

First project idea for an INTERREG EUROPE application

Project title	Creating opportunities for regional growth through boosting cultural heritage of fishing communities in Europe
Project acronym	???
Lead partner organization	Municipality of Middelburg
Specific objective	Objective 4.1: Improving natural and cultural heritage policies

Project Summary

Challenge:

Historically, small scale fisheries are important for local communities. Fishermen and fishing communities possess and cherish rich cultural traditions, strongly related to living at sea (and from the sea) and ashore, reflecting a quite self sufficient way of life. Originating from historical fishery migrating routes, contacts between fishermen and fishing communities developed for ages, resulting into exchange of cultural and economic activities. Nowadays, traditions of many fishing communities are still quite similar with recognizable elements in their local maritime heritage. Within this shared cultural framework, different local conditions resulted in distinctive accents and a unique identity for each fishing town. However, the economic situation and outlook for small-scale fisheries in the EU is not positive. Their contribution to regional income and employment is low and declining.

Many small scale coastal fisheries are struggling financially, or are disappearing altogether, being overruled by large fishing companies with more financial resources to buy quota, or struggling under administrative burdens and inadequate policy frameworks. Cultural heritage of fishing communities might disappear as a consequence of actual economic profiles of coastal areas (less people involved in the fisheries, modern fishing techniques, new economic dynamics in coastal regions).

The European Union recognises the valuable role that small scale fishing can play in coastal communities. Socioeconomic development of small scale fishing activities in European coastal zones is needed in order to let these activities (re)flourish in a sustainable and valuable way with the potential to lead to increased employment, food security and social and cultural wellbeing of coastal communities in general.

History has proven that fishing communities along the coast of the EU possess highly adaptive potential to change their way of life and business. Fishermen (and in the cultural mind set of fishing community members) contain a resourcefulness that could be better used to tackle the actual challenges. Increased efforts are necessary to better position and profile the fishing communities and their harbours.

This project will focus on development and implementation of new strategies utilising cultural assets of fishing communities and might both create new jobs and keep cultural assets protected and alive (slightly changing while passing from generation to generation).

The partners in this project will cooperate to reinforce (the cohesion of) these communities, their economic position and their competitiveness. The project will focus on the old core qualities and values of the fisheries and fishing communities, and make maximum use of the available social, cultural and economic capital within these communities. While doing so, knowledge exchange between regions will take place, enriching or maintaining local cultural settings. For example, coastal people in Northern Europe – in general – have forgotten to eat and prepare fish caught in their neighbouring coastal waters. As a result, coastal communities lost their connection to the sea and miss out on the many values that small scale fishing activities can offer, in an economic, social, cultural and spiritual sense. In Mediterranean countries, small scale fishing activities are still much more part of everyday life and embraced by local consumers, but here the fisheries struggle with other issues that threaten their long-term persistence, including ecological challenges such as overfishing due to poor fisheries management. Exchange between European regions supports to (re)use the “local” settings.

There is a local and regional interest in keeping and developing small scale and sustainable coastal fisheries in many areas, as they contribute to the liveability of the areas. Local and regional governments have policy in place to inject ‘new life’ into small coastal harbours and communities and see the cultural heritage of small scale fisheries and their communities as a way of doing this.

Overall objective:

The project will develop and implement (new) regional development approaches to protect and promote cultural heritage in fishing communities along the coast of the EU and thereby boost the attractiveness of these regions for businesses, citizens and tourists.

The project will develop action plans for sustainable and viable future strategies based on the historic role and core qualities and values of fishing communities. A balanced management and exploitation will foster sustainable regional development based on the available cultural capital within these communities (e.g. tourism, regional attractiveness) and at the same time protect it and support cultural changes.

Type of activities (not exclusive):

European exchange of good practices on regional development approaches to protect and promote cultural heritage in fishing communities include e.g.:

- Regional tourism strategies
- Place based tourism (cultural tourism / fish info centre)
- Best practices to connect fishermen and their traceable products, local historic distribution channels, consumers/tourists
- ...

Expected changes:

- improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes (boost to regional economy, more viable and sustainable region);
- protected and “dynamic” cultural heritage of fishing communities (organic grow)
- benefits for people in fishing regions

Overview of project partners

The geographical focus will be the wider European coastline, including regional areas such as the Mediterranean, Atlantic coast, North Sea, and Baltic area, containing harbours of varying size and home to local small scale coastal and recreational fisheries. Exchange will be organised to address the specific cultural or economic situations in different countries / regions.

Target groups for specific objective 4.1:

- Primarily national, regional and local public authorities responsible for natural and cultural heritage;
- Regional development agencies;
- Environmental agencies;
- Organisations responsible for the management, exploitation of natural areas and/or cultural heritage;
- Universities, knowledge and research institutes and institutes for higher education;
- Organisations in economic sectors with a strong impact or dependence on natural and cultural heritage;
- Other public authorities, bodies governed by public law or private non-profit bodies involved in the protection and development of natural and cultural heritage.

Annex COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Priority Axis 4: Environment and Resource Efficiency

Thematic objective 6 - Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency

Investment priority 6(c)

Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage.

Specific Objective 4.1

Title / Description

Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, in the field of the protection and development of natural and cultural heritage.

Results The main change sought is an improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular for Investment in Growth and Jobs and ETC, dealing with protecting, promoting and developing natural heritage, biodiversity and ecosystems as well as supporting cultural heritage.

Regional actors need to protect ecosystems and vulnerable landscapes and prevent biodiversity loss and soil degradation in their territories to prevent (further) degradation of these natural assets. Sustainable management and exploitation of the natural environment can also foster sustainable regional development based on so-called eco-system services (e.g. pollination for agriculture, or natural flood retention areas) and natural quality (e.g. tourism, regional attractiveness). A similar logic applies to the preservation and exploitation of regional cultural heritage.

Regional actors in management of natural and cultural heritage must define coordinated, place-based strategies and actions that balance measures of preservation with sustainable exploitation of these assets. This can include improvement of biodiversity protection schemes, sustainable use of NATURA 2000 or other protected areas, increase knowledge and sensitisation of actors.

The programme supports exchange of experiences and sharing of practices between actors of regional relevance with the aim to prepare the integration of lessons learnt into regional policies and actions. And the programme will facilitate policy learning and capitalisation by making relevant practices and results from Interregional Cooperation Projects and other experiences widely available and usable for regional policy actors.

This interregional sharing of practices and policy learning will improve capacities (skills, knowledge) of individuals and organisations involved and plan the implementation of lessons learnt. This results a better implementation of (G&J and ETC) programmes and policies for natural and cultural heritage.