectors, pollution and the effects of climate change are all taking their toll on the long-term sustainability of fisheries in the Mediterranean. These challenges are common in many Mediterranean FLAG areas and their solutions demand a collaborative approach.

What impact will collecting marine litter have if measures are not coordinated along the coast to prevent waste from entering the sea elsewhere? Similarly, why make efforts to better manage fish stocks in one area if overfishing next door continues unabated? By working together and extending the reach of projects implemented at local level, FLAGs can help mobilise local knowledge to respond to specific problems in the Mediterranean, while creating synergies and developing the critical mass of action needed to make a difference.

Protecting fish stocks and the marine eco-systems they depend on

A Joint Statement¹⁷ in 2016 by seven NGOs reported the dramatic situation of Mediterranean fish – 96 percent of stocks assessed were considered overexploited. The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) agrees that fisheries man-

agement must be addressed as a priority by all 21 countries around the Mediterranean. But the big question is, *how?*

Improving selectivity, minimising bycatch and interactions with vulnerable species and combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing hold some of the solutions. Putting in place Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) can also contribute to improving biodiversity and the health of marine eco-systems.

This is a topic being studied by FLAGs from various Mediterranean countries. MPAs are designated zones for which protection objectives are set. They have proved to have a positive impact on biodiversity, including fish stocks within and around them. Almost 12 percent of the Mediterranean Sea is covered by MPAs but the European Union believes that the marine space of the EU under protection should increase – to 30 percent, according to its Biodiversity Strategy for 2030¹⁸.



▲ Cooperation in the Mediterranean.



▲ Cyclades FLAG area, Greece.

However, for MPAs to be effective, setting them up is not enough. They must be managed and protection measures – i.e. limitations on activities, be they touristic or fisheries – respected. This requires resources.

With this in mind, 12 Mediterranean FLAGs from Greece, Cyprus, Croatia, Spain and Italy have shown interest in joining a new cooperation project to create a **working group among FLAGs to develop knowledge and foster collaboration to secure the economic viability of MPAs in their areas**. Through study visits and exchange, they aim to learn how to improve the management of these areas by identifying and supporting socio-economic development that is compatible with the natural environment. Led by the *Cyclades FLAG* in Greece, [the project](#) is coordinated by the company *VertigoLab* in France. The first study visit was held in October 2019, just off the highly protected island of Gyros. Participants examined the potential of introducing certain economic activities

(such as professional guided tours or diving) whose revenue could be reinvested in conservation activities which protect, for example, the island's monk seal population and other rare species, such as Eleonora's falcon.

Keeping tourism sustainable

The Mediterranean is the world's top tourist destination, attracting 1.4 billion visitors in 2018. It is a vital part of the economy in practically all coastal communities around the Mediterranean. However, in many areas, traditional tourism models have resulted in an overcrowded coast and damage to natural ecosystems. The economic profits generated do not always benefit local populations.



17 "High Level Seminar on the state of stocks in the Mediterranean and on the CFP approach" (Catania, February 2016): [Joint NGO Statement](https://oceana.org/publications/reports/joint-ngo-statement-%E2%80%99High-level-seminar-state-stocks-mediterranean-and-cfp) <https://oceana.org/publications/reports/joint-ngo-statement-%E2%80%99High-level-seminar-state-stocks-mediterranean-and-cfp>

18 EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

FLAGs have a role to play in ensuring that tourism in their areas remains sustainable and, by capitalising on the growing market for more authentic tourist experiences, FLAGs can ensure that the fisheries sector is involved.

Linking fishing and tourism can help local ecosystems by raising awareness among fishers and the public about the importance of respecting the marine environment. It can also prove advantageous to the local fishing communities by ensuring that they receive some of the revenue that sustainable tourism generates.

