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Forward-looking strategies for fisheries areas

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Introduction

2021 marks the start of the third period of local development support in fisheries and aquaculture areas in Europe. This means that the vast majority of Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) can capitalise on previous experience for the development of their next local development strategy (LDS).

By the end of the 2021-2027 period, over 20 years will have passed since community-led local development (CLLD) was first introduced to fisheries and aquaculture areas (starting with Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund). While the first period of local development in fisheries and aquaculture areas (2007-2013) could be considered one of experimentation, the second period (2014-2020) of capitalisation, the third period (2021-2027) should be one of maturity.

FLAGs and managing authorities (MAs) should by now have a good idea of what they want to do with CLLD, and what they can and cannot achieve with this method. Indeed, while CLLD is a versatile and powerful method to support local development, it also has its limits, for example in terms of budget or geographical scope. The experience gained from the last two periods should allow FLAGs and MAs to identify and focus their CLLD actions on those themes where it can make a real difference for fisheries and aquaculture communities in Europe.

For this, a good strategy is essential and is one of the three pillars of CLLD, along with the partnership and the area.

The **partnership,** a group of organisations or people who steer the strategic priorities of the FLAG. The members should reflect the strategic focus of the strategy which can imply changes when a new strategy is prepared.

The **area** covered by the FLAG. This should also be in line with what is to be achieved. Should the limited FLAG funding focus on specific parts of the area? How to ensure a minimum critical mass of human, natural, financial resources is available to trigger change?

The **strategy** – CLLD aims to ensure that projects and initiatives developed at local level reinforce each other and that the challenges to be tackled are considered in relation to each other. For this to happen, there is a need for a participative reflection process at the level of the area. This reflection process should be translated into an integrated local development strategy, which will steer the operations of the local action group over the course of the period and the projects it funds.

It is also important to remember that the local development strategy (LDS) is and should remain a **living document** to be adapted as it is being implemented in response to new emerging needs. Planning is needed to prepare as much as possible for the future, but this future remains unforeseeable, as the various global crises experienced in the past decades have shown (the 2008 financial crisis, the European migrant crisis some years later and more recently, COVID-19). A good strategy is therefore one that equips the area and communities with the means to react and adapt to uncertain circumstances.

Change is often believed to take a generation, and 20 years is the time commonly accepted to refer to a generation. FLAGs should therefore ensure that, by the end of this third programming period, they have triggered the required change to allow European fisheries and aquaculture areas to look to the future with confidence – confidence in their own strength and their ability to adapt to this world in transition. When such unforeseeable changes appear, all parts of Europe are affected, but coastal areas in particular.

It is therefore crucial to ensure that FLAGs are equipped with the strategies, partnerships and areas to build on the experience from the last two generations of CLLD and secure the change that fisheries and coastal areas need.

This Guide **aims to help FLAGs across the EU develop the third generation of LDS**: more focused, more innovative and better able to respond to local challenges. In the following chapters we will present:

> some of the key challenges that FLAGs are expecting to face until 2030 (Chapter 1),

> the structure and content of the local development strategies post-2020 (Chapter 2),

> the special place of cooperation in CLLD strategic planning (Chapter 3),

> the practicalities of developing new and improved strategies (Chapter 4).

In each chapter we present examples from FLAG practice and tips to help local stakeholders develop better local strategies for 2021-2027.

1. From 2020 to 2030: the challenges FLAGs face

FLAGs are a unique tool for fisheries communities to devise their own future; unique in the sense that they offer local stakeholders the possibility to come together and reflect on where they want to go in the coming years and how to use their budget to develop the activities of tomorrow. For this, they need to imagine a future that can be quite different from the situation today. They must be ready for **new challenges** that are likely to emerge, as well as for **challenges that are not so new**: those that may have been addressed by FLAGs in the past but continue to be relevant and may require a stronger, more coherent response.

When discussing with FLAGs their plans for the 2021-2027 programming period, the FARNET Support Unit (FSU) identified a number of challenges that FLAGs were expecting to face over the next ten years (until 2030), namely:

> sustainable food systems

> climate change mitigation and adaptation

> cleaner seas (including marine litter), balanced ecosystems and protection of marine biodiversity

> developing business opportunities, including sustainable aquaculture and other blue growth sectors

> a place for the young: within fisheries and the broader community

> safe, quality jobs and social inclusion for all

> a stronger role in governance and an improved image for fisheries.

The sections below present a short overview of each challenge and the main reasons for FLAGs to address it, with references to project examples and further information. More practical tips on how a FLAG may go about addressing these themes with high quality projects will be available in the next FARNET Guide.

1.1 **Sustainable Food Systems**

Increased industrialisation of global food production, coupled with the concentration of retail trade and the sharp decline of small businesses in the supply chain have had significant impacts on consumption patterns and trading practices over the last decades. The EU processing sector depends heavily on imported seafood and from the consumer standpoint, it is often challenging to find fresh and locally caught or farmed seafood in stores. Indeed, small-scale operators can have difficulties to scale up their supply and bring the products to the mainstream food system. Thus, fishers may need help to get more value from their products. Developing skills in business planning, processing, marketing, price negotiation, logistics management and administration, as well as creating linkages with other stakeholders, are important measures to improve the value chains of small-scale fishing and aquaculture.

However, despite these challenges, new markets are also emerging in Europe for organic and local food products. European consumers are increasingly willing to make informed choices about the food they buy, and tend to prefer local producers, where possible. Growing appreciation of locally caught and farmed seafood provides various business opportunities for the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

The recently launched European Green Deal, with the Farm to Fork initiative as one of its essential pillars, aims to transform European food systems, making them more sustainable. The Farm to Fork Strategy will also contribute to achieving a circular economy and acknowledges the important role of European farmers and fishers in managing the transition[1].

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has shown that global supply chains can be vulnerable to sudden disruptions. Seafood supply chains have been severely impacted by the logistical problems related to the stricter border controls and market access challenges associated with the closure of the food service sector, including restaurants. Therefore, more robust local and regional food systems are becoming more important than ever before.

Addressing sustainable food systems in your strategy

When planning to address this theme in its strategy the FLAG can envisage combining the following types of activities:

Mapping local producers and markets within and outside the FLAG area
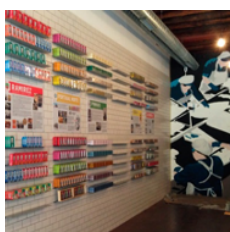
The Portuguese **Litoral Norte FLAG** supported a local Producer Organisation (**Vianapesca**) to develop new products based on locally caught mackerel and sardines with high potential for innovation. The first step was to carry out a market study; then, a line of ready-to-eat seafood products was developed; and finally, newly designed packaging and a marketing campaign helped to find markets for these products within and outside Portugal.

Raising consumer awareness and communicating the importance of sustainable, low impact fishing and fish farming

In the Croatian region of Dalmatia, fishers and restaurants received support from the **Galeb FLAG** to create the '**Fishermen recommend**' scheme and quality label, endorsing local fish products. The scheme aims to differentiate restaurants with local, fresh fish on their menu, and those serving primarily imported fish, often mislabelled as local fish. This will help the local fishers sell their fish at a better price and highlight their work at the heart of the community. In addition, the Galeb FLAG hopes that the project will promote this part of south Croatia as a tourist destination with exceptional gastronomy thanks to its quality fish products.

Building the capacity of local producers to develop high-value products

A Finnish fisherman and fish farmer has successfully applied a traditional Japanese technique to produce **the first umami-type fish from locally farmed rainbow trout**. The **South Finland FLAG** supported the project in two stages. First, in the testing and marketing phases of the product, when several variants of the product were developed and tested by Michelin starred chefs at a series of events. Secondly, in the further experimentation of the umami technique and the use of other species, along with the promotion of these new products at Helsinki food fairs, using a marketing specialist.

