FARNET TRANSNATIONAL SEMINAR FOR FLAGS
BANTRY, IRELAND, 2-4 APRIL 2019
Smart Coastal Areas: resourcefulness and innovation in FLAG communities

Organisers: FARNET, at the initiative of the European Commission
Hosts: Ireland's Seafood Development Agency - Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) and FLAG South (Ireland)
Participants: Over 150 Managing Authorities, National Networks, experts and FLAG representatives from all 20 Member States implementing fisheries CLLD

Depopulation, aging populations, reliance on a limited number of economic sectors, the decline of primary industries, the effects of climate change on coastal areas and the untapped potential of the blue economy are all challenges that require a fresh approach. FLAGs will need to be more imaginative, innovative and resourceful in order to help their areas adapt and thrive.

The European Commission's "Europe 2020" strategy emphasises smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Smart cities, smart villages, smart islands, smart tourism are all initiatives already shaking up European areas. By joining the smart thinking and working towards becoming "smart coastal areas" FLAGs can contribute to a more holistic view on the development of their territories and increase their creativity in tackling local existing challenges.

"Smart" is not limited to technology – it is about fostering new ideas and developing more strategic ways of thinking. The seminar broke down the smart concept into four themes in order to allow FLAGs to see how their actions can play a role in transitioning towards smarter development models.

SMART PARTNERSHIPS
FLAGs were encouraged to think about complementary relationships between those in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture; tourism providers; and other industries in order to create "win-win" situations.

SMART RESOURCE USE
This is about maximizing potential, revaluing waste into assets and improving the utilisation of undervalued species. FLAGs discussed encouraging gains from untapped marine resources and promoting the development of new value chains.

SMART FINANCING
FLAGs can increase awareness of smart financing options, such as special credit lines issued by local banks, micro-credit schemes or crowdfunding initiatives, both as an alternative and complementary to EMFF funding.

SMART SERVICES
This theme explored how FLAGs can support innovation in rejuvenating services (health, postal, …) and repurposing fisheries-related facilities in coastal regions facing depopulation.

"Interestingly, the FARNET Support Unit says that while collecting project examples for this seminar, some of you have said: "…well, actually we did not realise what we are doing is already smart, we have never looked at it from the 'smart' angle". This is the goal of this event, to make us all look at things in a different way and realise that each territory can find and define their own smarter ways. So, this makes us confident that 'smart' is not just a buzz word, it's a reflection of the local realities that you are facing on a daily basis."
Lorella De La Cruz Iglesias, Deputy Head of Unit in DG MARE

Thirty posters of "Smart initiatives" from participating FLAGs' regions were displayed across four "Walls of Ideas" to showcase work FLAGs are already doing to support the concept. Attendees were asked to vote for their favourite one!

🏆 Winners
Smart Services: Monpêcheur, a digital tool to help organise the direct sale of seafood products (Cornouaille FLAG – FR)
Smart Resource Use: T-Fish, an innovative system for managing seafood product traceability (Sun and Blue FLAG – IT)
Smart Partnership: The Courtmacsherry community-owned and operated shop (South FLAG – IE)
Smart Financing: Collaboration agreement between the bank, FLAG and possible beneficiaries (Vigo - A Guarda FLAG – ES)

Details on all 30 projects are in the Day 2 section of the Agenda under "Smart Initiatives".

In our World Café session, participants were asked to consider four pre-defined challenges and try to find solutions along the lines of our four smart themes. Here's a highlight of what the teams discussed.

CLIMATE CHANGE

* Involve the local community – e.g. use them to help in collecting data.
* Raise awareness by forming smart partnerships with local educational institutes such as schools and universities.
* Try to lower the carbon footprint of fisheries and aquaculture e.g. shortening the supply chain and more use of renewable energy, such as microalgae as a new carburant.
* New technologies offer ways to improve energy efficiency in the supply chain, especially in remote areas: think smart sensors, LED lighting, carbon neutral buildings, solar panels, wind vanes, …
* Turn a threat in an opportunity: invasive species are transforming ecosystems often for the worse but can as well create new opportunities in coastal areas e.g. the blue crab that now earn Greek fishermen an extra income.

