



European
Commission



© Gernot Gänszle, OIC



GENERAL INFORMATION

Member State:

Germany

EMFF Measure

Innovation linked to conservation of marine biological resources

Union Priority:

EMFF Union priority 1: Promoting environmentally sustainable, resource-efficient, innovative, competitive and knowledge-based fisheries

Thematic Objective:

Thematic objective 6:
Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency

Keywords:

- Control & surveillance
- Education & training
- Environment
- Marine fisheries
- Regional cooperation
- Research & innovation
- Small-scale fisheries
- Sustainable production

Operation start date:

2016

Operation end date:

2019

STORY OF THE MONTH

SUPPORTED BY THE EMFF (European Maritime and Fisheries Fund)

VOLUNTARY PROTECTION OF HARBOUR PORPOISES AND DIVING DUCKS IN THE BALTIC

Operation description

The purpose of the project is the coordination of a voluntary agreement between fishermen and the Ministry of Energy, Agriculture, the Environment, Nature and Digitalisation for the protection of harbour porpoises and diving ducks by the Baltic Sea Information Centre (Ostsee Info-Center) in Eckernförde. Besides the control and analysis of compliance to the restrictions on the gill net fisheries (to which the fishermen in Schleswig-Holstein committed themselves via a voluntary agreement), the project also includes public relations. In addition, the project oversees the coordination of accompanying monitoring measures and scientific investigations for the protection of harbour porpoises and diving ducks along the Baltic coast of Schleswig-Holstein.

Since no data is available on bird or porpoise by-catch it is not possible to quantify the reduction of such by-catches. According to scientific opinion, both the reduction of the overall gill net length during the summer months, and the avoidance of areas with an abundance of diving ducks in the cold season, are suitable measures to reduce the by-catch of such species and can be considered environmentally sustainable. Negative social impacts are not expected. Economic sustainability will be dependent on the extent to which measures may have economic costs on the fishing sector and the willingness to absorb any such costs if they occur, as well as the market benefits of being able to demonstrate reduced by-catch interactions.



INTRODUCTION OF THE BENEFICIARY

Beneficiary name:

Umwelt Technik Soziales e.V.

Contact details:

UTS e.V., Kieler Str. 35,
24340 Eckernförde – Germany

For project details: Ostsee
Info-Center (OIC) (Baltic
Sea Information Centre),
Jungfernstieg 110, 24340
Eckernförde – Germany

When was the organisation established?

1993

What does the company do?

UTS e.V. is a charitable organisation that implements projects in various fields: labour market, education, nature and environment, guidance for companies or employees, and integration.

Where is the organisation located?

Eckernförde, Schleswig-Holstein,
Germany

Employment:

3 people: 1 on 30 h/week, 2 on
8-10 h/week; in all, ca. 1.2 FTE

Website:

www.fischerleben-schleswig-holstein.de

Other operation info

Remarkable achievements

The project is most notably fostering communication between fishermen, ecologists and the administration and is therefore well accepted amongst fishermen. Currently, about 240 out of 300 active fishermen in the area are taking part, and their numbers continue to grow. Monitoring results show that the agreed protection measures have been implemented; only a few infringements occur.

The positive experience of fishermen has also improved the acceptance of another measure that was implemented in pilot projects and on which the ongoing operation is based. Fishermen in the region are given kits containing special plastic bags, antiseptic spray and gloves to anonymously dispose of harbour porpoise bodies in case they find them in their nets. The bags are collected at sea or on land by ombudsmen and transported to the ITAW Büsum (Institute for Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Research) for scientific investigation. This offer of anonymous disposal is being used more and more by fishermen, thus improving the basis for scientific investigation of porpoise by-catch.

Short history of the project

In 2010, a growing number of people who are, for various reasons, involved in Baltic Sea fisheries, started to discuss the problem of porpoise by-catch in gill nets. Investigations indicated that gill net fishing is the main cause of death amongst porpoises washed up on the beach. Hence a project was developed to facilitate cooperation between fishermen and the institutions involved in porpoise protection, to test measures to avoid porpoise by-catch, and to improve the image of fisheries in Eckernförde Bay. Initial funding came from the ideas competition Lust op dat Meer (Delight in the sea) of the Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and the Federal Environmental Agency; further funding was provided by the European Fisheries Fund axis 4 (see under 'related links' for details).

