

INTERIM TECHNICAL REPORT

April – December 2016 (9 months)

1. Title of the project

Pilot Project ‘Support Measures for Small-Scale Fishing’ - Baltic and North Sea (Agreement Number MARE/2014/04 – SI2.727556)

2. Objectives

The action is intended to build the capacity of European smaller-scale, low impact fishers and their organizations to participate in the decision-making processes across the board that affect their livelihoods and will support the exchange of information and experience of good practice between them to achieve these aims.

The main objective of the project is to strengthen the small-scale, low impact fishers active in the areas of Baltic Sea and North Sea, with particular attention to the areas of:

1. Successfully influencing the fisheries policies at European, regional and national level;
2. Helping small-scale, low impact fishers optimize the added value obtained for their products;
3. Identify common interests and needs. Promote initiatives, projects and co-operation among fishermen around the region to facilitate the exchange of best practice;
4. Ensure active representation of small scale fishers in the Advisory Councils;
5. Enable the creation and development of networks of small scale fishers;

3. Executive summary: Policy and strategic context of the actions delivered in 2016

Given the policy situation in Project area, strongly influenced by annual ICES catch advice for 2017, in particular for Western Baltic cod stock, coupled with the small-scale fishers’ strong desire to urgently address it, a strategic decision was taken to focus the first phase of the Project on the current policy issues at hand.

With the Project assistance, such “crisis situations” have been seized by small-scale, low impact fishers’ communities in Baltic and North Seas as opportunities to elaborate and successfully present their constructive views to decision-makers and wider public. This has brought about a real influence for small-scale, low impact fishers’ communities, on the key decisions being made, as is evident from the nature of EU Council Regulation on the Western Baltic cod TAC level and accompanying measures – in October 2016. Some elements of these actions have been delivered outside the BSAC’s framework, given that the responsible Coordinator has taken up his duties after some key deadlines in the BSAC’s processes.

Completion of this action has served as a “catalyst” in bringing the much-needed change in the fisheries policy mapping in the Project area – with the interests of small-scale, low impact fishers now becoming a clear and important part of sectoral policy landscape in Baltic Sea.

The execution of meaningful exchanges of best practice requires a prior identification and in-depth analysis of fishers’ needs. Some of the issues identified through i.a. field trips, such as impact of increased grey seal population on small-scale, low impact fisheries in the Baltic Sea, additionally require a careful risk assessment ahead of charting the appropriate course of action.

Therefore, the first phase of the Project was used to identify the detailed needs of fishers and gather information on the assets already possessed by LIFE Members and other Organizations involved in Project execution, applying a bottom-up approach. The examples cover the novel and lucrative way of marketing fresh products (www.larssonfiske.se), operated by a fisherman being Member of SYEF, as well as using tools provided by EU legislation to increase the added value of fishers’ products

(possession of Protected Geographical Indication for Puruvesi lake vendace by LIFE Member Kesalathi fish base/Finland).

4. Detailed description

4.1. Bodies involved

The beneficiaries of the action are small-scale fishers and their organizations across the Project area. In assisting them and ensuring that their voices are being heard, collaborations have been established and, where applicable, strengthened with:

- Baltic Sea and North Sea Advisory Councils
- Regional bodies (BALTFISH, scientific institutes),
- National authorities (dedicated Ministries)
- Intergovernmental organizations (a recent application has been made for HELCOM observer status),
- European Institutions (in particular the European Commission and European Parliament).

4.2 Activities carried out in relation to project components

For a comprehensive list of the actions performed under the Pilot Project, please consult *Annex 1 – BANS ACTIVITIES*

4.3 Deliverables

The objectives described above are being implemented through the following actions:

