



## FARNET Support Unit at your service

**The FARNET Support Unit has been established by the European Commission to assist in the implementation of EU measures for the sustainable development of fisheries areas (Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund).**



Over the next six years, this Brussels-based team of ten experienced staff, backed up by twenty-one country experts, will assist local partnerships in developing new, innovative solutions to the challenges confronting Europe's fisheries areas, and in sharing their ideas and experiences with other areas and with policy makers. The idea is to gradually build a **"learning platform"** which connects the growing knowledge and experience of potentially thousands of actors from across Europe. The Support Unit has three priority objectives:

1. To build capacity in integrated territorial development, by providing guidance and support to assist in the establishment of local fisheries groups or partnerships.
2. To identify, test and transfer successful responses to the challenges facing fisheries areas.
3. To create a platform and a voice for fisheries areas by connecting local learning and innovation to the broader European and national policy debates.

The Support Unit will also support transnational cooperation and organise regular transnational seminars, training events and an annual FARNET conference. To facilitate ongoing exchange and the sharing of information, the Support Unit will develop and maintain a FARNET website, produce a bi-monthly electronic newsletter and a FARNET magazine (two editions per year), as well as guidebooks and reports.

The FARNET team welcomes direct contact and visits from all the actors involved. You can find us at: FARNET Support Unit, 36-38 rue Saint Laurent, B - 1000 Brussels. Tel +32 2 613 26 50, [info@farnet.eu](mailto:info@farnet.eu), <http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/farnet>

## First meeting of Managing Authorities and official launch of FARNET

On 15 October 2009, representatives of Managing Authorities and the national networks of all 21 Member States implementing Axis 4 have been invited to the Support Unit's offices in Brussels to discuss how they can work together in developing effective strategies for the sustainable development of fisheries areas. This will be followed by a reception (18.00 to 20.00) addressed by Fokion Fotiadis, the Director-General of DG MARE, marking the official launch of FARNET, and the opening of the FARNET Support Unit to all stakeholders concerned with fisheries areas.

## Getting started on the ground: key messages from Pärnu

**On 4-5<sup>th</sup> June 2009, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) organised a seminar in Pärnu, Estonia on, "Getting started on the ground with Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund".**



The seminar, which brought together 125 participants from 19 countries, was the first meeting of local partnerships that will implement Axis 4 measures across Europe over the next five years. During the opening session, Mr Ernesto Peñas Lado, Director at DG MARE explained that around 200 fisheries local action groups are being set up in 21 European Countries, with a total public budget of more than €800 million. At the time of the conference, around one third of the groups were in operation and there were three national networks. The Commission emphasized that for the smooth implementation of Axis 4 in the Member States, all groups should be operational by the second half of 2010.

Where groups have been established, at least two very different types of partnership and strategy are emerging. The first, common in Scandinavian and some West European countries, tend to have small budgets, focus on a narrow range of fisheries-related projects and rely heavily on existing local partnerships. The second type of groups have much bigger budgets and are managed by bigger, stand-alone partnerships, which have more diverse strategies.

In this context, the Commission highlighted the dangers of adopting a budget that was too low to have the critical mass to develop a genuine territorial approach, or too high, with the risk of taking on poor quality investments which are unrelated to a genuine local strategy.

A key message to emerge from the seminar was the need for properly resourced capacity building programmes. The two-stage group selection approach developed in Estonia was cited as a particularly good example, especially for countries with little experience of local development. Other important issues highlighted were the need to remain focused on the local partnership's vision for its area and to ensure complementarity with other local strategies and initiatives. Finally, the importance of balanced partnerships was also underlined, ensuring adequate private participation but also avoiding dominance by any one sector.

## FARNET Support Unit on the ground in Bulgaria



**In September, the FARNET Support Unit was actively involved in assisting in the rollout of the Bulgarian Axis 4 programme**

The Bulgarian administration foresees four phases to the launch of the Axis 4 programme. The first phase, which involved the "collection of information and designation of fisheries areas", ran from the 16 June to 31 August 2009. During this period, the Bulgarian Authorities assessed potential fisheries areas from which five were invited to progress to a second phase.

Phase two, "**awareness raising and presentation of declarations of interest**", which runs from 1 September to 30 November 2009, began with the publication of a call for expressions of interest. Between 21 September and 2 October 2009, Mr John Grieve from the FARNET Support Unit accompanied representatives from the Bulgarian Managing Authority to meet with interested stakeholders in the five selected areas. A final meeting also took place with local and national stakeholders in Sofia, which also involved the Minister and senior officials from the relevant Bulgarian

Ministries and representatives of DG MARE. The purpose of this, the first FARNET mission, was to initiate the process of group development in Bulgaria and to inform and motivate stakeholder involvement in developing local groups and in preparing their declarations of interest.

Fisheries areas have until the end of October to submit their declaration of interest. The Ministry will then decide by the end of November what areas progress to the third stage, which will involve the “**preparation of final proposals**”. Each fisheries area admitted to this stage will be allocated a Technical Assistance grant to cover the cost of employing experts to work with stakeholders to develop an integrated territorial strategy by the end of May 2010. During this phase, the FARNET Support Unit will also organise a training session for the local experts and members of the groups.

During the summer of 2010, the selection panel will evaluate the final proposals and make the final “**selection of groups**”. Final selection for Axis 4 funding will depend on groups obtaining a minimum score in the assessment and the size of the grant awarded will be related to the quality of the proposal (but expected to be in the region of approx €4 million per group).

## FARNET Support in Italy



On 17-18 September 2009, the FARNET Support Unit took part in a seminar organised by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries for the 14 regions implementing Axis 4 of the EFF in Italy.

Members of the Support Unit had the opportunity to meet with about 40 regional representatives and to take them through the key steps required for selecting high quality areas, groups and strategies. The regional participants also had a chance to raise some of their problems and questions with representatives of the European Commission.

The success of the event suggests that similar events of this kind could be very helpful in finding ways of overcoming some of the specific difficulties Member States are facing in implementing Axis 4 and in streamlining the calendar for setting up the groups. Further information on the event will be available on the FARNET website (<http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/farnet>).

## Some planned highlights of FARNET’s activities over the next year

|                 |  |          |
|-----------------|--|----------|
| 15 October 2009 | Official Launch of FARNET                          | Brussels |
| November 2009   | Training Seminar<br>First Issue of FARNET Magazine | Poland   |
| December 2009   | Website  |          |
| Spring 2010     | Training Seminar                                   | Romania  |
| May 2010        | Transnational Seminar                              | Spain    |

## Send us your news

The FARNET newsletter is a resource for all those engaged in building a more sustainable future for Europe’s fisheries areas. Please send us news and information on your activities which might be of interest to other groups or actors working in this field. In particular, we would like to hear about your successes and achievements, important events and announcements, and also your ideas or proposals for exchanges or cooperation with other fisheries areas. It’s your newsletter, please use it!