Pesca-tourism, for instance, when successful allows fishers to diversify and complement their income while reducing the amount of fish they must capture to make a decent living. The concept is simple: fishing vessels, adapted to ensure safety and compliance with applicable regulations, welcome tourists onboard to witness a day in the life of a local fisher. In certain countries, tourists can also swim, angle from the boat and/or enjoy a meal made from the fish caught.

Given the safety issues posed by pesca-tourism, the activity has only recently had a legal framework developed in some countries. Much work lies ahead, to create and organise a formal tourist offer; adapt participating fishing boats; train fishermen; and promote the activity. This is the case in Greece where, in January 2020, **twenty Greek FLAGs launched a cooperation project to jointly develop and promote pesca-tourism.** Drawing on the experience of Italian fishers, the project foresees study visits for Greek fishers to Italy and the involvement of experts from countries that have already been offering pesca-tourism for some years¹⁹. Together, the Greek FLAGs hope to make pesca-tourism a recognised tourism activity in Greece.

Tourism will of course go beyond fisheries-related activities. Nonetheless, they should remain sustainable and avoid damaging the coastal and marine environment. Another Mediterranean cooperation project has seen **six Greek and Cypriot FLAGs work together to expand a network of diving and snorkelling trails that adhere to common standards of sustainability.** Led by **Lesvos FLAG** (GR), the project has mobilised local



▲ Pesca-tourism operator in East Sardinia.

fishers, researchers and tourism agents in identifying 30 different diving areas, and involved these local stakeholders in their conservation and promotion. The FLAGs have developed promotional material for the diving trails and organised a large conference to raise awareness among fishers, tourism agencies and entrepreneurs. This conference focused on the role that diving parks can play in promoting marine conservation while securing a sustainable income for local stakeholders. The monitoring of marine biodiversity by fishers and researchers is also being integrated to the initiative to ensure that any potential impacts of tourism activities on marine life are carefully analysed.

Combating pollution and marine litter

The Mediterranean is the most polluted of all Europe's seas, according to a 2019 study by Ifremer²⁰. The sources of marine pollution, including oil, chemicals, microplastics and marine litter, are numerous: shipping, tourism, fishing, aquaculture, landfills, industry, agriculture, etc. and the effects can be catastrophic for marine life. In terms of marine litter, the Mediterranean, as a closed sea with around 200 000 tonnes of waste entering it every year, is one of the most affected basins in the world. This litter includes plastic bags, bottles, packaging, fishing gear and clothing. Ifremer's study found 60 percent of

this waste contains plastic, explaining why plastic has been singled out by the European Commission as an urgent priority to tackle.

A number of FLAGs have already taken up this challenge and are supporting initiatives to remove plastic waste from the sea. This is the case for the **four Sardinian FLAGs (IT) that have partnered with the University of Cagliari to create a management system for the waste.** The project is in response to a public call from the region of Sardinia and has mobilised fishers, local harbour management authorities and waste management companies. Fishing boats are being equipped to allow fishers to collect and separate waste onboard, with containers for separate waste collection installed at landing areas around the island.

"FLAGs want to highlight the unique social service provided by professional fisheries during their activities," Alessandro Cau, University of Cagliari.

Sardinia is not the only region in the Mediterranean to launch calls promoting the collection of marine litter by fishers. In Catalonia, Spain, work is underway mobilising EMFF funds to motivate different organisations in these efforts – and FLAGs are well-placed to join and support such partnerships.

Adapting to climate change and a new, invasive species it has brought

Rising sea temperatures associated with climate change have brought new species to the Mediterranean. American blue crab (*Callinectes sapidus*), an aggressive newcomer with no known predators in the Mediterranean, is settling around the sea basin from Thessaloniki in Greece to the Ebro Delta in Spain. Fishers are increasingly worried about the growing number, as blue crabs break the fishers' nets when accidentally caught and negatively impact on endogenous crustaceans.

