



GEOGRAPHY OF INSHORE FISHING AND SUSTAINABILITY (GIFS)

UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF INSHORE FISHERIES IN THE CHANNEL AND THE SOUTHERN NORTH SEA

GIFS STAKEHOLDER MEETING, 28 November 2013 (Oostende, Belgium)

Workshop 1: Governance and Inshore Fishing in the coastal zone

The aim of the Geography of Inshore Fishing and Sustainability project (www.gifsproject.eu, INTERREG IVA-2 Seas) is to explore the socio-economic and cultural importance of inshore fishing in coastal communities along the English Channel and southern North Sea. The goal is to incorporate these aspects more explicitly into fisheries and maritime policy, coastal regeneration strategies and sustainable community development. The project has partners in England, France, Belgium and the Netherlands. The stakeholder meeting of the GIFS project (Oostende, Belgium, 28th November 2013) provided opportunity for discussion on the lines of action addressed by GIFS, and for exchange of views between representatives of the fisheries sector, administration, policy makers, NGOs, local planners and scientists. More information on the meeting and workshops, [here](#).

The Workshop on Governance and Inshore Fishing, led by Flanders Marine Institute VLIZ and facilitated by Mrs. Kathy Belpaeme (for Flanders Marine institute [VLIZ](#)) and Mrs. Jo-Orchard-Webb (for the University of Brighton [UBrighton](#)), addressed 4 key themes in a panel. The panel members are stakeholders with an expertise in fisheries governance: Mrs. Monique van de Water ([North Sea Foundation](#), NL), Mr. Kris Vandecasteele ([Alderman for Fisheries-City of Nieuwpoort](#), B), Mrs. Monica Burch ([FARNET Support Unit](#), B), Mrs. Yasmin Ornsby ([Hastings Fishermen's Protection Society](#), UK):

1. **A collective voice for the inshore fisheries**
2. **Education and involvement of the community**
3. **Innovative approaches toward tourism activities**
4. **Transition from recreational to professional IF activities**

1) A collective voice for an effective representation of the Inshore Fisheries sectors in the industry.

Panel members agree that the inherent diversity of inshore (IF) and small-scale fisheries (SSF), often leads to different opinions and fragmentation making it difficult to let fishermen speak with one voice. There are also important reflections to make about representativeness of those organisations and individuals who speak on behalf of a coastal/fishing community.

The [Fisheries Local Action Groups](#) (FLAGs, Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund EFF) are accessible to all fishermen organizations although most often they retain the attention of the SSF. FLAGs help to bring fishermen and different fisheries organizations together and create a collective voice. FLAGs operate differently in each country: e.g. in Galicia (SP) every coastal village has its own fisheries organization and FLAGs help to bring different villages together. FLAGs came late in England: the Hastings FLAG has been running for 3 years. It also helps the neighbor fleet and helps fishermen to find their way through bureaucracy.

Inshore fisheries are typically strongly connected with local communities. The new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP §19 of the general provisions) states that existing rules restricting access to resources within the 12nm zones of Member States have operated satisfactorily, benefiting conservation by restricting fishing effort in the most sensitive part of the EU waters. It continues to state that those rules have also preserved the traditional fishing activities on which the social and economic development of certain coastal communities is highly dependent and calls for Member States to give preferential access for small-scale, artisanal or coastal fishermen. However in the Netherlands and Belgium there are a few examples of SSF as defined by the CFP: the coastal shrimp and flatfish fisheries deploy towed gear and therefore cannot be considered SSF. In the [Wadden Sea](#) there are some [IF/SSF](#) that are directly connected to local communities. Communities that are identified with fisheries are sites where the fish is directly landed from the vessel, sites where the fish is auctioned and historical sites that once had fisheries but are now cut of the harbors such as [Arnhemuiden](#) (NL). The Belgian fleet comprises 80 fishing boats of which 50% are <24 m in length. Of those, less than 20 are fishing inshore although nearly all of them deploy towed gear and therefore cannot be considered SSF. The association that represents the Belgian fishing fleet speaks for the entire fleet and not just the IF. The city of Nieuwpoort (B) speaks for the fishermen of Nieuwpoort who are mostly IF, however even in that case it is very difficult to bring them together under one view. Although there are examples of good practice, there is a general concern that bigger boats may dominate the agenda.