- a) Building the capacity and increasing the participation of small-scale fishers in decision-making processes in the area, so that their voices and concerns are heard and heeded in regional fora, especially the Advisory Councils;
- b) Keeping small-scale fishers in the area informed of the policy developments at all relevant levels to allow proper definition of their needs and interests;
- c) Daily collaboration with small-scale, low impact fishers in the area to understand their situation and identify their needs – so that they can define the corresponding agenda & messages, and improve the communication, coordination and trust in and between themselves;
- d) Acting as facilitator in building common positions and organizing joint actions, regarding matters identified through daily collaboration referred to in point b);
- e) Encouraging small-scale fishers in the area to exchange experience and best practice on issues of common concerns;
- f) Advising on the solutions to the problems they face in daily work;
- g) Determining a greater understanding and knowledge by small scale fishers about how to achieve more sustainable fishery exploitation through low impact fishing

4.4 Timeline: planning, actual state of implementation and next steps

The initial planning for the project was made taking into consideration the starting date of 15 December 2015, as originally planned, for a period of 2 years, until December 2017. Due to a delay in granting the funds, the project could only be started on 4 April 2016. LIFE benefits from external funding to support its functioning until December 31st 2017, meaning that all other projects that are co-financed from LIFE's budget must end at this date as well. Thus, LIFE has made the request to terminate the Pilot Project in December 2017, completing the actions in 21 and not 24 months. The delay of the starting date, as well as the shift from 24 to 21 months have had their impacts in which

concerns the spread of the activities depicted in Annex 2. For example, the Project Coordinator was employed in July and not in March as initially planned and the actions on the ground were consequently deferred (for the Gantt chart depicting the detailed status of the implementation, please see *Annex 2 – Gantt Reporting*).

A synthesized summary of the operations carried out so far is presented in the table below:

Expected Results	Interim Report	Final Report
1 Regional Coordinator employed and put in place by March 2016 for the duration of the project	Given the deferred starting date of the project, Mr Marcin Rucinski was put in place on July 1 st 2016.	
Production of 4 project related publications per annum to be disseminated to all LIFE organisations and other small scale fishers, LIFE website and other social media	One article presenting the BANS Coordinator, Marcin Rucinski, 2 position articles (Western Cod and other Baltic stocks), Photo-video coverage of the Workshop (BANS Regional meeting) and interviews with the participants, as well as constant features in LIFE's Newsletters and on the Facebook Page (more information in Annex 7)	
2 Regional Conferences/workshops organised and undertaken	1 Regional conference was organised in October 2016. A second one to follow in fall 2017.	
Small scale fisher attendance at Advisory Councils (6 meetings)	Small scale fishers' attendance at 4 AC Meetings (16.08.16 - Technical Working Group BSAC, Copenhagen; 9.11.2016 - Demersal Working Group NSAC, Copenhagen; 15.11.2016 - BSAC ExCom Meeting Copenhagen; 15/12/2016 – BSAC Technical Working Group, Copenhagen)	
Fisher attendance at key member state events (3)	Attendance at 3 regional events. Given the proximity of the venue, the costs associated to the participation of the fishermen were not significant. Thus, LIFE will be able to facilitate the participation of fishers to other events as well.	
Fisher attendance at Other Fora events (4)	Attendance at 2 events – HELCOM Seminar/Baltic Sea Strategy (Stockholm) and Baltfish Forum (Frankfurt)	
Fisher attendance at key Brussels events	2 meetings have been organised – one at the European Parliament, with MEP Ulrike Rodust, and one at the European Commission, with Mr Bernhard Friess	
Inter Area 'Exchange of Good Practice meetings'	To be pursued in the remaining time of the project.	
Creation of 4 small scale fishers' organisations within the Region by the end of the action	The creation of new small scale associations has proven problematic in practice. After several field visits, the local reality has shown that most small-scale fishermen are already affiliated with "umbrella" associations/structures, comprising both small-scale and larger-scale fishers. The issue is that, although these bodies do not always represent their interests as small scale fishers, the small-scale fishers are often afraid of the repercussions associated with leaving the	

