



PRESS RELEASE

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“Paradigm shift in fisheries management underpinned by Catalan decree and European co-management Focus group”

Fishers organisations, public officials and stakeholders from across Europe gather in Barcelona under the aegis of LIFE and the Government of Catalunya to promote community-led approach as an alternative to current failed top-down models.

Barcelona, Spain, 19th July 2018 – Fishers organisation representatives, public officials, NGOs and other stakeholders met on the 18th in Barcelona, Spain, to **formally set up a Focus Group to promote an effective and inclusive form of fisheries governance across Europe based on the approach of co-management.**

The meeting, organised and facilitated by the Low Impact Fishers of Europe Platform [LIFE] and hosted by the Government of Catalunya, gathered 20 “hands-on” experts with different backgrounds to reflect on the various approaches to and the success of existing co-management models, promote the replication of local best practices on a wider scale and coordinate future practical actions that will be carried out over an initial period of two years (2018-2020).

Co-Management is typically defined as a partnership arrangement between government and the local community of resource users, sometimes also connected with agents such as NGO’s, research institutions and other resource stakeholders, to share the responsibility and authority for management of a resource.

A number of successful co-management initiatives were presented. Amongst the ones taking place at local level: Co-management in the Arctic (Snowchange Cooperative, Finland), the Lyme Bay case study (LIFE, UK), Co-management in Galicia (Foundation Lonxanet, Spain), COGEP in Sicily (University of Catania, Italy) PELA-Méd Project (CDPMEM du Var, France) and several initiatives from Catalunya. From a Mediterranean-wide perspective, the NGOs WWF and MedPan explained their initiatives on the promotion of co-management across MS borders.

During the event, participants stressed how the **top down model of command and control fisheries management as applied in the European Fishing grounds is dysfunctional and not fit for purpose.** Fishers have been alienated from management decision-taking processes, and, combined with a lack of capacity and political will at national level to enforce regulations, this has encouraged overfishing, habitat destruction and Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishery activities. In such a context, new forms of governance are required that build trust and cooperation between national authorities and fishery stakeholders, promote co-responsibility, and which unite them in the common purpose of sustainable fisheries and in the fight against IUU fishing. This requires a paradigm shift away from a top down command and control approach to a bottom up

approach based on co-management.

The Co-management Focus Group, formally established in this meeting, will provide a “ThinkTank” to reflect on the mechanisms and tools through which local initiatives can be replicated and scaled up. In addition, the Focus Group will promote cooperation and joint actions that could lead to have a coordinated and greater impact for the benefit of resources and fishing communities. Specifically, the participants agreed to jointly carry on several advocacy initiatives in the coming months at Brussels and GFCM level, promote capacity building and to share tools and methodologies to enable the effective paradigm shift on the ground.

It is in this light that LIFE welcomes the latest decision taken by the Government of Catalonia on the matter, which in its view will allow the very much needed change of direction and therefore the development of thriving fisheries. In fact, on the 19th of June the Government of Catalonia approved its first “Decree on Co-management” ([official link](#)) based on two main pillars: “a) The establishment of management plans as a **professional fishing activity regulation, monitoring and control tool**. b) The application of the co-management model as a **decision-making instrument** regarding the technical measures contained in the professional fishing management plans.

In the wake of this important momentum for the Catalan Region, and through the creation of this official Focus Group, the Low Impact Fishers of Europe in partnership with other stakeholders want **to create the conditions for other co-management initiatives across Europe to be able to share the positive results achieved and possibly formalise the approach at Member State and European levels.**

On behalf of LIFE, Executive Director Jerry Percy thanked Sergi Tudela, Director General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of Catalonia, for the generous hosting of the meeting by the Catalan Government and for their far-sighted initiative to introduce the Co-Management Decree. Mr Percy stated “today’s decision to develop a Co-Management Focus Group marks a paradigm shift away from the failed authoritarian systems that have failed us all and towards a brave new world of genuine and inclusive co-management that will put those who rely on the resource at the centre of the decision-making process. This is indeed a bright day for fishermen, fish stocks, coastal communities and the marine environment”.