Addressing the challenges posed by blue crab is at the heart of a collaborative action carried out by three FLAGs from the Occitanie region of France, led by **Mediterranean Pyrenees FLAG** and in partnership with the Kerkennah Islands (Tunisia). The project includes a number of experts and is supported by two programmes: Terricoop and DEVLOK. **Mediterranean Pyrenees FLAG has also been active in reaching out to Mediterranean FLAGs in other countries to understand how they are dealing with blue crab and how successful they have been in marketing the species.** Indeed, several FLAGs are active in exploring mitigation and control policies as well as ways to derive economic value from the increasing numbers of blue crab. Discussions are ongoing and cooperation among Mediterranean FLAGs in the future is a possibility.

The project mentioned above is just one example where fishing communities in the northern (European) Mediterranean are cooperating with communities in the southern Mediterranean (North Africa). Another is **ENSAMBLE**, where **fisheries communities from France, Italy and Tunisia are working together to promote sustainable development north and south of the Mediterranean Sea.** Coordinated by the **Etruscan Coast FLAG** in Tuscany (IT), the aim is to increase the partners' capacity to confront problems that go, not only beyond the local level, but beyond European borders. Ulti-



▲ Woman displaying fish products in Mediterranean Pyrenees FLAG area.

mately, this project is an effort to launch a participative approach to local development in Tunisian communities, mobilising both public and private stakeholders.

As FLAGs start thinking about their local development strategies for the future, they should increasingly consider if their communities can go further in addressing certain challenges by learning from and cooperating with others around the same sea basin. From study visits, to joint studies, to the development and promotion of new services and products, the fruit of collaboration can strengthen the impact of local action. In a globalised world where challenges are great, together, we can be greater.

FARNET can support you:

Are you looking for partners? Send us your cooperation idea in the [cooperation idea template](#) on the FARNET website. We will email your idea to all FLAGs and promote it via social media. ■

19 A cooperation project seeks to build a future for pesca-tourism in Greece – More information: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/news-events/news/cooperation-project-seeks-build-future-pesca-tourism-greece_en.

20 French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea (IFREMER) study: *Seafloor litter from the continental shelf and canyons in French Mediterranean Water: Distribution, typologies and trends* (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0025326X19305612?via%3Dihub>)

Perspective

Rethinking FLAG local development strategies: a new research agenda

Research into the impact of territorial approaches to development is not new. Community-led local development (CLLD) in the rural sphere has been extensively covered across numerous studies and in a variety of contexts. The fisheries case, however, is somewhat different, and until recently, CLLD under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) has been largely overlooked by the research community. That said, it is important to acknowledge that CLLD under the EMFF is a newer programme and that there are many parallels with existing research into CLLD across the other European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). Still, there is much to be learnt from the fisheries case. As we approach the end of what has been a second phase of CLLD in fisheries areas, a new research agenda is beginning to emerge.

Growing interest in CLLD research

Much like at the end of the 2007-2013 period, the end of the current programme brings a time to reflect and poses questions such as: what have we learnt, how have we developed, and how will this inform FLAGs' local development strategies in the future? In 2015, as the first period of CLLD in fisheries areas (Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund) drew to a close, a *Sociologia Ruralis*²¹ special issue on the local development of fisheries areas attempted to answer some of these questions. At the centre of the special issue was a collaboration between leading fisheries, social scientists and the FARNET Support Unit (FSU). Case studies undertaken by the FSU on individual FLAGs offered insights into the impact of CLLD on the local area²², while others broached wider questions of how successful the philosophical shift towards a more area-based approach to fisheries development in Europe had been²³. Arguably, the most pertinent topic transpiring from the early research into

FLAGs was how they are uniquely placed to bridge sectorial and territorial interests from the bottom-up, and how effective their local development strategies would be in achieving this balance and cohesion.

