

**„Local action for biodiversity”
22 October 2020, 11.30 – 13.00**

EWRC workshop organised by DG MARE and FARNET Support Unit, attended by ca. 30 participants

Jean-Pierre Vercruysse from FARNET Support Unit opened the workshop by reminding participants of the key features of community-led local development (CLLD) and of the activities of FARNET (Fisheries Areas' Network), set up by DG MARE to support the implementation of CLLD under EMFF.

Fabio Pirotta from DG ENV and **Dovile Vaigauskaite** from DG MARE presented the **EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and its impact on fisheries**. Biodiversity is essential for life on earth, but unsustainable human activity causes biodiversity loss. The 2020 EU Strategy for Biodiversity envisages that by 2030, 30% of European land and 30% of the sea will be protected, and at least 10% of maritime waters will be under strict protection. The strategy aims to reduce damage to seabed, reduce by-catch of sensitive species and diminish fishing pressure to sustainable levels. This strategy, together with the Farm to Fork strategy, are central elements of the European Green Deal.

Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) can contribute to achieving objectives of the biodiversity strategy by such activities as developing or enhancing marine protected areas (MPA) and helping fishermen to reduce by-catch or to address landing obligation.

Janne Posti showed preliminary results of a recent survey of FLAGs carried out by the FARNET Support Unit in the summer of 2020 on **FLAG actions contributing to the European Green Deal and the EU's 2030 Strategy for Biodiversity**. The 155 FLAGs which responded to the survey (out of 348) are involved in a wide range of actions linked with the European Green Deal and biodiversity strategy. 46% of FLAG funding allocated to these actions has gone to initiatives to preserve and restore ecosystems and biodiversity, 29% to sustainable food systems and 10% to circular economy and clean energy (15% of actions were not easy to categorise). The survey also helped to identify a number of interesting projects supported by FLAGs on these topics.

Thomas Hjelm presented a project supported by the Stockholm Archipelago FLAG (SE) which aims to **reinstate wetlands and pike spawning grounds in the Stockholm archipelago**. Such wetlands not only prevent eutrophication and increase the population of valuable fish species, but also create jobs and bring additional income from fishing tourism.

In reply to a question from the audience about carbon credits, Thomas explained that this potential source of revenue for carbon sequestration is being currently explored.

Francesc Galí Llorens from the Costa Brava FLAG (ES) explained how the area could capitalise on the presence of a protected species (**Tramuntana dolphin**) while creating synergies and additional benefits to the fishermen, who are involved in the sighting and counting of dolphins, thus helping researchers to monitor their population. The dolphins are also an important tourist attraction, which in turns develops pesca-tourism activities and helps fishermen get better prices for their fish.

Responding to a question from the floor about potential methods to scare dolphins away from the fishing nets Francesc explained that this is not envisaged in the project, whose primary objective is to convince fishermen that the presence of dolphins can be beneficial.

Paolo Valeri from the Veneto FLAG (IT) described the “*Tarta-Tur*” project: another example of building trust and enabling cooperation between fishermen and researchers in the protection of two endangered species (turtles and dolphins) in the Northern Adriatic, in order to reconcile conservational and economic activities in the design of a marine Site of Community Importance.

The key economic impact of the project (as Paolo explained in response to questions from the audience) is not so much to create additional income – in particular as the area is not yet attractive for tourists – but to enable the fishing activity to continue in harmony with the protected area.

Another question to the panellists was related to aquaculture – this activity (essential for many FLAG areas) can also have a negative environmental impact. However, according to Fabio Pirotta (DG ENV), aquaculture is important for the EU Farm to Fork strategy, this is why the European Commission is going to publish guidelines on making aquaculture more sustainable.

In closing remarks, Jean-Pierre stressed the importance of long-term thinking: recreating sustainability cannot be expected to happen within a single period of a local strategy (typically 5-7 years), so FLAGs and other local actors need to be able to continue their efforts in the future.

Presentations are available here:

https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/farnet-ewrc2020_en

A full recording of the session can be watched here:

<https://euregionsweek2020-video.eu/video/local-action-for-biodiversity>