

A success story of Community-Led Local Development

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Fishing, shellfish, marine aquaculture and the seafood sectors:

- Employ **more than 100,000** people directly or indirectly
- Generate a wealth of around **1,136 million euros** (in 2012)
- Represent **2.1% of the wealth of Galicia (GDP)**. (Source: Website of Xunta de Galicia, the Galician Government)

1. Galicia embraces Axis 4 for fisheries areas

Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) were created in 2009 as key elements of the implementation of the European Fisheries Fund's Axis 4. Local associations of stakeholders were set up drawing members from the fishing, social, economic and public sectors. In Galicia, the fisheries sector plays a very important social role in many rural areas, but had until then not been included in existing rural development initiatives. For this reason, we made the conscious choice of setting up entirely new partnerships. This had the downside of not allowing us to use the experience of existing local development groups but ensured the fishing and aquaculture sectors were given the right place in the local development process. I

Indeed, for us, one of the most important successes of Axis 4 was the **involvement of the fisheries sector** in the creation and operation of the groups. Important links were established between the fisheries sector and other local actors at the FLAG level and in the area, thereby reducing their isolation. The fisheries sector now presides over a structure in which all the local stakeholders are involved, and participate actively in the local governance of the areas. This guarantees the active participation of the target group to which the programme was directed while maintaining **the focus on the territory**.

The **local action groups** proved to be a **useful instrument** in the **creation of employment and territorial cohesion**, as well as in performing an active role in **decision-making for territorial development**.

Local development strategies were implemented over the years 2010-2014 (with an extension into 2015) during which time a significant number of projects were submitted to various calls for proposals. In all, **426 projects were approved for an amount of around EUR 23 million. It is estimated that the total number of jobs created exceeded 250** (in annual work units).

2. Why prioritise CLLD over other types of interventions in areas dependent on fishing?

The FLAGs are governance structures in which the fisheries sector, particularly small-scale coastal fishing, is fully integrated among other stakeholders and has a significant involvement in the design and management of local development strategies.

The fact that stakeholders design the strategies and select the projects turns them into drivers of the development of their area and they become a reference point for local communities. The level of economic development greatly varies throughout fishing areas and they do not always share the same problems or objectives. FLAG strategies however are adapted to local needs and possess the flexibility required to tackle the specific challenges of each territory and respond to any new requirements that may arise. In addition, the fact that they are "open-door" multi-stakeholder entities favour the participation of groups that until now may have remained in the background (e.g. the disabled).

Indeed, the FLAGs accompany and train people assessing and developing their skills as project promoters. They allow for the emergence of project ideas that would have been very difficult to develop had the groups not been present on the ground. In addition, they are instrumental in the development of collective projects that do not always happen naturally in the fisheries sector. With the help of these local partnerships, complex projects that involve different stakeholders can be nurtured, allowing the establishment of horizontal links between sectors or with researchers. The groups also help to address challenges related to the sustainable use of resources and climate change at local level. Likewise, they can broker agreements with local banks to improve funding conditions for local development projects thus facilitating access loans and guarantees.

3. Ensuring continuity between Axis 4 and the CLLD

Due to the high number of projects still being implemented in 2014, a budget was foreseen for the groups to continue their operations until the end of 2015. The fisheries sector, which carries a significant weight in the governing bodies of the groups, insisted on their continuity to avoid any interruption between the two programmes. We therefore started to meet with the groups in early 2015 to discuss the future of the areas, the different needs and challenges to be tackled with CLLD.

Schedule for implementation of the 2014-2020 programme

April 2015: call for applications

August 2015: approval of 7 candidate FLAG

November 2015: submission of 7 strategies

November 2015: approval of Spanish Operational Programme

December 2015: payment of preparatory support

January 2016: approval of 7 strategies

February 2016: agreement signed with 7 FLAGs

June 2016: first call for CLLD strategy assistance

In April 2015, with the operational programme still under development, we began the selection of the FLAGs for the 2014-2020 period. In order to forgo waiting for the approval of the OP (which was only approved in November 2015) we set up the selection process in two phases: we first selected candidates for the FLAGs, making them eligible for preparatory support, and then finally approved strategies and groups a few months after the OP adoption. We needed 11 months to approve and sign the collaboration agreements for the first seven strategies (from April 2015 till February 2016). One of the fisheries areas had become vacant, and a second phase of selection began at a later stage, leading to the approval of an eighth FLAG in the same year. The budget for the eight FLAGs for developing their strategies for the entire period is fixed at around EUR million 52 million for an average of EUR 6,5 million per FLAG.