As expected, when this period of reflection drew to a close, and the new 2014-2020 programming began, FLAG-related studies from the wider research community went into somewhat of a hiatus. Despite this, the FSU has remained at the centre of research into FLAGs, making significant contributions to the understanding of the roles FLAGs play in key issues – such as their impact on small-scale coastal fisheries²⁴ and how FLAGs have supported the place and role of women in fisheries areas²⁵. Despite its own ongoing research, the FSU continues to try to connect with the research community to aid and collaborate on CLLD and FLAG related work where possible. As such, in March, we received a team of researchers from the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) at our headquarters in Brussels to collaborate on a project

focused on the analysis of FLAG projects, how they relate to local development strategies, and how they may change in the future.

We hope to be part of similar collaborations with the research community over the next two years, and have started preparatory work on a session on 'supporting the transitions of fisheries communities' to be held at the next International Institute of Fisheries Economics and Trade (IIFET)²⁶ conference. The working group has attracted leading researchers from across the world, including China, South Korea, the USA, and Europe, with a common interest in local initiatives supporting fisheries and aquaculture areas. This wide range of international papers not only highlights a growing interest in the topic, but also offers a good opportunity for the exchange of knowledge and experiences across several continents.



▲ Designing future FLAG strategies at FARNET conference on "Local action in a changing world" Brussels, December 2019.

Area-based approaches beyond the EU

There is significant global interest in FLAGs and the CLLD approach. For example, a team of researchers from the Korea Maritime Institute²⁷ is looking at the CLLD approach in Europe and how it has informed the 'Fishing Village New Deal 300 Project'²⁸, a programme aimed at reigniting small-scale fishing communities in South Korea. To date, this exchange of knowledge has involved two research visits to the FSU headquarters to learn about how FARNET operates; FLAGs and the implementation of CLLD in Europe; and what lessons might be transferable internationally. Furthermore, the added value of CLLD also piqued the interest of a local South Korean radio station, which ran a feature on the approach and its influence on other local development programmes.

Elsewhere, there have been several exchanges and parallels drawn between CLLD and other area-based approaches to local development outside of the EU.

One case, and subsequent development model being experimented with, is Fogo Island and the [Shorefast](#) initiative, situated in Newfoundland, Canada. Fogo Island, whose fisheries communities were devastated by the collapse of cod stocks in the 1980s, has long since been a leading example of an area-based approach to local development; Shorefast being the public foundation which leads the development of Fogo Island through several initiatives. Moreover, based on the experiences of working with the Shorefast Foundation, a team of researchers developed the PLACE model of community development²⁹. This model highlights the key attributes that have contributed to achieving a place-based approach on Fogo Island and has many parallels with CLLD. Like CLLD and LEADER before it, PLACE focuses on a set of principles required for achieving sustainable territorial development.

Preparing new FLAG strategies

Forming comparisons and exchanging knowledge with other programmes adds to the value of CLLD and also raises questions on how local development strategies might change in the future. The 2019 [Post-2020 CLLD conference](#)³⁰ attracted many researchers from Europe and further afield, to both celebrate the successes of CLLD in the 2014-2020 period and plan for the future by working on how it might look in the next programming period. The combination of several working groups, keynote speakers, plenary sessions and an exhibition of [40 CLLD projects](#) supported by the EU's different ESI Funds, contributed to the first-ever glimpse of how CLLD is changing lives in urban, rural, and coastal areas alike. Judging from the wealth of positive changes and benefits to communities across Europe shared at the conference, it is safe to say that the added value of CLLD is growing.



To facilitate these working groups on future FLAG strategies, we used a series of **indicators** developed from analysis of **FLAG Factsheet** data and information collected over a three-year period, which offers insights into how FLAG strategies are currently formulated. The indicators were created to identify patterns in current FLAG strategies and to revisit some of the conclusions drawn from the first programming period of FLAGs between 2007-2013. The analysis also assessed if FLAGs are on course in addressing the challenges identified in the previous major FARNET conference, *Sailing Towards 2020*, in 2015. Based on a survey of 119 FLAGs, there was general agreement that FLAGs have been able to address three of the key challenges identified in 2015. Firstly, FLAGs indicated that they were able to support their areas in adapting to the 2014 changes to the Common Fisheries Policy³¹. Secondly, there was agreement that FLAGs have been able to support the creation of jobs, particularly in marginalised groups, and thirdly, FLAGs identified that they have been able to foster growth within their local blue economies. What was less clear from the survey, was to what extent FLAGs have been able to address the challenges of adapting to climate change, or in successfully developing and implementing a multi-funded approach.