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1   For more information on the European Green Deal, see **https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en**. For the Farm to Fork strategy, see: **https://ec.europa.eu/food/farm2fork_en**

Making use of low value but more abundant fish species
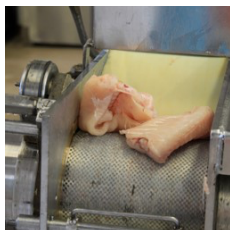
The **Lapland FLAG** in northern Finland supported fishers to create a mincing facility to process **unwanted, and otherwise discarded, by-catch into new marketable products** such as fish fingers. Through the project, the fishers identified that there was a profitable market for minced roach. They therefore purchased a mincing machine and developed a line of minced fish products (minced roach, burbot and pike) purchased by fish processing companies, municipal food services and local restaurants.

Reducing the carbon footprint through local cooperation and new local markets

To promote local fish consumption, a social enterprise, "**Terre et Mer**", was launched in southern France to process fresh, local seafood into ready-to-cook products and ready-made meals. The enterprise brings together the Red Cross and the local fish auction and offers supervised work to marginalised citizens. The frozen food is supplied to local schools and retirement homes, while fresh production is sold to the general local public. Supported by the **Thau FLAG**, the project does not compete with fishmongers or local distribution channels but responds to consumer demand for ready-made meals while encouraging locals to eat seafood caught nearby.

With the support of **Costa Blu FLAG** in Italy, fishermen and Solidarity Purchasing Groups in Abruzzo are working together to **introduce fish to the products sold in food baskets**. The project helps solidarity groups to buy products fished in ethical and environmentally-friendly ways and enables local fishers to sell all types of fish on the market at a fair price. In addition, profits from the sales fund cultural initiatives that diversify fishermen's income, such as fish cleaning and filleting courses, exchanges of new and traditional recipes, and events on the rediscovery of ancient professions e.g. sewing fishing nets.

Improving traceability with the help of science and research

In Portugal, three research institutions in collaboration with the local shellfish gatherers' association, nature reserve and municipality received support from the **Oeste FLAG** to develop a **methodology for tracing the catch area of goose barnacles**. This methodology aims at identifying potential illegal practices such as mislabelling or poaching, which threaten the sustainability of the stock and cause commercial losses to goose barnacle gatherers. Based on a "mineral finger-print catalogue", this technique allows the identification of the origin of products and was acclaimed internationally by **Nature**, one of the world's leading scientific journals, for its innovation and practical application.

Cooperation among different stakeholders and innovation will be essential for re-thinking your local food systems. Some of the **key partners** the FLAG should involve, include:

> fishermen, aquaculture producers, fisheries associations, etc.

> seafood traders, retailers, wholesalers, processing sector, etc.

> tourism and gastronomy

> research institutes

More suggestions for FLAGs wanting to improve their local fisheries supply chains can be found in the FARNET Guides:

> no. 14, **Integrating aquaculture within local communities**

> no. 12, **Boosting business along the fisheries value chain**

> no. 8, **Marketing the local catch**

> no. 3, **Adding value to local fishery and aquaculture products**

1.2 Climate change mitigation and adaptation

Marine and coastal environments are amongst the areas most affected by climate change, in turn having an impact on fisheries, aquaculture, livelihoods and living spaces. The complexity of water-based socio-ecological systems makes finding effective response to such changes particularly challenging. At the same time, the fishing sector's dependence on crude oil and natural gas for fuel not only consumes finite resources, but also contributes to the destruction of the natural habitats from which they are extracted. By using such energies the sector participates in the production of greenhouse gases linked to global warming, including the warming and acidification of the oceans.

In 2013, the European Commission adopted an EU strategy on adaptation to climate change. The strategy aims to make Europe more resilient to changes linked to climate, which will affect marine ecosystems and their fish stocks, agriculture, coastal wetlands, tourism trends and many other aspects of coastal life[2]. When thinking about local responses to climate change, and in particular the role FLAGs can play to support these responses, the popular doctrine "Think globally, act locally" could also take the form: "act locally to change globally".

During these last two programming periods, FLAGs have shown that through awareness raising and support to initiatives promoting lifestyle changes that favour local and sustainable products and services, they can help communities to adapt to a world in transition. This includes supporting their stakeholders to take advantage of new opportunities that can sometimes arise in the context of climate change.

Addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation in your strategy

When planning to address this theme in its strategy, the FLAG can envisage combining the following types of activities:

Raising the awareness of the local community and fishing sector

FLAGs can help raise the collective awareness of local fishing communities in order to minimise and/or anticipate the effects of climate change on the management of fisheries resources and the activities that depend on them. For example, the **Lake Vättern Co-management Group**, supported by the **Lake Vättern FLAG**, is helping local stakeholders to reach a consensus on the sustainable management of fish resources of the second largest lake in Sweden. One of the results was the establishment and implementation (in collaboration with fishers) of measures to take into account the impact of climate change on their activity, such as area fishing closures to ensure less pressure on the spawning biomass already impacted by global warming, and developing more selective fishing gear.

2   EU Adaptation Strategy: **https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/? uri=CELEX: 52013SC0133&from=EN**

Reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions

Reducing the consumption of energy is of primary importance to mitigate climate change; the next best option is to obtain it from renewable sources. Fishing communities are resourceful and, with the support of the FLAGs, they have seized this challenge of minimising fuel consumption and moving to renewable energy all along the value chain: from the fishing boat, through the dockside infrastructure and the transportation of the products to the consumer.

On the Spanish Mediterranean coast, the **Malaga FLAG** initiated a **pilot project** to research and test fuel saving techniques and gas emission reductions. It teamed up with the local university and a research centre specialised in boat engines. The nanotechnology used in the engines resulted in lower CO_2 emissions and reduced fuel consumption by 15%. The **Eastern Asturias FLAG**, also in Spain, has helped the fishing organisation ('*cofradía*') of Bustio to become 100% self-sufficient in renewable energy. **Two projects** have equipped their buildings, including the fish auction, with solar and wind power, as well as storage batteries allowing them to ensure any energy surplus can be retained and used when needed.

Greening local habits through reduced food miles
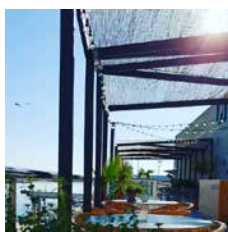
The **La Safor FLAG** in Spain supported the fusion of gastronomy, "eating local" and fisheries heritage by helping set up an **innovative restaurant** on the top floor of the Gandía's fish auction. The project promoters have committed themselves to buying fish from the local auction, including undervalued and commonly discarded fish, which are now on the menu daily.
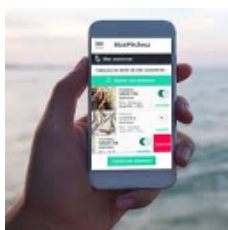
New technologies can also help shorten food miles. Two Breton (FR) FLAGs (**Cornouaille** and **Brest**) helped a young IT developer to launch **MonPêcheur**, a digital tool for organising direct sales of seafood products in the Finistère region. In an EU seafood market currently heavily dominated by imported seafood, any initiative that promotes local fish consumption can help mitigate climate change.

Supporting sustainable production to mitigate climate change

Preserving a fragile coastal ecosystem while boosting the local economy was the focus of a successful project from Portugal, "**Salina Greens**". Supported by the **ADREPES Costeiro FLAG**, a local biologist founded the first organic production and processing of samphire on abandoned salt marshes. Samphire is a sea plant highly resistant to climate change, and growing it is a sustainable solution to the accelerated degradation of the area's marshes caused by climate change.

Invasive species: turning a threat into an opportunity

Due to global warming and other environmental factors, changes in the distribution of marine species have been observed. New and invasive species are accounting for a rising proportion of catches in certain areas and can be detrimental to endogenous and commercially valuable species. Through FLAG technical support and funding, local fishing communities can study, monitor or even capitalise on some invasive species, turning them into new sources of income. For example, the invasive Atlantic blue crab (*callinectes sapidus*) has been detected in growing numbers across the Mediterranean coast, causing ecological and economic damage in recent years. The **La Safor FLAG** is supporting a **collaboration project** between the local fishers' association and scientists from the University of Valencia to determine its occurrence, abundance, and environmental impact in the region; develop control measures to limit the spread of this invasive species; and establish new market opportunities. In Greece, the **Thessaloniki FLAG** also helped two entrepreneurs establish a successful **seafood conditioning and processing business** which specialises in live blue crab exportation (primarily to Asia) as well as processed products from blue crab.