	existing structures and risks related to building new ones.	
Increase of at least 6 new and existing small scale fishers' organisations joining the LIFE Platform	4 new organisations have joined LIFE from the Project Region (SYEF – Sweden, Kesalathi Fish Base Cooperative – Finland, Darlowska – Poland, Mierzeja – Poland)	
Creation of an effective small scale fishers network on a local, cross border and regional basis	Active progress and intensive daily activities of different kinds, illustrated by the range of actions conducted so far by the BANS Coordinator and LIFE Team.	
Production of Best Practice Guide	(to be finalised in the remaining time of the project) For the moment, the LIFE Animation was translated in the languages of the Project Region, raising awareness about the cause of small-scale fishers and the organization answering their needs. Furthermore, LIFE has produced a series of 5 tutorials, which explain simply and clearly key topics for fishers (CFP, ACs, decision-making processes, funding incl. EMFF, Use of social media in marketing products offered by small-scale fishers). We consider that the simple & interactive format of tutorial video + written support is the best way to convey the message. Given that the concept costs for the tutorials surpassed the budget allocated under the BANS Project, LIFE has covered this expense from own funds. The Best Practice Guide budget line will be used to dub the tutorial videos and print the Best Practice guide in the languages of the Project.	

Next steps

In subsequent stages of implementation, the Project is to be focused on:

- Broadening and strengthening the small-scale, low impact fishers' network through expanding the membership of LIFE and daily cooperation with LIFE Members and other small-scale fishers' organization on matters of their concern;
- Detailed planning and execution of exchange of best practice activities, as well as impact fishers;
- Assisting in the implementation of Landing Obligation by small-scale, low impact fishers;
- Taking carefully designed steps to improve the policy climate in relation to the consequences of increased grey seal population for small-scale, low impact fisheries in the Project area;
- Ensuring the proper public visibility of the Project Actions, thanks to LIFE's strong Internet and Social Media presence;
- Wide dissemination of the results;
- Continuing the strong and constructive involvement into ACs in the Project sea;
- Remaining active in the annual cycle of fisheries policy, as the corresponding ICES advice becomes available;
- Putting emphasis on actions towards adding value to products offered by small-scale, low impact fishers
- Advancing the production of five short tutorial texts and films corresponding to the main topics of Project, in particular: EU decision-making process, Common Fisheries Policy, Advisory Councils, EMFF and novel ways to add value to fisheries products offered by small-scale, low

impact fishers. The language versions of all the tutorial films corresponding to the Project Area languages are in preparation.

5. Evaluation

5.1 Demonstrated results

Overview of actions delivered in 2016

- i. Various meetings with small-scale fishers' organizations from the area of operation to understand their situation in-depth and support them as needed, both at meetings themselves and in subsequent contacts – with a view to creating a functioning regional network.
- ii. Active participation by fishers in most meetings and activities of Baltic Sea Advisory Council and in relevant meetings of North Sea Advisory Council;
- iii. Assistance in a successful bid for one LIFE Member Organization (Fischereischutzverband Schleswig-Holstein/Germany) to join Baltic Sea Advisory Council, with an initial acceptance of their ExCom candidature, to be confirmed at a later stage.
- iv. Activating other LIFE Member Organizations (SYEF, Sveriges Yrkefiskares Ekonomiska Förening/Sweden, Darłowska Grupa Producentow Ryb/Poland, NetVISwerk/Netherlands) within the BSAC, NSAC and other important regional processes, such as BALTFISH.
- v. Facilitation of 3 Member Organizations joining LIFE
- vi. Organization of a major Workshop, open to all interested small-scale, low impact fishers, with the following aims:
 - o Getting small-scale, low impact fishers acquainted with the EU Institutions and decision-making processes relating to fisheries policy;
 - o the nature of Advisory Councils,
 - o European Maritime and Fisheries Fund,
 - o National quota management
 - o Landing Obligation, including the information on Discardless project
- vii. Assistance and facilitation in elaboration by small-scale, low impact fishers concerned of Action Plans:
 - o for Western Baltic cod stock in view of 2017 ICES advice for the stock;
 - o for Seabass stocks, in view of 2017 ICES advice for the stock;Following the elaboration of both Plans, intensive action was undertaken to popularize their content vis-à-vis the relevant addresses at all levels covered by the Project, with particular attention to decision-makers, other groups representing fisheries interests, as well as working to elevate the interest of wider public in the Plans through strong presence on the Internet, including Social Media;
- viii. Preparing the application for LIFE Observer Status within HELCOM