In terms of other challenges during this programming period (2014-2020), just under half of the FLAGs surveyed identified that they were faced with unforeseen challenges. Of these FLAGs, 50 per cent indicated that new issues they faced required a change to their Local Development Strategy. One of the key outputs of the conference working groups focused on better strategies, was **the need for both adaptability and resilience, and, in addition, the need for flexibility in their strategies**. Examples of unforeseen challenges were wide-ranging, including new and unanticipated opportunities, and changes to the market, fisheries sector, and government policy. Amongst more specific issues mentioned were the migrant crisis, stakeholder conflicts and the impact of natural disasters.

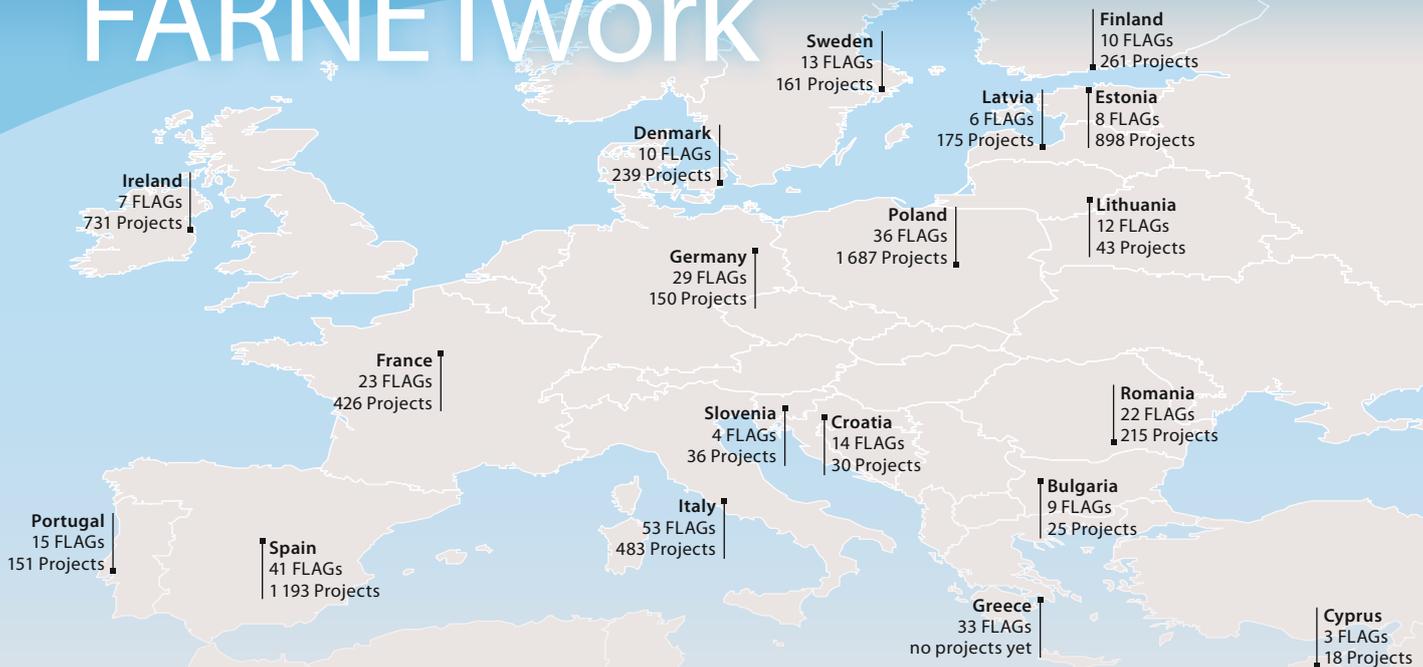
Looking towards the future, FLAGs were asked to consider the landscape in 2030, as many researchers are also doing as the current programme draws to a close.