Some of the **key stakeholders** the FLAG should involve to tackle climate change:

> fishermen, aquaculture producers, fisheries associations

> seafood traders, retailers, wholesalers, processing sector, local consumer organisations

> local authorities and other public actors

> environmental NGOs, protected areas etc.

> renewable energy sector

> research institutes

> schools, universities and other educational bodies.

More suggestions for FLAGs wanting to address challenges related to climate change can be found in the FARNET Guides:

> no 18, **Smart coastal areas**

> no. 17, **Circular economy in fisheries and aquaculture areas**

Other existing and potential responses to adapt to climate change in different maritime regions around the world were also examined in the **FAO's 2018 report** "Climate Change Impacts on Fisheries and Aquaculture".

1.3 Cleaner seas, marine litter, balanced ecosystems and protection of marine biodiversity

Fisheries and aquaculture as primary production or extractive activities depend very much on healthy ecosystems. Primary production activities are among the first to be impacted when ecosystems are thrown out of balance. They also impact the ecosystem they rely so much on, and there is a fine balance to strike between using the local resources and protecting them.

Another pillar of the European Green Deal mentioned above, the EU biodiversity strategy published in May 2020, highlights the importance of biodiversity in the provision of food, health and medicines, materials, recreation and wellbeing. It sets ambitious targets including the protection of 30% of land and sea areas in Europe by 2030[3].

Protecting biodiversity is about ensuring an ecosystem as rich as possible in terms of the variety of animal and plants life. In the marine environments, a good tool to restore or maintain biodiversity can be marine protected areas (MPAs). Adequate management of extractive activities and other, often conflicting, uses of marine ecosystems (such as sailing, leisure fishing, diving) is also of key importance. Due to their unique character as a partnership, FLAGs can be particularly effective in bringing different stakeholders around the table and facilitating a consensus around common goals.

The pollution of our seas by plastic has become a major issue worldwide. Nowadays, there is no part of our marine environment which is not contaminated by plastic particles. The fisheries and aquaculture sector are faced with a double challenge:

> they are major consumers of plastic for their equipment (nets, work clothes, cages, strings, pouches, etc.) of which only a fraction currently gets recycled with some being lost at sea by accident, erosion or mal-practice;

> the long-term impact of plastic particles in the marine environment on the fish that ingest it is yet to be assessed but represents a major risk for the sustainability of the industry in the long run.

There is therefore an urgent need to rethink the industry reliance on plastic. FLAGs could lead the way in pushing the reflection forward. The FARNET guide on **Circular economy in fisheries and aquaculture areas** offers some leads in this respect. The "Three R's" approach of Reducing, Reusing and Recycling can help in rethinking the way the industry is looking at its plastic consumption. FLAGs can also support initiatives to research and test replacements for plastic, for example, based on algae, shells, fish scales and sugar cane waste, as well as market uptake of viable alternatives. As coastal areas are located at the recipient end of water catchment areas and as pollution is often carried downstream, they can also facilitate collaborative efforts between inland and coastal areas to ensure the good environmental status of coastal waters.

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3   For more information, see **https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/eu-biodiversity-strategy-2030_en**

Cleaner seas and healthy ecosystems as part of your strategy

When planning to address this theme in its strategy, the FLAG may want to combine the following types of activities:

Preventing pollution in the marine environment

Four Sardinian FLAGs linked up with the University of Cagliari to set up the **Fishing Litter and Abandoned Gears** project, putting in place effective waste management solutions for fishers. The project involved the installation of boat decks which allow fishers to separate and store the marine litter they catch, as well as onshore separation and collection facilities so that marine waste can be disposed of efficiently when landed.

Cuan Beo, a community-based organisation established with the support of **FLAG West** (Ireland), aims to address the South Galway Bay's water quality issues by re-establishing the connection between land and sea communities, building cohesion and understanding, and thus ensuring the protection of the region's marine resources. The organisation was successful in obtaining priority status under the Water Framework Directive for two rivers that flow into South Galway Bay.

Ensuring protection of local biodiversity

FLAGs can play different roles in supporting the creation and management of MPAs, such as ensuring the involvement of fishers in the management structures and improving ownership, supporting monitoring or raising awareness and social acceptance of the MPA while ensuring socio-economic benefits for the local area.
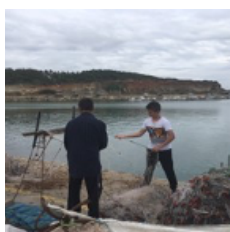
The **Cádiz Estrecho FLAG** in Spain has teamed up with WWF Spain to ensure that the self-regulatory measures, setup by the fishers of the coastal village of Conil, were further developed through the **inception of an MPA**, ultimately to become part of the Natura 2000 network.

In Italy, four FLAGs cooperate in the "**Tarta Tur**" project bringing together fishers and researchers to monitor the impact of fishing on two protected species (turtles and dolphins) and explore the socio-economic impacts of setting up a marine Site of Community Importance.

Some of the **key stakeholders** the FLAG should involve to tackle the challenges of water quality and healthy marine ecosystems:

> fishermen, aquaculture producers, fisheries associations

> environmental organisations and agencies

> local authorities

> local businesses (e.g. tourism, recreation etc.)

> research institutes.

More suggestions for FLAGs wanting to address this challenge can be found in the FARNET Guides:

> no. 17, **Circular economy in fisheries and aquaculture areas**

> no 16, **Strengthening local resources management**

1.4 Developing business opportunities, including sustainable aquaculture and other blue growth sectors

In some areas, traditional primary activities such as fishing or aquaculture still represent a critical mass or a niche market strong enough to remain viable in the future. In these areas, the FLAG should capitalize on the strengths of these sectors and reinforce their linkages with the local economy to secure their future. In others, fisheries and aquaculture represent pockets of activities which are strongly under pressure from both internal (difficulties of recruitment, lack of adequate facilities) and external factors (competition from other uses of the coastal environment, gentrification). In these areas, there might be a need to develop new opportunities for the local community.

Almost 45% of the EU population (214 million people) live in coastal regions. This presents challenges (e.g. competition for space and uses mentioned above) but also opportunities: this vast population represents a market for local products, not to mention a pool of ideas, knowledge and talent that can be turned into projects and businesses, if harnessed correctly. Coastal areas are the gateway to the seas and oceans and their marine related assets, so they have a comparative advantage when it comes to developing the blue economy.

Including a focus on new business opportunities in your strategy

When planning to address this theme in its strategy, the FLAG can envisage supporting new business opportunities linked to fisheries[4] as well as a combination of other activities:

Fostering the development of activities that complement fisheries

The development of activities that can complement primary production activities is strategic decision that can help reinforce the viability of primary production activities.

"Your everyday life is someone else's adventure": primary producers (fishermen and aquaculture farmers) have a special know-how that can be used to offer a special experience to visitors. Beyond creating an alternative source of income, benefits are multiple for the producers: developing the customer base and, at the same time, improving the image of the fishing activities.
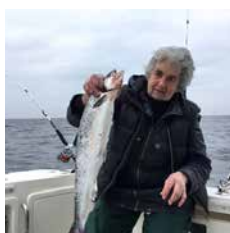
With the support of the Latvian **North Kurzeme FLAG**, a **Baltic fisherman** started to offer guided fishery tours along the coast and leisure fishing, while the owner of a fish farm in south-eastern Poland received support from the **Roztocze FLAG** to **diversify his sources of revenue**. He connected and expanded three small ponds to form a 20 hectare lake with an island to develop a highly successful tourist resort offering angling, recreation, conference, hotel and restaurant services. Such **tourism activities should not be planned in isolation**. They should be combined and promoted together in coherent packages covering accommodation, meals and a wide range of tourist attractions available in the area.

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4 Many ideas for new sources of income linked to quality local fish products can be found in section 1.1 above and in **FARNET guides**.

Tourism is not the only activity complementary to fishing that FLAGs can foster: for example, an Estonian fisherman started the **production of fishing gear and multi-purpose nets** to diversify his sources of income outside the fishing season.

