



THE FIRST SEMINAR EVENT

On the 4th and 5th of November 2021, the EU project '**Catching the Potential**' held a Seminar on sustainability training for fishers. Participants flew in from all over Europe to IJmuiden, the largest fishing port of the Netherlands, to discuss the project's progress and to share their experiences on the training of fishers. The project's aim to develop an international standard for sustainable fisheries training is of great importance, as well trained maritime professionals can make the difference in achieving sustainability goals for the sector. Providing training is the first step in the right direction by informing fishers and raising awareness on sustainability. This will benefit not only the precious resources of our ocean but the planet, economy and humans, including fishers themselves.

THE GOALS

1 PROGRESS

Discuss current progress in the project 'Catching the Potential' which aims to develop an international standard for sustainable fisheries training.

Country specific trainings are being developed for Ireland, Spain, Latvia, Greece, France, Germany & Azores. Currently Ireland (BIM), France (CEFCM) and Latvia (Novikontas) aired their first pilot. These pilots deliver the input for an international standard for sustainable fisheries training.

2 NETWORK

Build and sustain an international network around training fishers.

Establish an international network of fishing academies and training institutes to exchange/build experience on sustainability training. It also creates a support system for trainers to incorporate this training after this project is finalized.

3 EXPERIENCE

Exchange knowledge and experiences on the training of fishers.

In the seminar, this was achieved during workshops, tours, games, panel discussions & presentations.



A photograph from one of the tours aboard the Dutch GO-22 Beam Trawler commonly used to catch flat fish.

THEMES

Several common themes around fisheries training were realized during a panel session with **Cor Blonk** (PFTA), **Raymon van Anrooy** (FAO) and **Daniel Voces** (Europêche) and all the partners present.

IMAGE

The fishing industry seems to have an image issue. It is often not realised that many fishers care truly deeply about the ocean. There seems to be a general lack of empathy and connection from the public towards the ocean and the maritime industry, and understandably so as they are far away from most of societies daily lives. As mentioned by Lucia Fraga from CETMAR,

"There is a need to raise awareness on the fishing community and its contributions to protect the ocean. Positive messages can create links with citizenship and contribute to the social license to operate."

There should therefore also be a focus in training fishers to improve their image, and for us as a network to also spread positive awareness.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is one of the most important skills fishers can benefit from; amongst each other at work, with the public and with other stakeholders. As Cor Blonk (PFA) said;

"Fishers should learn to present themselves better to be taken more seriously in legislation and to move to a more sustainable sector. If fishers take initiative and communicate effectively, their voices can be heard to create positive change. It's time to be PROactive rather than REactive."

MOTIVATION

Another challenge was on how to motivate fishers to attend a training on sustainability. Fishers are so focused on their expertise, that it can be difficult to understand the importance of other knowledge and skills that



Participants engaged in an interactive workshop to map out the Dutch policy making process with all stakeholders.



TAC game on the value of joint management of fish stocks.

do not directly relate to the activity of fishing itself. A 'whats in it for me' approach should be kept in mind when preparing and conducting a training. Understanding that fishers come from a very practical field, a mix of workshops, practical work, real life demonstration and a moderate amount of theory is required.

NEW ENTRANTS

One of the difficulties lies in attracting new entrants to work in the fishery sector, as numbers continue to decrease for certain regions. Firstly, women are near to non-existent in this sector. On top of this, Daniel Voces (Europêche) explained;

“In many fishery education centres in Spain, only about 2 out of 10 students actually want to become fishers, the rest want to work onshore”

There are several reasons for this; the negative image of the sector, the isolation from the rest of society (and lack of WIFI), the increase in legislation, and the heaviness of the work itself. Mustapha El Ketab (CEFCM) phrased the toughness of

the industry perfectly;

“In France, you're not a fisher until you lose a finger.”

TRUST

Fishers are often part of strong and sometimes isolated communities. This tends to lead to a cultural and societal gap that can create a distance and lack of trust. As a result fishers may feel secluded and misunderstood. Bridging this gap is crucial for professionals that want to work in the fishing industry, but this requires a new set of skills. As Adrian Bartlett (BIM) said;

“While fishing originally started as a cottage industry, it's rapidly transformed into a professional sector. This divide is noticeable, alongside the generational gap. Gaining trust of fishers and bringing them into the spotlight is no easy feat.”

ATTENDANCE

In addition, attendance to the training can be difficult as fishers spend most of their time out at sea. Fishers are usually paid on a "share of the catch" basis, meaning they will

immediately lose their income during their training. Therefore, some sort of compensation often needs to be in place for fishers to attend.

OPPORTUNITIES

All parties agreed on the importance of actively involving fishers and fishery students in the training, requiring them to also think about the future of the sector. Technological advancements and stricter regulations call for a broader set of knowledge and skills to keep up with the changes. At the same time, these skills could also offer opportunities for them to work in other sectors in the future. A **broader view of the fishing industry** is desirable, where more attention should be paid to marine ecology, entrepreneurship and innovation, communication, safety motivation and fisheries management. Creating awareness around why and how policies are set promotes understanding and reduces resistance. In this fast changing world, training should be at the forefront to assist fishers in the transition and to achieve sustainable impact in the fishing industry.

LOOKING AHEAD

While training and spreading awareness takes time, all parties emphasised the importance of this project and it's broad network. There was a strong realization that similar struggles are taking place in all the participating countries, offering a newly realized sense of support and courage to fight for this important cause. Policy makers, scientists, NGOs, training institutes and the sector will be involved in the design and implementation of the training. This is especially important during the development of the two specific pilot courses for each of the countries involved. Based on the results of the pilots, an **international standard for sustainable fisheries training** will be developed. Major steps have been taken within the project to include sustainability training in the **STCW-F code**, which deals with the minimum training requirements for all fishing vessel personnel. With the great success of this seminar, we look forward to the second edition which will be focused on the implementation of sustainable fisheries training across the European Union. We thank all the partners for joining and helping us get one step closer to reaching our goals.

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