Concerning the transition into the next period, a majority of FLAGs (65 percent) said they are prepared for the future, either being “somewhat” or “well-prepared” in developing their future strategies.³² For those FLAGs less prepared, the Post-2020 Conference working groups on future strategies offered **practical tips** on how to improve animation, project selection criteria, and delivery. Also considered were the **basic elements** of setting up area-based partnerships and developing local development strategies used in the formative years of the network. If the first programming period (2007-2013) was one of getting launched and the beginning of the implementation process, the second (2014-2020) has certainly been one of learning. This naturally leads to the question of ‘what’... what have we learnt over the past six years? What has changed? What can we improve?

The early indications are that as FLAGs approach a third programming period, they will hone their strategies more, focusing on specific issues and becoming more mature as they use lessons learnt for territorial development that is more coherent and efficient. In this new stage of maturity, FLAGs can explore more streamlined working methods, different learning techniques, and innovative ways of tackling local challenges. Key among the points which emerged from the Post-2020 Conference was the need for FLAGs to evolve as they move into the 2021-2027 programming period. FLAGs will need to act as the link between the fishing sector and new business clusters, embrace new technologies and solutions as a way of guaranteeing the sustainability of the sector, and become the focal point of ‘learning communities.’ As such, they will have an important role to play in shaping education agendas at a local level to develop the skills of the younger generation and prepare them to take on the many new challenges they face. ■

- 21 *Sociologia Ruralis* is a leading academic journal on rural and territorial development.
- 22 See van de Walle *et al.* (2015) ‘Achieving sustainable development of local fishing interests: The case of Pays d’Auray FLAG’, *Sociologia Ruralis*, 55(3), pp. 360-377.
- 23 See Phillipson and Symes (2015) ‘Finding a middle way to develop Europe’s fisheries dependent areas: The role of fisheries local action groups’, *Sociologia Ruralis*, 55(3), pp. 343-359.
- 24 See the FARNET Support Unit Technical Report on small-scale coastal fisheries: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/library/technical-report/present-and-future-emff-support-small-scale-coastal-fisheries-through-flags_en.
- 25 See the FARNET Support Unit Technical Report on FLAG support to women in fisheries: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/library/technical-report/flag-support-women-fisheries-and-aquaculture_en.
- 26 IIFET is a global organisation consisting of over 700 members from over 65 countries. IIFET provides an international forum and network for the exchange of research on the economics of fisheries management, seafood trade, and aquaculture.
- 27 The Korea Maritime Institute has a department dedicated to fishing communities and port research (<http://www.kmi.re.kr>).
- 28 An overview on the Fishing Village New Deal 300 project can be found on <https://www.mof.go.kr/eng/content/view.do?menuKey=765&contentKey=233>.
- 29 PLACE is an acronym which signifies the **five principles** for community development that emerged from a research project on the Shorefast place-based approach on Fogo Island, Newfoundland.
- 30 Organised by the FSU, the Post-2020 CLLD conference was a collaboration across all of the ESIFs implementing CLLD. It showcased how thousands of citizens are successfully using the ‘bottom-up’ approach for sustainable development in their areas.
- 31 See Hegland and Raakjaer (2020) *The Common Fisheries Policy* for a concise overview of the 2014 changes: <https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-1099>.
- 32 The survey was conducted in late 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the preparedness of FLAGs indicated in the survey does not take into account the potential impact of the COVID-19. Read more about FLAG reactions to COVID: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/news-events/news/covid-19-flag-response-message-board_en.