Tapping into the blue economy

The blue economy is a term that includes all marine based or related activities. Possibilities are vast and each area has to identify those that correspond best to its assets, which could be human, natural, physical or financial. Beyond the more established sectors of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism, the blue economy includes activities in the field of biotechnology, health services, renewable energies, maritime technologies, specialised ship construction etc., that represent endless development possibilities.

For example, a young university graduate has been helped by the Costa da Morte FLAG in Spain to develop a **high-value product from a species of micro-algae** abundant off the coast of Galicia, particularly rich in omega-3. He cooperates with local fishers to collect the algae and produces oil for the pharmaceutical industry.

The key to fostering new ideas in the field of the blue economy is to bring people together from different backgrounds to interact and exchange with each other. This is one of the objectives of the **Marstal Engine Factory community hub**. Located on the small Danish island of Ærø, this project turned a former boat engine factory into a multipurpose community hub offering shared office spaces and conference facilities with a focus on innovative businesses and maritime entrepreneurship.

Supporting the aquaculture of tomorrow

Aquaculture is a major activity in many FLAG areas with traditional carp or trout farming in inland areas and shellfish farming in marine spaces. However, competition for space and issues linked with social acceptance of farming in the aquatic environment can be barriers for further development of the sector.

One key possibility is to foster the development of new aquaculture practices more in line with current social concerns. For example aquaponics (**integrated fish and vegetable production systems**) and recirculated systems can help limit social and environmental costs as these systems can be based nearly everywhere (limiting conflicts for space), with environmental pollution reduced to the minimum and more efficient energy use.

Biotechnology also presents much potential for some aquaculture producers; for example, the production of **marine worms for medical purposes** can be profitable while generating wider societal benefits in the form of medical progress.

Some of the **key stakeholders** the FLAG should involve to develop new business opportunities and the blue economy:

> fishermen, aquaculture producers and fisheries associations

> business development organisations and advisory services

> local tourism agencies and service providers

> innovation brokers

> research institutes.

More suggestions for FLAGs wanting to address this challenge can be found in the FARNET Guides:

> no. 18, **Smart coastal areas**

> no. 14, **Integrating aquaculture within local communities**

> no. 9, **Fisheries and tourism: creating benefits for the community**

1.5 A place for the young: within fisheries and the broader community

Most fisheries areas are facing the challenge of an ageing profession: in the catching sector, the average age of fishers has increased over the last 20 years and in some Member States is close to 60; the situation in aquaculture is slightly less problematic. Unfortunately, few young people are interested in taking up a job in fisheries.

Many coastal areas are also struggling with depopulation, with the younger generations migrating to bigger cities looking for better education and/or job opportunities. Some fishing boats are already having difficulties to find crew members.

Nothing seems to indicate that this situation will improve in the near future, so in the 2021-2027 period many FLAG strategies may need to propose solutions to facilitate generation renewal and promote the transfer of experience between existing and potential fishers. Given the advanced age of many fishing professionals, it may be the last opportunity to capitalise on their skills and experience and to make sure such knowledge is not completely lost when they retire.

For some FLAGs it may also be an opportunity to attract young people to become more involved in the implementation of the local strategy, which can be challenging. Inviting youth to discover the fishing profession may not only encourage them to stay in the area, but also offer them opportunities for personal and professional development.

Addressing youth and generational renewal in your strategy

When planning to address this theme in its strategy, the FLAG may want to encourage the following types of activities:

Raising awareness, especially among younger generations, of the fishing profession and its value for the local community
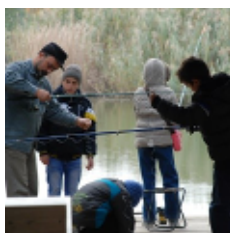
For example, fishermen of the Romanian **Galati FLAG** wanted to ensure that traditional fishing know-how and their passion for the profession were passed on to the next generation. In co-operation with the FLAG and the local university they designed an **education package** as an extracurricular activity for schools to raise awareness about sustainable fishing and its cultural heritage.

Identifying and removing barriers that prevent generation renewal in the fishing sector

In the area of the German **Schlei – Baltic Sea FLAG**, in line with a 500-year-old tradition, only fishers living on the Holm (traditional fishing district of Schleswig) have fishing rights. To enable two young men to take over their father's fishing business and make their activity viable, the FLAG had to **help them increase** the size of their building and improve the processing and repair facilities, while preserving the fisheries cultural heritage.

Analysing job opportunities in the broader fishing sector (including catching, aquaculture, processing etc.)

The French **Arcachon FLAG** supported a study to identify issues facing the oyster sector and found that finding well-qualified employees for the short periods of high sales was particularly difficult. The **solution was found** in facilitating job sharing between different maritime activities during the year.

Supporting the training of young people interested in the fishing profession

This can be done in the form of group courses, or individual, tailor-made trainings. For example, the UK FLAG of **Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly** supported an intensive 3-week **fishing course** for young unemployed people. The **South Finland FLAG** organised on the job training that allowed young people to partner with more experienced fishers in a "**master-apprentice**" format, with the possibility of taking over the business in the future.

Addressing depopulation by promoting remote working

The Danish FLAG **Thy-Mors** has supported the establishment of a co-working centre in a small coastal town. This can help provide opportunities for working locally, while allowing people to maintain a work-life balance and attracting new companies to the area. For more information see FARNET Guide no. 18 **Smart Coastal Areas**, p. 21.

Some of the **key stakeholders** the FLAG should involve to tackle the challenge of retaining young people in their areas and their fisheries sector:

> active fishermen (and their associations if relevant), aquaculture producers, processing sector

> persons and organisations interested in fishing heritage (including retired fishermen, a local museum etc.)

> employment centres, schools, universities and other educational bodies

> youth organisations.

More suggestions for FLAGs wanting to address challenges linked to youth can be found in the FARNET Guides:

> no. 13, **Social inclusion for vibrant fishing communities**, especially factsheet A2 "Generation renewal"

> no. 7, **Axis 4: A tool in the hands of fisheries communities**

1.6 Safe, quality jobs and social inclusion for all

Many fisheries areas are struggling with the marginalisation of primary production, especially fishing, but in many cases also fish farming, combined with seasonality of other activities (e.g. tourism) and often low levels of education. CLLD can be used to address this challenge, and the number of jobs created is one of the key indicators of CLLD achievements in 2014-2020. Therefore, the primary focus of many FLAG strategies is to support activities that create sustainable, all-year-round jobs available to local people, both within and outside the fishing sector.

Some sectors with high potential for job creation include tourism and creative industries, new technologies, aquaculture and other blue growth sectors. However, FLAGs should carefully analyse which opportunities are realistic to explore in the local context. There is no "one size fit all" solution for sustainable job creation; but FLAGs may find it useful to keep in mind a few basic principles:

> work with both **potential employers** and **potential employees**, to ensure the most appropriate fit between them,

> for *potential employers*, prioritise those with the highest potential of job creation, but do not forget to ensure they can remain viable, long-term businesses,

> as far as possible, develop practical skills of the *potential employees* through tailor-made training or on-the-job traineeships,

> look for the job creating potential in existing companies as well as start-ups! Some FLAGs may also explore the possibilities of attracting potential employers from outside their area.

An important task of the FLAG is to ensure that also the **most vulnerable groups** of the local community benefit from the employment generated and nobody is left behind. Strengthening social inclusion is not only going to make the FLAG area a better place to live for all members of the community, but will also make it more resilient to crisis situations. In the 2014-2020 period many FLAGs have initiated projects targeting people with disabilities (including disabled fishers), long-term unemployed, women, youth and elderly people. With the accelerated ageing of the EU coastal populations and economic uncertainty following the COVID-19 crisis, such activities of the FLAGs are likely to be needed even more in the future.

Poverty and unemployment are not the only forms of exclusion facing fisheries areas; people can also struggle, for example, with mobility or digital exclusion. For many fisheries communities, especially in remote areas, ensuring access to adequate health care and working conditions can be of primary importance. Even though such challenges are typically addressed at the national or regional level, experience has shown that FLAGs can play a key role in finding local solutions to these issues.

