



PRESS RELEASE

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“Survive and Thrive: Adding Value to Fisheries Policy and Production for Small Scale Fishers”

Fishers organisation and stakeholders from across the Baltic and North Sea gather to maximize the potential of local and fresh products and ensure a fair and equitable access to the markets.

Thorupstrand, Denmark, 7th February 2018 - Baltic and North Sea smaller scale fishers and their representative organisations from Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, Latvia and Poland met on the 7th and 8th in Thorupstrand, Denmark, for a capacity-building workshop on the marketing and added value of fresh and local fish products and the cooperative development of fisheries policies relevant to the small scale fishing sector. The meeting, the third in a series of best practice exchanges in the framework of the EU-funded project „Support measures for small-scale fishing in the Baltic and North Sea” (<http://lifeplatform.eu/eu-projects/>), was organised and facilitated by the Low Impact Fishers of Europe Platform [LIFE]. It gave smaller scale, low impact fishers the opportunity to come together to identify problems and solutions and discuss a series of initiatives and actions to ensure the sustainability and survival of their fishing sector with special attention given to marketing and policy aspects.

Alongside fishers’ organisations, a number of stakeholders attended, including representatives of Farnet – the European Commission’s Agency in charge of Fisheries Local Action Groups – Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), Culinary Heritage Europe and the Baltic Sea Advisory Council. Attendees spoke with passion of the need for the creation of long term plans as an integral element of the more dynamic and effective management of Baltic and North Sea fisheries. Such plans should be based on the aim of long term sustainability and coupled with EU **marketing regulations, tools and schemes** that would allow fair competition for local fish products within the wider market.

Of equal importance to the LIFE members was the need to ensure access to fishing rights for local fishing communities, underlying the perverse effects of ill-management within Producers Organisations as highlighted in LIFE’s latest investigation report “Fishy Business” (available here <http://lifeplatform.eu/fishy-business-fish-pos-eu-2/>) and the historic failings in the allocation of quotas.

The conference made clear the need to not only highlight the vital importance of smaller scale, low impact fishers to the history and culture of local communities but also **the social, economic and environmental benefits** they provide as primary wealth creators and stewards of the sea. In this respect, an open discussion on the implementation of the CFP's regulatory framework in relation to the needs of SSFs took place.

Speakers from across the whole region underlined **the perilous state** of fisheries and the domination of previous policy by larger scale mobile gear operators, often at the expense of smaller scale interests. Participants called for **better regulation and control** of such activities and the need for equity and fairness across all sectors. At the same time, they identified the urgent requirement to significantly **increase the selectivity** of all metiers to avoid unwanted catches of fish below the minimum size.

The meeting also made clear and universally supported the need for effective representation of small scale fishers within the **Advisory Councils** to provide more balanced and all-encompassing advice to **Member States and the European Commission**.

Speaking on behalf of Danish hosts, Kirsten Monrad Hansen thanked LIFE for organising and facilitating the event. Responding on behalf of LIFE, Executive Director Jerry Percy thanked the Danish contingent for being such warm and friendly hosts and everyone else for providing wide and diverse contributions to the discussions. He told the meeting that all in LIFE recognised the massive challenges, as well as the potential opportunities facing smaller scale fishers and fisheries in the Baltic and North Sea.