DEPOPULATION & EXODUS OF SERVICES

* Better promotion of the benefits of working in fishing & aquaculture especially in light of improved working conditions in these sectors.
* Market the identity of the area and the way of life to attract young people and families.
* Setting up mobile banks, pharmacies, healthcare centres and post offices are smart solution to compensate the shortage of services.
* In many areas shortage of services is seasonal (public transport typically) and in line with the tourist season. Lengthening the tourist season is a way to maintain services.
* Attract more young people by highlighting the entrepreneurial nature and range of skills needed in fishing and aquaculture businesses. In parallel, work on housing shortage as gentrification and buoyant secondary housing market prevent many young people to find affordable housing (cooperative living, accommodation sharing …).

NO MORE FUNDING

* Raising money through smart partnerships with local businesses.
* Successful companies/profit generating projects could also be asked to pay back a small percentage of their profits to the FLAG.
* FLAGs could also provide consultancy services to local businesses.
* Funding doesn't always have to come in the form of money – knowledge and service exchanges are a good alternative.
* Alternative finance options exist: crowdfunding, ethical banks, credit union, cooperative banks, foundations, community loans… FLAGs have to improve their knowledge on different financing options through better education on this.
* FLAGs can also help to liaise with other (ESI) funds (EAFRD, ERDF, ESF, etc.).

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

* A targeted effort at improving the technical knowledge of fishermen, such as teaching them how to use apps on smart phones. Intergenerational exchanges could be fostered where young people pass on their IT skills while fishermen contribute with their fishing knowledge.
* Ensuring that EMFF funding available for training and education is targeted at bridging this gap by mapping the real needs in each community.
* To get the fishermen on board, start with apps that are simple and widely used, for example the meteo apps for marine weather forecasts, then move to other apps.
* Look into options for community broadband.

SMART PARTNERSHIPS

Valerie Cummins
Senior Lecturer at School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University College Cork, IE

Val proposed the following "SMART approach" to partnerships:
'SM' for Stakeholders Mapping (i.e. place them according to the combo' interest/influence')
'A' for Action
'R' for Reciprocity (identify win-win collaborations) and "T" for Trust
It's Important to define:
The "What For?" – jobs creation, development of marine renewable energy, tourism, etc.
The "With Who?" – youth, NGOs, scientists, etc.
The "How?" – best practice review, surveys, info days, etc.
See the presentation

SMART FINANCING

Tony O'Rourke
Former Professor of Banking & Finance and Director of Continuing Professional Development, UK

Finance can be innovative: different actors and schemes exist in the financing world, and these can be combined to offer custom made solutions adapted to local needs.
Credit unions, for example, offer a smooth way of facilitating finance. On the basis of a letter of offer confirming the EMFF project has been approved, some Unions have provided the cash flow necessary for projects to move forward instead of having to wait for the EMFF funding.
"Ethical banks" should also be targeted. They are concerned with the social and environmental impacts of their investments and loans. FLAG projects are likely to fit ethical banks' criteria.
See the presentation

SMART RESOURCE USE

Vilhjálmur Jens Árnason
Project manager at Icelandic Ocean Cluster, IS

To cover the loss in jobs in fisheries, FLAGs should help to map opportunities in their area that could play a role in the blue economy. The ocean is much more than fishing. A great way to generate these opportunities is to create clusters of companies linked with the blue economy but from different perspectives. In Iceland, this method led to the development of the "Incredible fish value machine" which increased the use of the fish biomass from 20% previously (mostly as food for human consumption) to 80% with scales, bones, guts and other non-edible parts of the fish now all turned into profitable products.
See the presentation

