

**SPEECH BY THE CHAIR OF THE MEDAC**

**“Beyond 2020: Supporting Europe’s Coastal Communities”**

**Tallinn, Estonia 12-13 October 2017**

**Workshop 9: “Small-scale coastal fisheries and fisheries in the outermost regions”**

First of all, it is opportune to clarify that, in order to discuss SSF, it would be appropriate to re-examine and solve the problem of the definition of these fisheries. It is widely recognised that, within this term, there is an extensive range of gears and capture systems with different levels of selectivity and of impact on resources (from gillnets to longlines, handlines, pole-lines and small purse seine nets, etc.), which deserve to be treated separately, this is partly so as to be able to define the level of sustainability of each one. Attempts to achieve the most appropriate definitions were made by the European Commission during the most recent reform to the CFP, however the results were inconclusive and the approximate, generic and unsatisfactory definition of 12 m LOA, not including trawl gear, was reconfirmed.

Having said that, we know that within SSF it is possible to identify characteristics that are common to the various different fishery activities that are carried out (at least in the Mediterranean), including: highly scattered fishery activities along the coasts, including small landing points; reference made to local markets; low geographical range; short trips at sea; flexibility and variability of gears used according to the target stocks; gears that change with the seasons on board the same fishing vessels; a fleet of small, generally obsolete vessels; an extremely small volume of business (micro-enterprises), consisting of 1-2 crew members (many family businesses), that are generally under-capitalised but which conserve and maintain local traditions and cultures. These characteristics are distinguished by some, into small-scale fisheries with a high social value and more market-oriented fisheries.

We are also aware of the widespread and dominant problems that arise with respect to these characteristics: from ensuring due recognition of the value of the product and its quality, which is also impacted by the shortage of services and facilities on land, to the difficulties faced by sector workers in diversifying into other activities (which is sometimes possible towards to tourism but not in all cases and areas; more difficult towards aquaculture), a lack of generational replacement, difficulties faced in involving families in the satellite activities and related services, difficulties in accessing credit, thus leading SSF enterprises to resort to EC funds which still require that the beneficiary covers a significant part of the investment, competition (and conflicts) in many coastal areas, both between different SSF activities and with other fleet segments and other uses of the sea and coast.

In view of all these problems, if we consider the use of EMFF funds by the SSF sector, we can only observe how this segment of European fisheries has not benefited greatly and how it continues to show a lack of ability to submit projects and to carry them through. Small-scale fisheries continue to be scattered and not predisposed to aggregation, although representation of the sector is ensured by the different forms of association in the various countries (Cooperatives in Italy, Cofradias in Spain or Prudhomies in France). The

problem is not the representation of small-scale fisheries, the problem lies in organising and raising awareness among operators, who need to be contacted directly to promote the presentation of projects and to provide support.

The only context in which this is easier and which is working to some extent is that of FLAGs in the framework of local development, with pilot projects and initiatives to galvanise the fishing community. These play a positive role in coastal areas, but the impact is low and depends greatly on the presence of local skills and on the composition of the single FLAGs.

In consideration of the low impact of the EMFF, even though it contains many interesting opportunities, where SSF are concerned we should perhaps recognise that the mechanism based on “applications” for funding does not work, contribution levels are too low and problems such as access to credit are insurmountable if they are not dealt with in a direct and specific way. We will need to ask ourselves how to encourage aggregation and technical assistance for those micro-enterprises with the characteristics already mentioned, so as to enable them to formulate investment projects and manage them, thus increasing their added value, improving product quality, or diversifying their activities. Without this kind of innovation, the risk is that the SSF sector will remain marginalised and unable to trigger a rationalisation process that would ensure its sustainability and its future.



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