A collective voice for inshore fisheries in MSP planning process? In Hastings there were several meetings of fishermen and other users of the seabed, divers, recreational fisheries, NGOs. Although fishermen spent a lot of their fishing time to the meetings and made a recommendation to the governmental level, this was not taken on board. Therefore it must also be acknowledged that a collective voice is not always heard. The MSP planners contacted local inshore fishermen in [Nieuwpoort](#) (B). They agreed that the existing fisheries can remain in the newly established MPAs, however they will be the last fishermen allowed a permit to fish for shrimps with beam trawlers in these areas. Inshore fishermen achieved an exemption and spoke with one voice. However, the discussion was based on short-term and did not address a real vision for the future.

Are women part of a/the collective voice in fisheries? There are some Axis 4 projects investigating the women's voice in fisheries, for example [AKTEA](#) and some women in fisheries networks in Spain. Often, as e.g. in Belgium, fishermen's wives do not feel the need to join forces, especially when their husbands are coastal fishermen that go fishing for the day and their partners have a job working out.

2) Education of local community and visitors about the local fishing industry.

The 'Hastings classroom on the coast' was developed by the [Hastings Fishermen's Protection Society](#) (co-funded by the local FLAG). The classroom is led by fishermen to educate "new" voices. The GIFS project develops education packages and connected the Hastings fishermen with the Educational organization 'Horizon Educatief' in Belgium. FARNET provides similar support in education and involvement of community projects all over Europe. Projects address information on fish species, how to cook fish, activities for children, etc. The fish auction of Nieuwpoort (B) annually receives +/- 5000 students for educational visits. The visits are free of charge and it is important to keep it this way: many schools would probably drop-out if it would be paid. [PROSEA](#) (NL) is an organization that educates young fishermen about sustainable fishing. Their experience is that younger fishermen are eager to learn about environmental processes and open to new insights and developments.

3) Innovative approaches toward tourism activities: securing the connections between the local tourism sector and a sustainable local fishing industry

About Quality labels: Selling fish directly to the consumer holds a potential benefit for the IF/SSF fishermen. However, when this is not translated in financial/material benefit, it may be difficult for the sector to recognize labeling as an added value. The Wadden Sea (NL) has its own quality label; the Wadden gold (Waddengoud). It requires continued effort to sell it locally. In the Netherlands and Belgium it is mandatory to auction commercially landed fish for sale. If the fish is auctioned first, it is more difficult to tell the story beyond it or relate it to the fishermen, and labeling the fish may be a better alternative. Nieuwpoort (B) fisheries are in favour of the fish auction as it gives a higher price of the day for their fish than in other fish auctions in Belgium (0.5€ / kilo). Hastings has MSC certified fisheries for sole, mackerel and herring which are quota managed (under 10 m fleet). In Hastings MSC exists since 2005 and fishery has been accredited 3 times, through rigorous testing. There are 3 fishmongers that sell local catches. Hastings has a big renovation programme and one of the objectives is to create increased awareness about sustainable fisheries. MSC is attractive to tourism. Initially the thought was that premium fish was going to give a good price however after the third accreditation, it was noticed that MSC label doesn't really translate into a supermarket or a fish counter. Hastings fishermen were approached by a Dutch fleet with MSC label for sole, however the biggest problem is finding money to go through accreditation. Nieuwpoort has its own label which is attractive to tourists. However, at times there may not be enough "Nieuwpoort" labeled fish to supply the demand, also because of the dwindling of the commercial fleet. Therefore the city of Nieuwpoort is in favor of developing a specialized small-scale fleet dedicated to the fresh catch of the day. In Nieuwpoort, enthusiasm for MSC or other labels comes mainly from local shops and restaurants. **MSC** is also a driver for reporting. The Dutch shrimp fisheries want a fish label since 2009. Shrimp fisheries are not restricted, but MSC requires an indication of the catches in order to avoid overfishing. For the time being this label has not been achieved.