SMART SERVICES

Susan Kearney
Assistant Chief Executive Officer with SECAD, IE

Community involvement is key to identifying those services crucially lacking locally. This needs identification can be done by what Susan calls a "smart planning process" based on local consultation and the setup of a town/village renewal committee. The set up of a smart hub that can serve as a focal point for the community revival efforts, as well as the importance of identifying local champions, able to convince and motivate the rest of the community to follow suit, is key to the success of the initiative.
See the presentation

SMART FINANCING FLAG PROJECTS

Carl Dahlberg, Leader Bohuskust och Gränsbygd (SE)
Developing a **"Functional Digital Region"**, focusing on supporting local initiatives and networks via an online communication platform, and encouraging local funding via a new crowdfunding platform. *See the presentation*

Elena Herbello Puentes, A Guarda FLAG (ES)
FLAG help in facilitating **an agreement accessing finance for project promoters**. The agreement allows the bank to give better loan conditions. *See the presentation*

Amy Thurtle, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly FLAG (UK)
A FLAG-supported project getting fishermen microcredit to kickstart projects from **Credit Unions**. The Credit Unions now also educate fishermen in financial management and investments, to safeguard themselves when fishing is not possible. *See the presentation*

Nino Ruggiu, East Sardinia FLAG (IT)
A partnership with a private credit company sees the creation of a new financing tool to help small-scale fishermen obtain **microcredit**. *See the presentation*

SMART PARTNERSHIPS FLAG PROJECTS

Mark Gannon, South FLAG (IE)
Courtmacsherry's community received help from the FLAG and formed the local **Community Shop Cooperative** in January 2016, after the previous shop closed down. The Co-op has a groceries section, a bookshop and a tourist information office. *See the presentation*

Michael Cornell, Lake Vättern FLAG (SE)
The FLAG has played a role in several projects related to the **operation of Hästholmen port**, including the construction of a building for cleaning fish; and the restoration of the traditional boat houses in the port. *See the presentation*

Aurélie Aradan, Calanque Islands FLAG (FR)
Establishing **a co-management platform** for consultation between recreational fishing associations, professional fishermen, scientists, managers of protected areas and NGOs. *See the presentation*

Donatella D'Andrea, Blue Coast FLAG (IT)
The Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale (GAS) are groups that **cooperate in purchasing and distributing food directly from local producers**. The FLAG gets small-scale fishermen to become suppliers by bringing them together with the local GAS. *See the presentation*

Séamus Breathnach, West FLAG (IE)
A cohesive approach to reconnecting the land and sea communities in South Galway Bay. A **partnership between these communities and state agencies** to capitalize on the unique sense of place present in the Bay. *See the presentation*

SMART SERVICES FLAG PROJECTS

Rita Pestana, Sotavento Algarve FLAG (PT)
The remote fishing community of Ilha da Culatra can **see an emergency doctor using a phone and video function on the Permanent Assistance Service system (PAS)**. The doctor is assisted remotely by a nurse who is with the patient at the PAS office. *See the presentation*

Brenda O'Riordan, South FLAG (IE)
Schull Harbour used to suffer from smelly bait waste. In 2017, the local harbour users' group came together to request new **FLAG-funded hermetic bait bins** to replace the old rusty and smelly domestic freezers creating a nuisance for other users of the pier. *See the presentation*

Gian Mario Garrucciu, North Sardinia FLAG (IT)
Programme developing new skills across North Sardinia's coastal line aimed at **answering fishermen's real training needs**. Professional courses provided are based on in-depth analysis of the training needs of fishermen. *See the presentation*

Rosa María Carballo Martínez, Arousa FLAG (ES)
The FLAG worked with two local fishermen's guilds to create **a mobile app** that facilitates the organisation of the work, encourages the training of professionals and drives connection between the actors in the industry. *See the presentation*

Fabian Polster, Tirschenreuth FLAG (DE)
Local products come to inhabitants of the region through a '**mobile village shop**', creating a short supply chain that includes fish farmers' products. *See the presentation*