The administration supported the process by providing the candidate FLAGs with a whole series of tools to develop quality strategies, by holding **training sessions**, as well as **meetings in all fisheries areas** that raised the value of CLLD and acknowledged the expectations for the future of coastal communities.

The **determined support of the administration, together with the intense work of the candidates**, was necessary for the process to progress at a good pace and with quality strategies.

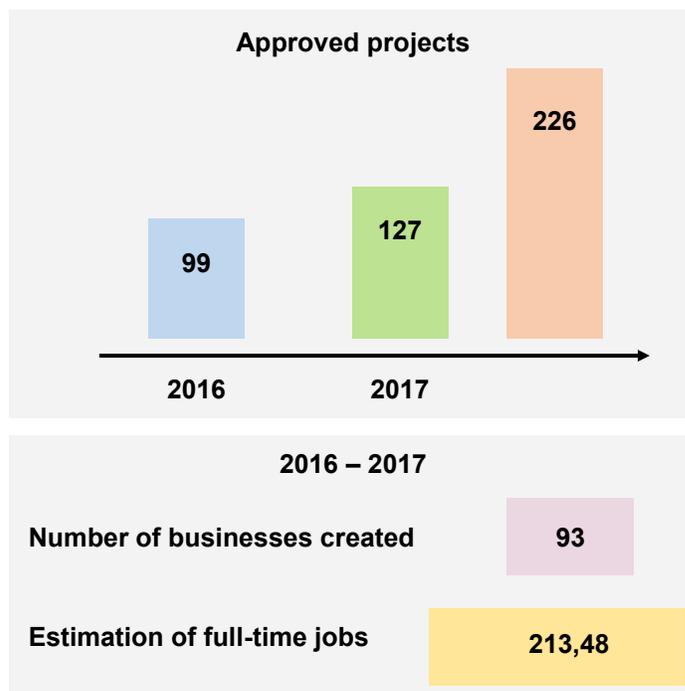
The approach for the creation and development of the strategies of the new FLAGs was **highly participatory** and ensured the involvement of a broader spectrum of stakeholders than in the previous period. The number of entities taking part in the FLAGs is therefore high, with more than **360 entities involved in the fisheries CLLD programme in Galicia** while keeping a significant integration of entities from the fisheries sector (for a total of **99 entities**).

Aware of future challenges facing fisheries areas, we also encouraged groups to include aspects in their strategies that are related to the implications of the **common fisheries policy, blue growth or climate change**.

The first call for projects of the new period was published in June 2016, with a high number of projects presented (198), reaffirming the existing interest in the areas with the launch of a new CLLD, and the importance of ensuring that there was no interruption between the two periods

since needs remain acute at local level and this independently from any implementation period.

The first two years of participatory local development 2014-2020 in figures



4. Monitoring the programme, analysing achievements and responding to challenges

In early 2017, we started a **Programme for Strategic Monitoring of Community-Led Local Development (2016-2020)**, with three priorities: the **monitoring of strategy implementation** through the approved projects and promotion measures, the **analysis of the economic and social impact of CLLD**, and the **identification of good practices** and required support for the FLAGs.

The programme, which will run until 2020, will be implemented in collaboration with the FLAGs and open to the participation of communities. This will allow us to see what is working and what should be strengthened during the implementation of CLLD.

In addition, we believe it is important to broadly publicise CLLD so that it reaches the greatest number of people in fishing areas. For this purpose and to promote the work of the FLAGs, we created the **Blue Economy Awards** as a way of recognising the collective effort of those involved in the programme.

I Blue Economy Awards: a competition to recognise outstanding projects developed in the following sectors:

***Small-scale coastal fishing *Job Creation
*Diversification *Local innovation**

From the projects proposed by the FLAGs, we selected 3 candidates for each category. People were then able to vote for their favourites through the FLAG website and on 27 October the prize winners were announced during a ceremony.

