



## FLAGS on the move: the second wave!



**The FARNET Support Unit organised its fourth European seminar for Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) in Sofia, Bulgaria on the 21-23 of March 2011.**

Supported by Bulgaria's National Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture, the seminar, "FLAGS on the move: the second wave", provided recently selected FLAGs, and groups in the final stages of the selection process, with information and advice on the implementation of their local development strategies and on supporting successful projects in their areas.

Over 120 participants, including 70 FLAG and 15 Member State representatives, participated in the seminar, which focused on topics such as: building and running effective partnerships; ensuring successful project selection and animation; and mobilising the private sector. A draft of the next FARNET guide on partnerships, project selection and working with the private sector was also presented (this will soon be available in 11 languages). Further details on the [FARNET website](#).

## Greek FLAGs begin the implementation process



**The Axis 4 managing authority in Greece organised an informal meeting of FLAGs in Athens on the 18 March to discuss challenges in the implementation process and the priority needs of the groups.**

All eight Greek FLAGs were represented at the meeting. During the introductory discussion, the managing authority also announced that a call for up to 5 more FLAGs had been launched in October 2010, and the selection procedure was currently underway.

In the meantime, the managing authority asked the existing FLAGs to move ahead with the implementation of their strategies. In this regard, FLAGs indicated their intention to focus primarily on tourism, including pescaturism, as well as improving the competitiveness of the fisheries sector, improving quality of life, supporting the creation of SMEs, and promoting innovative projects such as marine parks.

Challenges identified include the absence of a national legal framework on fishing tourism, and low levels of education and a lack of relevant experience within the fisheries sector. In terms of priority needs, FLAGs highlighted the need for a national network in Greece, and for the dissemination of good practices from the different Axis 4 themes. Greek FLAGs are also interested in sharing their experience in implementing LEADER with FLAGs in other countries. Finally, there was a proposal to simplify and strengthen the image of Axis 4 by, for example, calling it "Fisheries Leader".

## Meeting of Sweden's Baltic FLAGs



**The Swedish Fisheries Board (*Fiskeriverket*) organised a meeting in Visby on 8-9 March for Swedish FLAGs situated on the Baltic coast. The aim of the meeting was to identify ways in which Axis 4 could provide opportunities to jointly tackle common challenges.**

The meeting brought together nine FLAGs and the discussion focused on issues such as: improving spawning grounds and restoring water bodies, the coexistence of commercial and sports salmon fishing, the potential for targeting new fish species (e.g. pike), processing and adding value, and how to mitigate the impact of seals on fishing activities.

Based on the discussions, the nine FLAGs agreed on a joint project to test seal-proof fishing gear. A subsequent "kick-off meeting" for this initiative took place in Gävle, in April, at which a working group was established to develop common actions to be implemented in 2012. The FLAG Södra Bottenhavet is coordinating the project. The next meeting of Swedish Baltic FLAGs will be held at the end of September, in the Tornedalens fisheries area, and will look at the theme of «Adding value to fisheries products». Further details are available [here](#).

## Latvian FLAGs review progress and priorities



**An Axis 4 focus group in Latvia on 3 March brought together over 20 participants, including representatives of 12 FLAGs, to share views on progress, challenges and priority needs.**

Participants cited achievements such as "learning in practice", "active stakeholders", "addressing real needs", "improving quality", "activating regions where nothing happened before" and "integrating society and fisheries". The main challenges were considered to be administrative barriers, the long time from idea to support, unclear legislation and uncertainty about future financing.

The second part of the meeting sought to identify support that could be provided by FARNET and by the national fisheries network. Priorities identified here included seminars, training, exchange visits and a project and FLAG database.

Finally, the Latvian FLAGs expressed interest in sharing their experiences and expertise with FLAGs in other countries on areas such as mobile traditional fish-smokeries, managing water basins, and museums. They also expressed an interest in learning from other countries on issues such as, "how to involve fishermen", "fishing tourism and adding value", "starting new projects", and "Leader projects".

## A Mediterranean Network for Axis 4?



**At a meeting organised by the Spanish national network on the 30 March, FLAGs highlighted the potential benefits of a network to promote contacts and cooperation between Mediterranean FLAGs.**

The proposal, originally made by the Catalan FLAG, *Litoral Costa Ebre*, could see the development of a network similar to that proposed for the Baltic Sea. However, further discussions need to be held with the other Mediterranean countries in question.

The Spanish network meeting also reviewed activities for 2010, during which Spanish FLAGs approved 96 projects, representing a total investment of €16 million. Over half of these projects are expected to create jobs. The meeting also heard that the Ministry for the Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries had established contact with the national tourism institute with a view to developing marine tourism products. Work will soon begin on market studies and common definitions for such activities. Further details on the [network website](#).