SMART RESOURCE USE FLAG PROJECTS

Enrique Ferrer Moragues, La Safor FLAG (ES)
The FLAG is supporting a collaboration between a local fishing organisation and scientists from the University of Alicante (CIMAR) to **develop control measures to limit the expansion of an invasive species** (the blue crab) and find market opportunities for its exploitation. *See the presentation*

Giovanni Borsellino, Sun and Blue FLAG (IT)
T-Fish is an innovative **system for the management of seafood product traceability**. It is an easy-to-use integrated hardware and software solution especially for non-professionals. *See the presentation*

Markku Ahonen, Lapland FLAG (FI)
As there was no market for roach, increasingly found as a by-catch, the FLAG got together with local fishermen and the municipality to establish **a project analysing the potential of mincing roach** for human consumption. *See the presentation*

Pekka Sahama, East Finland FLAG (FI)
Solutions to the main issue of **using undervalued species** (cyprinids: roach, bream) in food production: availability, logistics and handling process. *See the presentation*

"A smart coastal area is a vibrant community where sharing and supporting is the reflex. It is a place where shared values and local pride creates solutions for development, service availability and financing. Smart partnerships, networks and sustainable resource use are keys to this way of life."

Carl Dahlberg (Leader Bohuskust och Gränsbygd, SE)

"Smart coastal area is a place where people and businesses work together to use know-how, resources and infrastructure in a new and innovative way. The focus is on reducing waste and environmental impact and increasing quality, utilization and value."

*Vilhjálmur Jens Árnason (Expert – Smart Resource Use)*

Seminar participants spent an afternoon in Bantry and Gearhies visiting FLAG-supported projects and other interesting aquaculture and fisheries-related initiatives. These included learning about de-licing salmon using the "cleanerfish" technique at the Bantry Marine Research Station Ltd; a tour of a mussel processing factory; seeing mobile aquaculture classroom that's part of the #FarmedInTheEU campaign; and stopping at a laboratory centre that is part of the Marine Institute Phytoplankton Monitoring Laboratory.

Mobile aquaculture classroom, Bantry Harbour

Bantry Marine Research Station Ltd, Gearhies
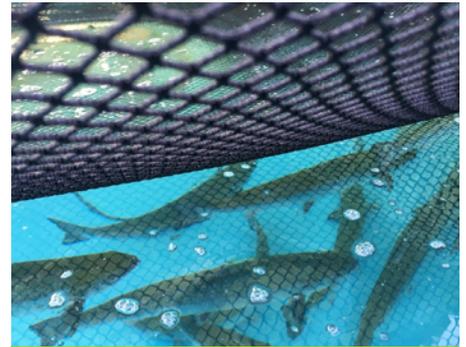
Bantry Marine Research Station Ltd, Gearhies

Learning about the "cleanerfish" technique

Lobster pots

Tour of the mussel processing plant, Gearhies

The highlights of the field trip were a short ferry ride to Whiddy Island to hear about revitalising a small island community with a rich history at The Schoolhouse. Tourists come mainly for walking, and a rejuvenated the Schoolhouse would provide accommodation, storage lockers and drying facilities to support this activity – as well as serving as a heritage centre. The Schoolhouse is a recipient of EMFF-funding and is supported by South FLAG (IE).

Ferry ride to Whiddy Island

Hearing the history of the Schoolhouse, Whiddy Island

The Bankhouse, Whiddy Island

On the boat trip back from Whiddy Island, there was the chance to see the operations of Bantry Harbour Mussels Ltd. With EMFF funding, the company's mussel farming uses the eco-friendly "hairy rope" system; and new floats made from high-density polyethylene (HDPE), so they can be plastic welded, repaired and re-deployed if they get damaged.

Leaving Whiddy Island

Mussel farming boat, Bantry Bay

View of Bantry Bay