Foreseeing actions in your strategy to boost quality jobs and social inclusion

FLAGs planning to address this theme in their strategy could envisage a combination of the following types of activities:

Improving the employability of the local population

FLAGs can organise training courses for local people (or support organisations that organise such training) to increase their chances of being employed. This may be particularly important for people facing specific barriers to enter the labour market. For example, the **Mariña Ortegal FLAG** in Spain has supported **training of people with mental or intellectual disabilities to recycle and repair products** from polyethylene and polypropylene under the supervision of trainers. The FLAG also supported the purchase of equipment to start a company that offers plastic repair services to the local fish auction and other stakeholders.

Supporting existing or new businesses with a job-creating potential

There can be as many ideas for job creation as there are FLAGs. Sometimes the best solution is to support an existing company to develop a new type of activity: as with the Estonian company **Stonefish**, which – thanks to funding from the **Hiiukala FLAG** – has developed from a small fish shop, owned by a fisherman, to fish processing (including smoking) and services for tourists. This has created **five new permanent jobs** and additional part-time jobs in the holiday season. With the support of the Spanish FLAG **Ría de Arousa**, three young entrepreneurs from a small fishing village set up a successful company combining a **fish restaurant, bar and delicatessen**, creating **14 permanent and three seasonal jobs** for the local inhabitants.

Promoting social inclusion

Direct support for job creation is only one of the ways to build more inclusive fisheries communities. The **Ostrobothnia FLAG** in Finland has found a way to address a number of major challenges with one project: by promoting "**Blue Care**". This project is helping young people with learning difficulties to follow a special educational programme including classes in the fishing harbour, while providing additional occupation and income to fishers.

Improving access to health services

Many coastal areas struggle to maintain social services (e.g. transport or medical centres) essential for the quality of life of fisheries communities. On the Portuguese island of Culatra, workers in small-scale fisheries experience higher than average health problems which often remain untreated, partially due to the difficult access to medical facilities. The **Sotavento Algarve FLAG** has been involved in the creation of a telemedicine clinic, where patients are received by a resident nurse and get a videoconference consultation with a doctor in a mainland medical clinic. For more information see FARNET Guide no. 18 **Smart Coastal Areas** (p. 18)

Some of the **key stakeholders** the FLAG should involve to boost safe, quality jobs and promote social inclusion:

> local labour market organisations, employment centres etc.

> local organisations dealing with social inclusion, quality of life, health care etc.

> municipalities

> fishing sector organisations

> schools and other educational bodies

> youth organisations.

More suggestions for FLAGs wanting to address these challenges can be found in the FARNET Guides:

> no. 18, **Smart Coastal Areas**

> no. 13, **Social inclusion for vibrant fishing communities**

1.7 A stronger role in governance and an improved image for fisheries

Coastal areas are increasingly sought-after for both residential and leisure purposes. Tourism is a booming industry in many sea-side places, while the number of fishing boats and fishers has been decreasing for some decades. The combination of growing attractiveness of the coastal strip with a reduction in fishing activity often leads to the marginalisation of the fisheries sector, which can then struggle to find a voice within the local governance framework.

The development of other uses of coastal areas is often at odds with fisheries and aquaculture stakeholders needs. Competition for space on land and on the water can prove acute in many places. On land, the noise and sometimes smell accompanying the daily trade of fishermen or aquaculture can be considered as nuisance by other users who see these places primarily as a recreational/relaxing space. At sea, fishermen and fish farmers face a vast array of competing uses, be they recreational (e.g. yachting, diving, angling), professional (e.g. windmills, extracting activities) or environmental (e.g. marine protected areas).

The attractiveness of coastal areas also pushes property prices up, leading to the gentrification of many places, leaving primary producers unable to afford the rent, or purchase price, of waterfront space. This speeds up the declining presence of the fisheries sector in favour of hotels, restaurants, secondary residences etc.

Yet, fishing communities through their traditions and unique type of activity are a defining feature of many of these areas. The latter often benefit from the presence of living harbours and working fish farms for their attractiveness. It is therefore key to ensure the engagement of fisheries and aquaculture in local governance. Due to a lack of time and resources, and the fragmentation of the sector, a proactive approach might be required for this to happen.

Strategic actions to secure a place for fisheries in local governance

FLAGs planning to address this theme in its strategy could envisage a combination of the following types of activities:

Ensuring a place for primary producers in decision-making
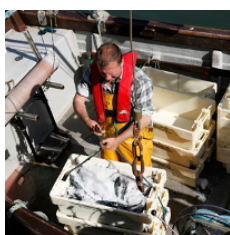
The Irish inshore fisheries sector represents around 1 200 boats of under 12 meters, but it is highly fragmented and scattered across many coastal communities in the Republic of Ireland. Until recently, it had no representative structure or effective way of engaging with the State Authorities. FLAGs were identified as an ideal vector to reach out to the inshore fleet and support the development of regional inshore forums. There are now six Regional **Inshore Fisheries Forums** (RIFFs) covering the whole coastline of the Irish Republic. They offer a platform for inshore fisheries to engage with the authorities and have their voice heard in decisions affecting their activity.

Involving fisheries and aquaculture in the management of water space and fish resources

Striking a balance between using the ecosystem in a profitable way and keeping it healthy, while maintaining a role for the fishing sector is not an easy task and requires bringing together interests that can sometimes be at odds with each other. FLAGs can play an important role as demonstrated by the **co-management group** of Lake Vättern. In Scotland, the **Orkney Islands FLAG** supported a project for the **co-management of the local inshore fisheries** with a view of achieving sustainability of local resource harvesting and obtaining MSC certification of the brown crab fishery.

Safeguarding a place for fishing and aquaculture in the area

In the French **Pays d'Auray FLAG** area, a consensus of local actors was built to develop an "**Oyster Charter**" (*la charte conchylicole*) which ensures that oyster production, essential for the area's economy and identity, is not marginalised or replaced with other uses of the land (e.g. residential or recreational).

Raising the local community's awareness about the importance of the fisheries sector

The Italian **Adriatico Salentino FLAG** put in place a **package of activities** aiming to strengthen the links between the community and the fishing sector, and to empower fishers to become drivers of change. The package included promoting traditional fishing know-how and recipes, education on sustainable fish consumption, an app bringing together fishers and consumers etc.

Improving the image of the sector

Overfishing, destructive practices, bycatch of marine life, these negative stories hit the news more easily than the efforts made by fishers to work sustainably. To address this, FLAGs can highlight fishers' efforts towards sustainability. The Spanish **Navia Porcía FLAG** that helped its artisanal producers become the world's first **octopus fishery to receive MSC certification** is just one of many projects that has mobilised local fishers to improve the sustainability of their profession and its image. Others include trialling new fishing methods or gear and taking an active role in campaigns linked with marine litter and awareness raising of the marine environment.

Over 50 fishers from Le Grau-du-Roi fishing port, with the support of the French **Vidourle Camargue FLAG**, participate in the pilot project called "**ReSeaclons**", which offers a collaborative approach to developing a circular economy around the collection and recycling of marine litter. The scheme brings fishers together with other local stakeholders, creating mutually beneficial partnerships to turn plastic waste caught at sea into new products and contributing to improving the image of the local fishing sector.

Some of the **key stakeholders** the FLAG should involve when aiming to promote governance and an improved image for fisheries:

> fishermen, aquaculture producers, fisheries associations, processing sector etc.

> local authorities

> bodies and organisations responsible for the environment

> consumer organisations (especially if active at local level)

> schools, universities and other educational bodies

More suggestions for FLAGs wanting to address this challenge can be found in the FARNET Guides:

> no. 16, **Strengthening local resources management**

> no. 14, **Integrating aquaculture within local communities**

> no. 7, **Axis 4: A tool in the hands of fisheries communities**

2. Making a difference: what should go into your LDS?

A good strategy helps the FLAG address the needs of its area both effectively (reaching the desired results) and efficiently (optimising the use of resources). It also helps to achieve integration between different activities, creating synergies and avoiding contradictory actions.