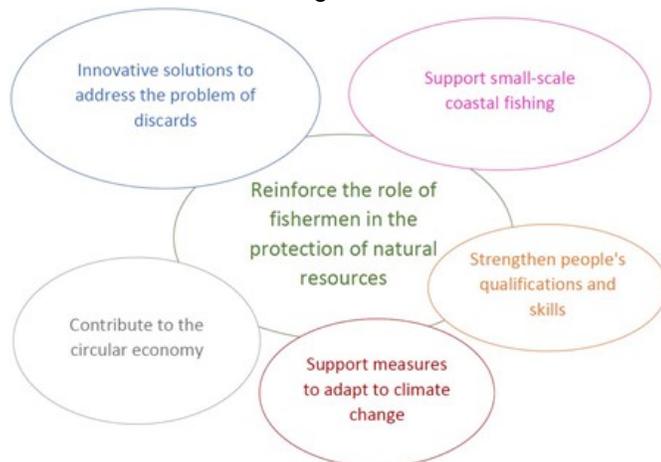
[Find out about the winning projects](#)

Analysing community-led local development in Galicia, we must highlight two important aspects of the programme: the commitment to cooperation projects from all stakeholders, and the role of the groups in reinforcing the participation of women from the fisheries sector in local development projects.

Achievements of CLLD



Challenges of CLLD



In the fishing sector of Galicia, women are engaged in fishing activities, and are registered as professionals with the social security system. The FLAGS have already supported the creation of two women's associations at the local level as well as the set-up of the **Asociación Nacional de Mujeres de la Pesca** (National Association of Women in Fisheries). In addition, **a cooperation project among six FLAGS** is underway, aiming to empower "sea" women across six fisheries areas, implementing participative activities to promote equal opportunities, employment and professional improvements.

On cooperation we have sent out a clear signal of support to encourage cooperation between FLAGS to:

- improve sharing and access of/to information,
- exchange about new ideas with other groups, regions or countries,
- stimulate innovation and acquire skills that make it possible to take advantage of new opportunities in the territories.

To support cooperation, we have already organised two transnational cooperation events. The last one was held in September 2017 and all the Galician FLAGS took part along with the administrations and FLAGS from other Atlantic regions from Spain, France and Portugal. The key objectives were to identify the shared needs of these territories and possible solutions to be turned into cooperation project ideas. So far, we have already selected five cooperation projects for a total budget of close to EUR 450 000.

5. CLLD beyond 2020

In Galicia, the importance of the fishing and aquaculture sectors (including the processing and marketing of their products) cannot be underestimated regarding their contribution to both the local economy and the local food supply. These are also sectors of the future which have the potential to grow and to create many jobs within the framework of the blue economy. CLLD should therefore continue to support the development of the blue economy in those more traditional sectors such as fishing and aquaculture, but also in the tourism and maritime industries and related emerging sectors. For this, the following is required:

1. Modernisation and sustainable development of traditional sectors such as fisheries and the processing industry, with the aim of creating greater added value, in priority for the small-scale fishing sector;
2. Add value to sea products, developing short distribution chains with the participation of producers and reinforcing industrial processing activities in fisheries areas;
3. Make the most of the cultural wealth of the fisheries areas to offer sustainable and high quality maritime and coastal tourist services;
4. Render fishing areas more attractive by improving infrastructure and developing services in such a way as to encourage people to keep living in these areas;
5. Reinforce the role of FLAGS within the framework of future fisheries policy, giving them more resources that will allow them to continue and improve their work as well as boost inter-territorial and transnational cooperation.

Likewise, CLLD should remain governed by the FLAGS and linked to the fisheries fund. Furthermore, FLAGS are now well-established bodies and the selection process linked with the changes in the programme triggers uncertainty. In those areas that have achieved good results, FLAGS should not have to undergo a new selection process, without excluding possible changes in territorial areas or strategies. In any case, the existing FLAGS should be able to rely on preparatory support to elaborate new CLLD strategies beyond 2020.

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This article is one in a series of four developed by the four panellists of the workshop on "The EMFF and local perspectives" organized in the framework of the "Beyond 2020: Supporting Europe's Coastal Territories" conference organised by DG MARE on 12 and 13 October 2017, in Tallinn.

Their aim is to trigger the reflection and fuel the debate on how to improve CLLD intervention in fisheries and aquaculture areas. The other articles can be accessed on the FARNET website.

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