## Baltic Sea cooperation



**Representatives from seven Member States around the Baltic Sea met in Tallinn, in May, to discuss the potential to coordinate their work and support cooperation between FLAGs, national networks and EFF specialists around the Baltic Sea.**

This first Baltic Sea cooperation event brought together representatives of Axis 4 managing authorities and national networks from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. The aim was to explore the potential for coordinated activities such as joint events and thematic work. The initiative is also expected to serve as a model for geographical cooperation elsewhere in the EU. Further details from Eve Külmallik, e-mail: [eve.kulmallik@agri.ee](mailto:eve.kulmallik@agri.ee)

## Launch of the Portuguese national network

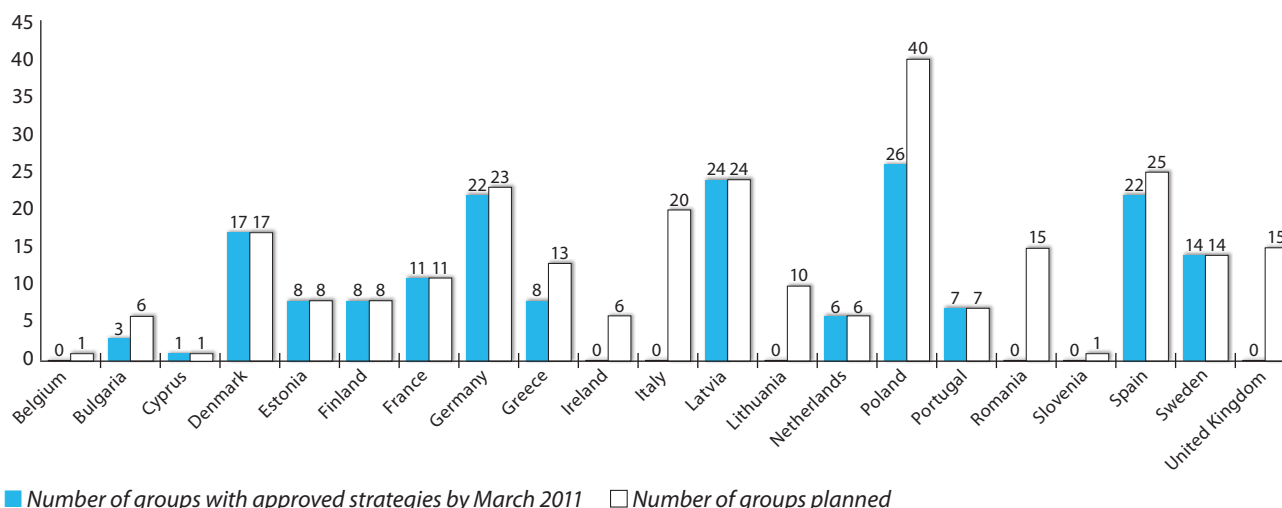


**The national network for Portuguese FLAGs was officially launched on 25 February, at the second national meeting of FLAGs.**

The network will promote and facilitate cooperation between FLAGs at national level. It will organise thematic workshops, facilitate the dissemination of information, as well as arranging study visits between Portuguese FLAGs, and with other European FLAGs. More information is available on the [network website](#) (PT). This second meeting of Portuguese FLAGs took place in Aveiro and was hosted by the [Ria de Aveiro FLAG](#).

## State of play: 177 FLAGs with approved strategies

By March 2011 there were 177 FLAGs in 14 Member States with approved strategies. Since the last update, Bulgaria has joined the list of countries with FLAGs approved; having selected its first three FLAGs. Another Finnish FLAG was also approved, completing the selection of eight FLAGs in Finland. The latest projections indicate a scenario of more than 270 FLAGs approved by 2011.



## Forthcoming events and activities

5-7 July

FARNET transnational seminar on diversification in EU fisheries areas.

Gdynia, Poland

## Other news

### Funding for Eco-Innovation



The European Commission published the 2011 call for proposals under the Eco-Innovation programme on the 28 April. The deadline for applications is 8 September 2011. The eco-innovation initiative supports projects that bridge the gap between research and the market. It focuses specifically on innovative products, services and processes that help to protect the environment. The programme has four main strands: materials and process recycling; buildings; the food and drink sector; and greening business (including green procurement). Further details on the [Eco Innovation website](#).

### Micro-credit facility launched



**The European Commission and European Investment Bank (EIB) have formally launched the Progress Microfinance Facility.**

This €200 million initiative aims to provide micro-credit (loans of up to €25,000) to entrepreneurs or enterprises with fewer than 10 employees. The facility is managed by intermediaries in each participating Member State. Further information is available on the [EIB website](#).

### 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.

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