Developing a new local development strategy (LDS) takes a lot of effort by the FLAG team and by the whole local community. Most FLAGs planning to apply for CLLD funding under the EMFF have already developed at least one local strategy in the past, so they may ask themselves why it is necessary to go through this process again. There are several reasons for this:

> strategic work is a **continuous** (or **cyclical**) **process**, involving planning, implementing, reflecting on what was achieved, and returning to the planning stage,

> the situation and needs of the local area and its fisheries sector may have **significantly changed** since the 2014-2020 LDS,

> it is a **legal obligation** for FLAGs to develop a local strategy for each funding period, and this strategy is the basis for the FLAG to be selected to receive CLLD funding,

> updating the local strategy is a good opportunity to **strengthen linkages** with key actors and the whole fisheries community and to encourage their participation in the area's development for the next period.

Article 26 of the proposed post-2020 Regulation[5] specifies that each LDS should contain the following elements:

> the geographical area and population covered by that strategy;

> the community involvement process in the development of that strategy;

> an analysis of the development needs and potential of the area;

> the objectives of that strategy, including measurable targets for results, and related planned actions;

> the management, monitoring and evaluation arrangements, demonstrating the capacity of the local action group to implement that strategy;

> a financial plan, including the planned allocation from each Fund and programme concerned.

2.1 **Building on experience**

This chapter aims to help FLAGs develop new strategies based on their past experience and a more mature reflection on the local needs and ways to address them. We will briefly remind the reader of the key components of a good strategy (diagnosis of the area, SWOT and needs analysis, choosing the focus, defining objectives and targets, action plan), without going into detail as there are existing guides and tools on this topic already available. We focus here mainly on the **contents** of the LDS. Practical tips on the process of its development, as well as key elements of the action plan, are provided in Chapter 4.

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5. **Post-2020 Common Provisions Regulation proposal**, Article 26.

When preparing the work on designing the next strategy, the FLAG team (i.e. staff and volunteers responsible for the strategy development process) should start with a **reflection** on the lessons learnt from the current period. **The following questions can be helpful**:

> Did our previous strategy reach its objectives? Has it achieved the expected impact on the area and on its fisheries community?

> If we have not reached all our objectives, what were the reasons? Was the strategy too broad, too narrow, too ambitious, not properly integrated, lacking result-orientation, monitored with the wrong indicators, challenged by unexpected events (such as COVID-19), etc… ?

> What did we do well and how can we build on this to develop new activities?

> What lessons have we learnt? How can we learn *more* from our past actions? Have we put the right monitoring and evaluation system in place?

⚙ Developing a new strategy, building on previous achievements

The Italian **VeGAL FLAG** focused its 2014-2020 strategy on three key objectives:

> maintaining and creating jobs,

> strengthening the role of fishing communities in local development and governance,

> supporting the development of fishing and aquaculture activities.

In the post-2020 period the FLAG expects that the same objectives will continue to be relevant, but would like to develop new activities, building on the results achieved in the current period. Here are some examples of how this will be done:

2014-2020 PERIOD	2021-2027 PERIOD
> linking the fishing sector with **sustainable tourism** (attracting tourists to fishing-related waterfronts and fishing villages) > working on **standardisation** of services, locations and supply	> focusing more on **biodiversity** and **unique character** of the coast to attract tourists > enhancing **environmental aspects** of tourism while involving fishers in continuous monitoring of coasts and lagoons
> improving **infrastructure** necessary for business development > **stabilisation** of the number of people employed in the fishing sector	> developing **complementary activities** on the basis of improved infrastructure, e.g. making the most of ports and fish markets > stimulating **networking** between businesses > supporting **marketing** and research on **technological innovations**
> increasing **awareness** of environmental issues > working with fishers on the **designation** of non-fishing areas	> building on the increased awareness to create opportunities for fishers to carry out **environmental monitoring** > encouraging research on **biodegradable fishing gear**

If an **evaluation** of the previous LDS has already been carried out, such a reflection process should take into account its results. However, some FLAGs may only carry out evaluation when the implementation of the 2014-2020 LDS has fully been completed, and it will be too late to feed into work on the next LDS. It is important to remember that **even without a comprehensive evaluation exercise**, the FLAG decision-makers can **reflect on what has been achieved and lessons learnt** from the previous period. They can also use results of studies and evaluations carried out in the context of other projects, as in the example below.

⚙ Evaluation of an Interreg project used by a FLAG to improve its strategy

The Estonian **Lake Võrtsjärv FLAG** was a partner in the project "**An innovative tool for improving the competitiveness of community-based tourism**" funded under the Interreg programme. The objective of the project was to improve the competitiveness of tourism with community-based development methods in Estonia and Finland, trying to build local ownership in tourism development.

The project was piloted in 2011-2013 in six different rural areas, including the Lake Võrtsjärv FLAG area. The project was then evaluated in 2014, and its results were used by the FLAG to adjust its strategic approach to the development of sustainable local tourism.

2.2 Definition and diagnosis of your area

For most FLAGs already active in the 2014-2020 period, the geographical area is more or less fixed and can be the basis of the post-2020 strategy. However, in some cases it may be necessary to **re-consider the area** of your FLAG and see if it should not be adapted. This would be particularly important if:

> actors in the neighbouring areas are strongly interested in getting involved in your FLAG and it is possible to extend the FLAG to include those areas without losing coherence,

> the activities of the FLAG were particularly problematic in one part of your current area (for example in case of a strong local conflict the FLAG was not able to resolve) – in this case there may be reasons to exclude part of the territory,

> there has been a change in the national/regional legislation and your current territory will no longer be eligible for funding in the next period.

In the CPR **proposal** for the post-2020 period, the size of the area no longer needs to contain between 10 000 and 150 000 inhabitants[6]. This creates more flexibility in case a modification of the former area is considered necessary (but do not forget to check for additional national rules concerning the size of FLAG area or its population).

Once the decision to maintain or change the area of your FLAG has been taken, it is time to carry out a **diagnosis** of the area and its fisheries community. You may have carried out such a diagnosis at the start of the 2014-2020 period, but it is highly probable that the situation has evolved since then, not only as a result of FLAG activities but also due to other, external factors: demography, markets, unforeseen events such as COVID-19 etc. Data collected in the diagnosis stage can be used to establish a baseline or reference situation, i.e. the situation before the planned intervention of the FLAG.

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6   Article 25 only requires the area to be "sub-regional".

Information to be collected or updated can be both quantitative and qualitative:

> **Quantitative** information can include geographical characteristics, demographic data and trends, employment and jobs, infrastructure and services, structure and organisation of the local economy, with a special focus on the fisheries and aquaculture sectors etc. Some of this information can be obtained from the local authorities and agencies in charge of tourism, environment etc.; other data can be accessible online, although it might be difficult to find it at the right geographical scale.

> **Qualitative** information is usually gathered via different types of surveys and interviews, allowing a better understanding of the population's perception of certain issues such as mobility or local food availability.

This data collection exercise can be an opportunity to **involve more people** in the action of the FLAG. Surveys for example allow the FLAG team to know more about the area but can also inform the people surveyed on the process of strategy development. Data collection and analysis can be designed in an iterative fashion, allowing for different perspectives to enrich the knowledge basis. Undertaking the diagnosis of the area can also be an opportunity to establish closer links with the world of **research** and gain access to data sources. This can be particularly useful at a later stage, in case of unexpected developments, building flexibility in the process of implementing the strategy.

FLAG cooperating with research to get in-depth knowledge of its fish resources

Herring is one of the key species in Finland, with annual landings representing over 80% of the total fish catch by volume and about 50% of the economic value of commercial fisheries. The **Archipelago Sea FLAG** teamed up with the University of Turku to undertake **a two-year project** to collect spawning data for herring in cooperation with local fishers, and another joint project to study parasites in the northern Baltic herring population.

Such information was highly relevant for the FLAG strategy, which aims to increase the use of local fish resources, including in processing, as well as developing the value chain of the sector. Good access to data on fish resources was therefore key to their success.

2.3 **SWOT analysis of your area**

> Before starting the SWOT, remember to reach a clear agreement on the focus of your analysis: **from whose perspective are you doing the SWOT**: your area's, your fisheries community's, or the fisheries (or aquaculture) sector's?