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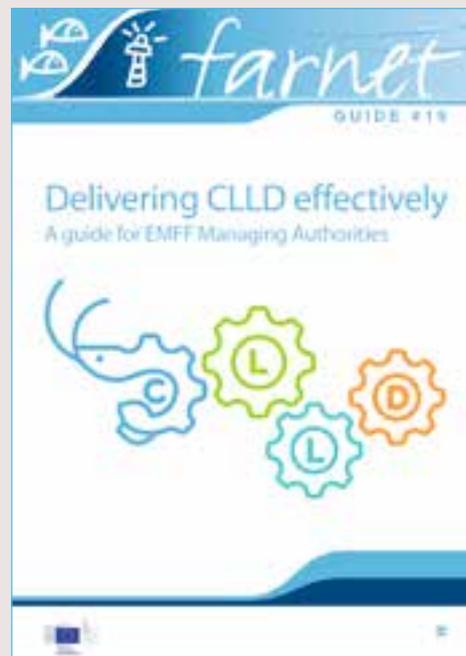
Information collected by the FARNET Support Unit as of July 2020

CLLD delivery – the key to getting EU funding to high quality projects

FLAGs around the EU are supporting thousands of beneficiaries to turn their ideas into reality. For this, effective delivery systems are crucial, i.e. rules and procedures which facilitate the quick and transparent selection of local projects and delivery of EU funds to those implementing them. A well-functioning delivery system can promote innovative projects and facilitate access to funding for small-scale stakeholders, while a dysfunctional system can create administrative obstacles and delays.

The FARNET Support Unit has prepared a guide for Managing Authorities to help them design their CLLD delivery systems in the next programming period. The guide contains practical tips and examples of CLLD delivery from Member States across the EU: from application, project selection and approval to implementation and payment. The Guide also includes information on tools such as the “delivery system health check”, or a benchmarking tool for comparing the speed of processing of CLLD projects in different EU Member States.

Find the Guide on the FARNET website (www.farnet.eu) – go to the “Library” and then “Guides”. It is available in seven languages!



CLLD in practice



FLAG helps create Spain's first sailing school for people with disabilities (Murcia FLAG, Spain)

Thanks to support from the FLAG and the Regional Aquaculture Federation, a paraplegic man has turned his personal project of rehabilitation into the first National Sailing School for people with disabilities. The physical and social inclusion improvements experienced by members has led to a clinical trial by the National Hospital of Paraplegics.



An aquarium supplied by local fishermen on the Wild Atlantic Way (North West FLAG, Ireland)

A local company set up by Achill community two decades ago, has created an aquarium in a disused building they own, engaging volunteers, retired fishers and fisheries-related workers. The Achill Experience Aquarium and Visitors Centre became the first cultural space in Ireland based on local fisheries heritage.



Creating a network for marine litter management (East, North, West-Central, and West-South Sardinia FLAGs, Italy)

Four Sardinian FLAGs teamed up with the University of Cagliari to create a waste management system that efficiently deal with litter caught by fishers. The *Fishing Litter and Abandoned Gears* project includes the installation of boat decks, onshore separation and collection facilities.



Private fish processor investing in the FLAGs (Bothnian Bay FLAG, Finland)

With their "Thanks to the Fisherman" campaign, one of Finland's biggest fish processors Hätälä, is aiming to raise approximately €100 000 for FLAGs to support local fishers. The campaign promotes wild Finnish fish and improves the visibility and image of fishing as a profession. Hätälä is donating a percentage of its sales of Finnish fish to the FLAGs.



Promoting aquaculture products (Three FLAGs in Slovenia – Soča Valley, Gorenjska košarica, Posavje)

Three FLAGs are implementing a collaborative assessment of fisheries products to establish a quality system for fish products produced in Slovenia. This will assure consumers that they are buying quality food and encourage them to choose local over imported fisheries products with high food miles.

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