The tested measures included a pick-up service at sea for the anonymous disposal of porpoise by-catch, the transport of the bodies to the ITAW Büsum, the testing of fish traps and the deployment of pingers. The measures were developed on the basis of harbour porpoise observations during the last decade, investigations of dead porpoises, and consultations with experts and stakeholders.

The voluntary agreement for the protection of harbour porpoises and diving ducks represents a follow-up and extension based on the success of the pilot projects – which now also include the protection of diving ducks and is applied to the entire coast of Schleswig-Holstein.

Supervision of the project

A workgroup for the supervision of the project was constituted in February 2014 in the Landesamt für Landwirtschaft, Umwelt und ländliche Räume (LLUR) (State authority for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Areas) in Flintbek. The workgroup meets two or three times a year and consists of ≤ 10 members, always including representatives of the Fischereischutzverband Schleswig-Holstein e.V. (FSV) (Fisheries Protection Association) and the Landesfischereiverband (LFV) (State Fisheries Association). The workgroup is open to further members; external experts are invited depending on the situation.

Scientific background and monitoring

The Baltic Sea Information Center carries out compliance monitoring; the ship controls the gill net length. Large groups of birds in certain areas of the Baltic Sea are reported to the Baltic Sea Information Centre, which issues a warning to all fishermen. Those taking part in the voluntary agreement will stay clear of these areas to avoid by-catches of diving ducks.

The ITAW Büsum provides scientific background data and monitoring concerning porpoises and by-catch. The protected areas for diving ducks are based on fishermen's specifications, and are generally shallow areas and mussel banks where diving ducks feed. Further areas were included in 2015, taking into account the long-term observation of sea birds by the Ornithologische Arbeitsgemeinschaft (ornithological workgroup) (Kieckbusch 2010) and observations collected by the Ostsee Info-Center.

Lessons learned

The main achievement of the project, or more accurately the chain of projects and actions over the past 7 years, is the need for constructive cooperation between fishermen, other stakeholders, experts and administrators in order to implement effective conservation measures. The excellent cooperation with fishermen in particular is crucial for the action's success.

Results and outputs

Expected / potential outcomes (project in progress):

- Reduced levels of by-catch interactions;
- Agreement over protection measures for diving ducks and harbour porpoises with high levels of acceptance amongst fishermen;
- Improved public image/perception about fishery practices, with potentially positive market impacts;
- Beneficial effects on tourism;
- Improved knowledge about the effectiveness of by-catch reduction measures;
- Knowledge about whether the respective lengths of the protection periods are sufficient or should be changed (and how).

Next steps

1. Since April 2017, the new warning device PAL (Porpoise Alert) has been protecting harbour porpoises from by-catch. It imitates the natural warning sounds of harbour porpoises on a frequency of 133 kHz. This causes the animals to be more alert and intensifies their echo sounding, enabling them to detect nets in time and avoid them. Within the framework of the project, fishermen taking part in the voluntary agreement are supplied with PALs free of charge, which are applied all year round to provide a continuous protection for porpoises. The Baltic Sea Information Centre is also monitoring compliance in this project.
 2. Another project aimed to set up an underwater camera in the Eckerförde Bay to transfer recordings directly to visitors in the Baltic Sea Information Centre (OIC). The project was funded via axis 4 of the EMFF.
 3. Further monitoring is currently being planned in the framework of the PAL project, for example to understand the effects (positive or negative) PALs have on harbour porpoises.
-



BUDGET

Total operation budget:
EUR 522 139,90

EU Budget contribution to the operation:
EUR 391 604,92

Coordinating organisation:
Umwelt Technik Soziales e.V.
Jungfernstieg 110
24340 Eckernförde – Germany



Operation sustainability and relevance

Amongst the main points of the latest reform of the CFP were the ecosystem approach, the avoidance of by-catch, international responsibilities and favourable measures for small-scale fisheries. This project is contributing to all of these.

With regards to the last point, the voluntary agreement works successfully, currently without more restrictive (legal) protection measures, such as a ban on gill net fisheries in certain seasons. It can thus be considered favourable, if not essential, for the future of small-scale fisheries in the region.

The operation is important on regional, national and international levels.

Regional level: The measures are beneficial for the image of fisheries and for tourism in the region.

National and international levels: Germany is responsible for the conservation of protected species as defined by EU regulations and international conservation agreements. The project covers a substantial part of Germany's territorial waters, as well as extensive parts of the distribution areas of diving ducks and harbour porpoises.