The most common tool for analysing your area is a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. Most FLAGs are already quite familiar with SWOT analysis, so there is no need to provide detailed explanation here[7].

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7   For a simple explanation of SWOT see e.g.: **https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05.htm**

Some useful questions that can be asked during the SWOT analysis process, adapted from the FAME Support Unit, are shown in the table below:

		HELPFUL	**HARMFUL**
Internal origin	Characteristics of your area	**Strengths** › What are our resources and assets in the area? › What works well in the area?	**Weaknesses** › What could we do better? › What is missing and needed? › Where are we at risk?
External origin	Characteristics of the environment	**Opportunities** › What are the **external** trends for the future that are not yet capitalised on in the area? › Is there any new **external** aspect that our area can explore?	**Threats** › Is it likely that any of the weaknesses of the area make it vulnerable? › Are major **external** changes coming that threaten the area? › What are the **external** factors that increase its vulnerability? › Where is the area not ready?

While updating your strategy, it could be useful to revisit the SWOT analysis prepared for the previous funding period and ask yourselves **some of the following questions**:

› how useful was the previous SWOT exercise to formulate strategic objectives?

› does our previous SWOT capture what is special about our area, what makes it **different** from other areas?

› did we correctly identify the strengths and weaknesses of our area? What elements did we under- or over-estimate? Would it have been possible to avoid such errors?

› which of the opportunities identified in the previous exercise materialised? Which ones were we able to benefit from?

› which of the threats identified previously materialised? Were we able to mitigate them?

› how can we make the SWOT more relevant for our future strategy?

⚠ Remember: the SWOT is not a purely descriptive exercise! Its main purpose is to guide your decision-making!

2.4 **Choosing your strategic orientation and focus**

The most important part of the analysis is to **combine** the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and to decide on the **focus** of your strategy. For example, some strategies can take as a starting point strengths and opportunities (**SO**), or weaknesses and threats (**WT**). The table below illustrates how the SWOT can be translated into different types of action (source: FAME Support Unit):

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3" align="center">**INTERNAL FACTORS**</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td align="center">**STRENGTHS**</td><td align="center">**WEAKNESSES**</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">**EXTERNAL FACTORS**

OPPORTUNITIES</td><td>**SO** types of actions:

Growth (acceleration/expansion) strategy

Take advantage of the opportunities that are adapted to the strengths of a specific area

e.g. Innovation</td><td>**WO** types of actions:

Structural adjustment strategy

Overcome weaknesses to take advantage of opportunities

e.g. Capacity development</td></tr>
<tr><td>**ST** types of actions:

Stabilisation strategy

Identify ways of using existing strengths to reduce vulnerability to external threats

e.g. Diversification</td><td>**WT** types of actions:

Preventive strategy

Plan to avoid weaknesses that make us susceptible to external threats

e.g. Compensation</td></tr>
</table>

For an example of how a FLAG has used its SWOT to develop strategic objectives and types of action, see FARNET Guide:

> no. 11, **Results oriented CLLD in fisheries areas**, pp. 11-12

The choice of a strategy orientation must also consider financial aspects, especially the size of the **budget** that can be mobilised. On average, FLAGs tend to have a budget of 2.5 – 3 M€ for a period of around five years, which limits the scope of the actions that could be supported.

> ⚠️ Do not try to address **everything** with your strategy – be selective, focus on a few actions where you can have the greatest impact!

It is therefore important not only to decide on the type of actions the FLAG would like to support under its strategy, but also actions that are out of the scope of support. Such a decision should ensure FLAG support is complementary to other funding sources available to project promoters in the area and concentrate its budget on activities where the FLAG is particularly well-placed to intervene.

Selecting the focus of the FLAG strategy, i.e. what it will and will not support, is a decision that may require some difficult discussions and compromises. To prepare this decision, it may be useful to carry out a participative exercise using the table below.

Types of action resulting from the SWOT	Reasons why FLAG has a good chance to achieve impact with this type of action	Other available funding sources (realistically available to local promoters)
Action 1		
Action 2		
…		

Your support should focus on activities where there is strong justification for FLAG involvement (middle column) **and** where other sources of funding are not easily available (right column).

However, preparation of the LDS can also be a good opportunity to expand the scope of FLAG activities by mobilising other funding, to complement the FLAG's budget. In many places, the FLAG strategy has been a starting point to identify and help beneficiaries develop projects, which were then supported by other sources of funding.

For example, particularly in the 2007-2013 programming period, FLAGs in France had small budgets and most actions supported were of a small scale, such as feasibility studies for activities that would need to secure larger budgets from other sources to put into action. In Finland, some FLAGs help their beneficiaries find funding from other EMFF Union Priorities, using their running cost and animation budget.

⚙️ Combined support for the development of aquaculture

The Romanian **FLAG Valea Mostistei** is situated about 40 km from Bucharest. The area has many lakes and ponds, an old fishing tradition and good human resources specialised in aquaculture. The FLAG supported a project to introduce innovative fishing methods in a local lake. This helped the beneficiary, a private aquaculture company, to obtain funding for a second project focusing on environmental services provided by aquaculture and supported directly by Union Priority 2 of the EMFF.

2.5 **Setting objectives and targets**

The local strategy should translate the needs of your area (identified, for example, from a SWOT analysis) into objectives you will try to achieve to address these needs. A useful method could be a "problem tree", representing the **key problems** graphically as having several "roots" or **causes**, and several "branches", which are **effects** of the problem on the community. It is then possible to identify the **general objectives**, **specific objectives** and **types of activities** that contribute to achieve them.

Effect	Decline of the fishing sector	Better economic viability of fishing sector	General objective
Problem	Low income of the fishing community	Higher incomes of local fishers	Specific objective
Causes	Low consumption of local fish	Raising awareness of consumers	Type of action
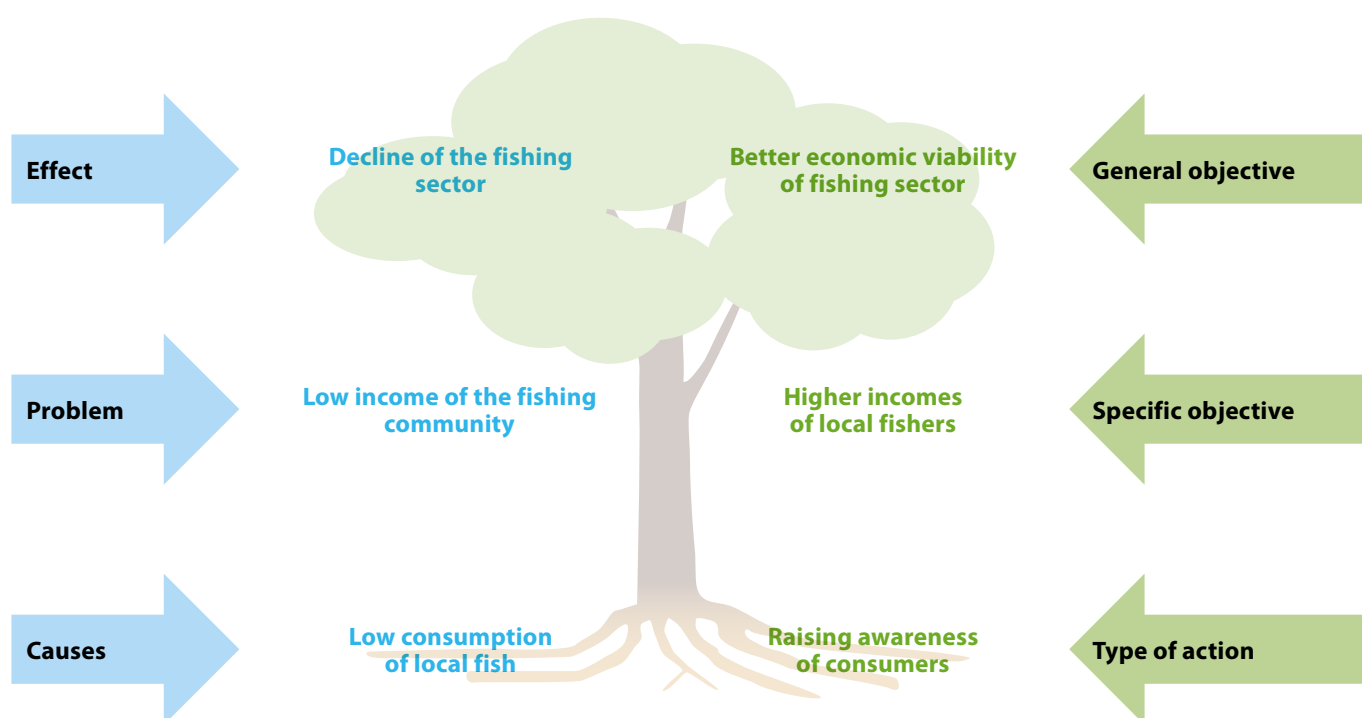
The next important step will be to set **targets,** which you will aim to achieve with your strategy, and **indicators** that will help you measure progress in terms of **outputs**, **results** and **impact**[8]. To find out more, see FARNET Guides:

