



## MARITIME FORUM

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# Study 2006-17 lot 2: Analysis of the economic and social importance of Community fishing fleet using bottom gears in the high seas

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This report presents a description of the Community fleet using bottom gears (fishing gears which are in contact with the seabed) on the high seas (waters located beyond national jurisdiction), together with an analysis of its economic and social importance.

### ***Why this study?***

The need for this study arises from international moves to address the effects of high sea fishing with bottom gears (HSBG) on vulnerable marine ecosystems and in view of a Communication on the EU policy in respect of this. Catches from deep sea fisheries increased by 440% between 1975 and 2005 (high seas and EEZs). There is growing concern over the impact of fishing using gears that come into contact with the seabed (bottom gears), in particular in deep-sea areas where vulnerable marine ecosystems including seamounts, hydrothermal vents and cold water corals are located.

### ***Goals***

1. Give an overview of the Community (HSBG) fleets, including characteristics of the vessels, species targeted, fishing grounds, flag states and ports used.
2. Quantify the economic importance of Community (HSBG) fleets.
3. Quantify the social importance of Community (HSBG) fleets, including direct and indirect employment.

### ***Results***

The report presents a description of the EU (HSBG) fleet on the high seas. Where possible, the importance is disaggregated by fishing activities in Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), regulated high seas areas and unregulated high seas areas. In an appendix a country by country overview is given for Estonia, Ireland, Spain, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal and other EU Member States.

The EU is an important stakeholder in (HSBG) fisheries: five of the eleven countries responsible for 95 % of the reported high seas bottom trawl catches in 2001 were EU Member States. The EU HSBG fleet is made up of 106 vessels. They represent 0.1 % of the European fleet by number, 5.1 % by tonnage and 1.8 % by power. The most significant EU HSBG fleets are those of Spain, Portugal and Estonia, followed by Lithuania and Latvia. The Spanish fleet is based in Vigo and the neighbouring ports of Cangas and Marin. Other significant landings by EU vessels are made in Canada, Iceland and Norway.

The main fishing areas for the EU HSBG fleets are the north Atlantic, mainly within the NAFO and NEAFC regulatory areas. Interactions with Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) in these areas are most likely around the Hatton and Rockall Banks (where trawling bans have already been established in several areas in order to protect concentrations of cold water corals). Interactions with VMEs in other areas is likely to be limited, either due to their non-existence of VMEs (e.g. SW Atlantic) or to the relatively minor amount of EU effort (e.g. SE Atlantic).

Overall, EU HSBG fleets have been catching on average 70 000 tonnes of deep sea species in high seas areas (2004–2006), representing around 1.3 % of total EU catches. Deep-sea species fisheries occur at depths from 400 to over 2 000 metres, often on continental slopes or associated with seamounts, and the species are often slow-growing and vulnerable to over-exploitation. Deepwater species include orange roughy (*Hoplostethus atlanticus*), oreos (*Allocyttus* spp., *Pseudocyttus* spp.), alfonosinos (*Beryx* spp.), redfish (e.g. *Sebastes mentella*, *S. marinus*), roundnose and roughhead grenadiers (*Coryphaenoides rupestris* and *Macrourus berglax*), blue ling (*Molva dypterygia*), Greenland halibut (*Reinhardtius hippoglossoides*) and in the Southern Ocean, Patagonian toothfish (*Dissostichus eleginoides*).

Overall, the economic and social importance of Community HSBG fleets is relatively minor, compared to the EU fisheries sector as a whole. Nevertheless, in certain countries and regions, notably Spain and Portugal, it contributes significantly to catches, employment and value-added. Spain is the key EU player in HSBG fishing and these activities make a valuable contribution to the economy of the Galicia region. The activities generated by the Spanish HSBG fleet accounts for approximately 37 % of the total value added from all Galician based fishing activities in 2005/2006. Other players in HSBG fishing are Portugal, Estonia and Lithuania.

The EU HSBG fleet employed 5,053 people in 2007, representing 2.8 % of employment in the European catching sector. The majority of employment on these fleets is of EU nationals (81.1 %). The magnitude of processing employment is probably of the order of 3.4 % of EU and 10 % of employment in the processing sector in Spain.

Economic and social benefits from EU HSBG fleets are also derived in non-EU countries, through direct employment, indirect employment, processing and other value-added activities. Direct employment on Baltic fleets benefits Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians. Indirect benefits mainly accrue to the countries where catches are landed and processed, namely Canada, Iceland, Norway, and to a lesser extent, South Africa, Brazil and Uruguay.

## Reference

Full title Analysis of the economic and social importance of Community fishing fleet using bottom gears in the high seas  
Organisations MRAG, MG Otero Consultores SL and PoIEM  
Full report [http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/publications/studies/bottom\\_gears\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/publications/studies/bottom_gears_en.pdf)  
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