About Pesca-Tourism: another way to relate the local tourism sector to local fishing industry is Pesca-tourism with professional fishermen welcoming a certain number of tourists on to their boats in a tourism-recreation activity to discover the world of fishing (e.g. in Cornwall). It is noticed that

fishermen that take tourists on board fish less because they already have a certain income (from tourists) guaranteed. An example is the Dutch “[Sharkattack](#)”, programme, a new market for tourism shark fishing. The caught sharks are tagged for biological studies and released. The fish auction of Nieuwpoort is located in the city center. Tourists buy fish in the center on their way home after going to the beach. There are 10 fishermen in Nieuwpoort that provide work for 200 people (fish processing, transport, shops, etc.). Therefore Nieuwpoort is in favour to support this ‘inshore fisheries’ for fresh fish.

4) Transition from recreational fisheries to professional fisheries activities.

The revised CFP states that recreational fisheries can have a significant impact on fish resources and it urges Member States to ensure that they are conducted in ways that are consistent with the objectives of the CFP. This means according to the principles of the ecosystem approach and including the collection of data needed in support of a robust stock management of resources. In Belgium all professional fishing vessels are over 12 m. In Nieuwpoort alone there are around 100 recreational fishermen. Some sail under Dutch license since about 5 years, and therefore they are obliged to land 50% of their catches from the Belgian part of the North Sea in the fish auctions in the Netherlands. Other recreational vessels do not report at all. This results in underreporting and may ultimately lead to two different fishing regime > one for the recreational fleet and one for the commercial fleet, fishing in the same areas. Is this desirable? The transition from recreational to professional fisheries would help to control the fisheries and manage resources in a more sustainable way. However, in Belgium it is not possible to give small vessels a professional license because they must meet the same conditions of a ship of 24m in terms of license cost, accommodation on the vessels, and crew qualifications. Panel members agree that from a conservation perspective and fisheries management point of view, it should be considered to create legal conditions for those recreational fishermen who want to become professional fishermen: this will optimize target resource management and eventually favor the wider ecosystem. At this moment, fish leaves from Nieuwpoort without registering. The marine spatial plan of the Belgian part of the North Sea may put further restrictions on some of the recreational fishing. Requirements for the transition from recreational to professional are too restrictive to be met. The aim of the city of Nieuwpoort is to give recreational fishermen professional licenses so they can fish (also in Natura 2000 areas). There is a possibility to create a small-scale fleet segment under special conditions in order to have faster entry into professional fisheries. This would not represent a new or additional fishing effort since it already exist but is not officially recognized. It is therefore that the panel members request that these conditions be created urgently by the competent authorities through a legal instrument.

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The work in the GIFS project is organized along 3 main activities.

- **Coastal zone governance and inshore fishing** undertakes an analysis of fisheries governance approaches, at regional and local level, and their relationship with broader coastal zone management.
- **Fishing places and communities** investigates the community and place identity of fishing places, women and social cohesion in coastal communities and inshore fishing activity in the past and present.
- **Economy and regeneration** in fishing communities estimates the direct, indirect and induced benefits of marine fishing, along with the non-market benefits of inshore fishing (e.g. amenity, recreation, heritage).

GIFS develops a toolkit for decision-makers and planners, providing methods for capturing the broad value of fishing (in social, cultural and economic terms), and to document the importance of fishing for sustainable coastal communities. Case studies within the common priority area will be undertaken, utilizing fishing heritage for regeneration, community identity and the development of new economic opportunities. By exploring the three themes of governance, place and economy, GIFS develops end products on the geography of inshore fishing that will help to create an understanding of its diversity and identity, the importance and contribution to the sense of place for the region and its coastal communities.

Activity 1 explores the role of inshore fisheries in relation to the main policy instruments that are in place for the integrated management of the coastal zone and marine environment. In a second phase, an in-depth case study approach explores and documents the complex processes that create the interaction between inshore fisheries and communities. Within the case studies along the GIFS area, the following topics are explored: stakeholders, governance structures and agendas within local regeneration planning, tourism, marine/coastal governance and Fisheries Local Action Groups.

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