5.2 Success factors

a) Bottom-up approach

The success of project activities crucially depends on starting any action by reaching out to small-scale fishers, who are its ultimate addressees, or by responding to calls for action from them. Only on the basis of identifying the problems and needs of small-scale fishers, at best in a direct interaction, can a successful strategy to address these problems be devised and implemented.

b) Assistance in self-representation of small-scale fishers rather than representing them

Many small-scale fishers are disappointed by the actions of those policy actors that are often purporting to represent, at European or regional level, all the segments of the fisheries, small-scale included. More often than not, in practice they tend to represent the interests of those

financially strongest, i.e. usually not the small-scale fishers, which means neglecting the real needs of small-scale fishers.

This widespread practice has led to a wider disappointment with the consultation system underpinning the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), and consequently, loss of belief in the policy itself by many small-scale fishers. To overcome this major issue, it is necessary for the small-scale fishers themselves to be present at meetings, and be active in representing their interests on their own.

5.3 Difficulties encountered

a) Languages and public speaking: small-scale fishers representing their communities often have insufficient language capabilities and public speaking preparation to successfully make their points vis-à-vis the incumbent policy actors in key fora, such as Advisory Councils;

b) Time shortages: small-scale fishers representing their communities are, in most cases, working as fishers themselves. This makes their timelines highly unpredictable, dependent on the weather conditions and business environment for fish sales, with its inherent seasonality. This is a challenge to their availability at meetings;

c) Lack of confidence in the system: the phenomenon described in p. 5.2.b) leads to diminishing confidence of many small-scale fishers in CFP's advisory system. Therefore, a set of activities directed at winning back their trust in the policy was organized in the starting phase of the project, as part of capacity building exercise. Activities at the level of Advisory Councils have followed.

6. Lessons learnt

6.1 Best Practices identified

As regards supporting the small-scale fishers in effective representation of their interests at relevant fora, the project activities to date show that a balance needs to be struck and links established between the mix of:

- field trips carried out to listen to the ultimate project addressees, the small-scale fishers. During the field trips, it is necessary avoid drawing facile or premature conclusions, and focus on obtaining good understanding of small-scale fishers' problems in their often unique local context;
- capacity building activities tailor-made to look into the solutions of the problems identified during field trips, prepared in a practical way;
- small-scale fishers' presence at key regional, national and EU fora, applying the principle of self-representation, with extensive assistance prior to and during the meetings, with a view to correct, contextually correct and meaningful articulation of small-scale fishers' interests and views.

If correctly applied, this mix brings about a genuine change of fishers' attitude towards the CFP's advisory system, with emerging individuals willing to engage more deeply and intensively into a meaningful representation of small-scale fishers communities they originate from.

6.2 Solutions to barriers identified

The barriers/difficulties identified in p. 5.3. can be overcome by applying the following methods:

- Transparent approach to cooperation with small-scale fishers, including sharing of information and careful internal negotiation of policy lines to be taken

- Presenting policy issues using a somewhat simplified (but not simplistic) language, avoiding too many technicalities and jargon
- Being available to listen to small-scale fishers' concerns at their convenience;
- Building confidence through quality of daily work and level of activity.

6.3 Recommendations

The process of elaborating success the Project Recommendations shall be completed at the end of the project timeline and presented in the Final Report. Based on project activities covered by the present Interim Report, and depending on the results of further implementation of the project, the matters initially raised in points 5.2 a) and b) as well as 6.1. may become fully-fledged Recommendations.

7. Other information

7.1 Website

A dedicated section for the Baltic and North Sea Project has been created on LIFE's website. It can be accessed at <http://lifeplatform.eu/eu-projects/>

7.2 Various documents (reports, presentations etc)

For samples of our work, please see the enclosed Annexes

LIST OF ANNEXES

1. Annex 1 – BANS Activities
2. Annex 2 – GANTT Reporting
3. Annex 3 – BANS Workshop Material
4. Annex 4 - Action Plan and other public policy documents
5. Annex 5 - Documents officially submitted to Advisory Councils
6. Annex 6 - Application for Observer status with HELCOM
7. Annex 7 – Media & Communications