



Paving the way for pesca-tourism

Greece



Joint action by 18 FLAGs is changing mentalities among Greek fishers as discussions, training, and study visits prepare them to launch new activities and make their trade known to the wider public.

In 2015, the Greek government introduced pesca-tourism rules to help fishers in diversify their income, putting their boats to new uses and reducing fish catch. Taking tourists on board was expected to offer a solution to many small-scale fishers struggling to maintain a profitable business. Previously, a common approach was to accept European funds to 'scrap' their boats, which reduced the national fleet's capacity to catch diminishing fish stocks. However, this also eliminated the traditional wooden boat heritage.

Despite pesca-tourism regulations, few fishers were able to take advantage of this opportunity due to a lack of information, skills and motivation. Pesca-tourism remained unfamiliar to tourists, and fishers faced a significant learning curve when engaging in this new activity. In response, 18 FLAGs came together to design a joint project to develop pesca-tourism as a new, slow tourism activity. For this, fishers needed to be convinced and supported to launch such activities; and the market for pesca-tourism had to be developed. Project activities included:

- **Building trust with fishers** through visits by each FLAG to its fishing ports, informal chats and information sessions. FLAGs also provided information leaflets on pesca-tourism and helped fishers fill in questionnaires to **collect information** on their knowledge and interest in pesca-tourism.
- **Sharing and analysis** of the information collected in 256 questionnaires filled in by fishers in the different FLAG areas, including details of fishers' profiles, challenges faced and other statistics.
- A two-day **training session** for 50 fishers by fishers in Kefalonia. The first day covered procedures to obtain a license, changes needed for fishing boats to meet the legal requirements, safety information, basic accounting, marketing and use of social media. The second day involved an onboard pesca-tourism demonstration.
- A practical **training session for FLAG Managers** on pesca-tourism requirements and implementation on local boats.
- A **study visit** to Italy for 50 fishers and 50 FLAG members to learn from Sardinian fishers experienced in pesca-tourism.
- Production of three short **promotional videos** per FLAG area.
- Development of an **online platform to promote pesca-tourism**, including an interactive map and videos showing different types of pesca-tourism from mixed fisheries to open sea mussel farms.
- A **final conference** for the project partners, journalists and the Ministers of Tourism and Agriculture to promote pesca-tourism, share the project results, lessons and next steps.

Results:

- More than 450 fishers mobilised to explore pesca-tourism as a new opportunity.
- More than 100 fishers trained in pesca-tourism.
- As of September 2023, 48 fishers have taken steps to obtain a pesca-tourism licence and 157 fishers are already undertaking pesca-tourism activities (up from 101 fishers practicing it before the project).
- Fishers involved in the activity can now live almost exclusively from pesca-tourism in the months of July and August (a pesca-tourism trip brings in approximately €500 per day).
- Reduced pressure on local fish species (a gillnet fisher sets around 0.5 km of net for pesca-tourism, compared to around 5 km of net for a day of professional fishing).
- The project is contributing to keeping the young in the sector, preserving vital skills, as well as traditional vessels and the heritage they represent, since the young are getting more involved in the family fishing businesses, attracted by the easier working conditions and better pay.



Transferability and Tips:

Similar projects can be transferable to other countries where pesca-tourism legislation is in place or where there is the will to develop it. They can also be very useful where there is need for more promotion of pesca-tourism – both to the public and among fishers.

Do:

- Build trust with local fishers! This is fundamental before attempting to convince them to launch a new activity such as pesca-tourism.
- Keep activities simple and practical to keep fishers onboard and engaged.
- Get the relevant authorities involved!

Don't:

- Don't rush! Such a project (especially with so many partners) needs time. Build in ample time to ensure the project can mature and address the variety of different objectives.
- Don't push this 'new' activity on fishers until trust has been built up. It is important to listen a lot and talk less! Gradually, pesca-tourism may be introduced as a solution.



Quote from project promoter/beneficiary

"Together, we can make change happen in our local communities"

Lili Lympelopoulou, FLAG Coordinator.

Project cost and funding

Total project cost: €649 000

FLAG grant (divided among 18 FLAGs):
€649 000 (100% of total project cost)

Implementation duration

June 2021 – December 2023

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