> no. 15, **Evaluating CLLD – a handbook for LAGs and FLAGs**", especially section 1.4 "What to evaluate".

> no. 11, Results oriented CLLD in fisheries areas, especially Factsheet 1 **Developing strategic objectives**

2.6 **Integrating different funds in your strategy**

Some FLAGs may be implementing strategies that integrate different sources of funding. As in the current period, CLLD funding in 2021-2027 will be available under the EMFF, EAFRD, ESF and ERDF.

The possibility to combine different EU funds must be envisaged by the Managing Authorities at programme level. However, even if such option is enabled by the MA, the FLAG must consider carefully if such a combination will allow FLAGs to increase the impact of their work on the fisheries community and if it will not create too many administrative complications for project promoters[9].

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8   When the FLAG prepares an Action Plan separately from the strategy, targets and indicators for each type of action can be part of this plan, see section 2.8 below.

9   At the time preparing this Guide (May 2020), the final details of how multi-funding will operate in the 2021-2027 period are not yet known, so we are not able to provide more specific guidance at this stage.

Combining different objectives and funding strands into a coherent strategy

The Polish Slowinska FLAG uses funding from the EMFF and EAFRD in a single strategy. The area has a strong fisheries character and the EMFF is the Lead Fund. The strategy has three main objectives with several specific objectives. The figure below indicates how the different objectives are linked to each other and from which sources they are funded.

Community integration initiatives (EAFRD)

Developing NGO potential (EAFRD)

Promoting fisheries heritage (EMFF)

Animation and FLAG management (EMFF)

Supporting citizens' activity and social cohesion

Promoting local heritage and identity

Strengthening cooperation between sectors

Developing infrastructure and improving public spaces

MAKING THE AREA AN ATTRACTIVE PLACE TO LIVE AND VISIT

Promoting local non-fisheries heritage (EAFRD)

Maintaining fisheries character of the area (EMFF)

Improving cultural and recreational infrastructure (EAFRD)

Developing community services (EAFRD)

Strengthening businesses (EAFRD)

Starting new tourism businesses based on local assets (EAFRD)

Developing coastal tourism businesses (EMFF)

Business development based on local assets and specificities

Maintaining the environment

Diversifying and promoting tourism

EFFICIENT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Protection and conservation of natural assets (EMFF)

Improving tourism and recreation infrastructure linked with fishing activities (EMFF)

Combining tourism offers (EAFRD)

Developing tourist trails linked with fisheries (EMFF)

Diversifying income of fishers (EMFF)

Developing fisheries supply chain (EMFF)

Capitalising on local fisheries potential

Maintaining the fisheries sector

SUSTAINABLE FISHING SECTOR

Adding value to fisheries (EMFF)

⚙ Potential synergies from multi-funding

 The **Danish Small Islands FLAG-LAG** covers 27 islands scattered throughout the seas around Denmark. There are 11 islands where fisheries are still active and they can access EMFF funding, while the other 16 islands covered by the strategy can only benefit from LEADER funding. The FLAG-LAG has two strategies (required by the Danish MA to access funds from the EAFRD and the EMFF), but both strategies are coordinated and focusing on support for small businesses. The EMFF funds fisheries and "Blue Growth" projects (tourism, harbour infrastructure, etc.).

Coordination across 27 islands is a challenge – it requires a lot of travelling and the use of new information technology. Integration and synergies are achieved by several means:

> Common FLAG-LAG workshops are organised for potential project holders.

> Calls for projects are issued at the same time for both strands of funding. Project holders must choose the most appropriate fund.

> FLAG and LAG share the same Board and funding decisions can be taken in the same meeting.

> There are separate delivery mechanisms, but they are similar (they share the same paying agency for example) and follow the same timeline

Thanks to these arrangements, the Danish Small Islands FLAG-LAG has become an efficient Local Development Agency combining different strands of funding to support an overarching strategy.

2.7 **Keeping your strategy flexible**

The health crisis in 2020 has revealed that CLLD delivery may have to be adjusted to allow a prompt response to new challenges, such as the spread of the Coronavirus and its socio-economic consequences[10]. The local dimension of FLAGs means they are well-positioned to deliver urgent support adapted to local circumstances. Two elements are of key importance to enable this:

> the **FLAG strategies** must allow sufficient flexibility for addressing emergency situations, and there must be clear procedures of modifying and updating the LDS;

> the **managing authorities** must be prepared to approve the modifications speedily.

FLAGs reacting to Coronavirus

The EU legislation quickly put in place new support tools[11] and enabled Member States to adapt existing tools[12] to react to COVID-19.

On the ground, FLAGs started by using the means at their disposal within their strategies, before envisaging modifications. The **FARNET "COVID-19 – FLAG Response Message Board"** shows examples of actions carried out by the FLAGs, focusing particularly on the promotion and provision of fresh fish to lockdown customers, thus supporting local fishers when normal marketing circuits were no longer operational. Other FLAGs facilitated a transition to new safely measures in fish auctions and on boats to allow the fishing activity to continue.

The next challenge for the FLAGs will be to help rebuild their local economies, heavily impacted by the pandemic. This might require the modification of their current LDS and a reallocation of budget between strategic objectives.

One key lesson from the crisis is that **flexibility** is needed, whilst maintaining a good level of accountability for public money. How can such flexibility be achieved? Here are a few suggestions:

> Don't define the types of projects or beneficiaries too rigidly in your strategy, make sure to leave scope for a local response to emergencies, and also for innovation!

> A particularly good knowledge of the area in all its components will facilitate a flexible adjustment to new emerging needs. This would require a good in-depth diagnosis of the area – see section 2.2 above (even if not all the detailed information needs to be included in the LDS, it should be readily available to the FLAG team) – and ongoing dialogue with local stakeholders.

> A good local governance will help the right decisions be made rapidly. This requires good relationships with local politicians and with other institutions such as banks, etc., and a clear understanding of the local power balance to be able to knock at the right doors. Such relationships are easier when the FLAG has developed a strong reputation of a genuine local development agency.

> A good on-going exchange between FLAGs and the MA (or IB) is needed to be able to agree quickly on how the FLAG capacities and resources can be used to deal with a crisis and ensure speedy approval of the necessary adjustments. Such exchange can be facilitated by the National Network.

> It would also be useful for the MAs to adopt a simplified procedure for approving LDS modification, for example allowing the modification of single elements of the strategy without having to re-submit a full new programme.

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10   A similar situation, on a smaller scale, was observed in 2015 when some LAGs and FLAGs had to find ways to react quickly in view of the **refugee crisis**.

11   The Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII): **https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/newsroom/crii/fs_crii_0204_en.pdf**, and the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus (CRII+) **https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2020/04/04-02-2020-coronavirus-response-investment-initiative-plus-new-actions-to-mobilise-essential-investments-and-resources**

12   **Regulation (EU) 2020/560 (23/4/2020)** amended the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) to support specific measures until 31 December 2020 to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak in the fishery and aquaculture sector.

2.8 **Action plan**

In some MS, FLAGs are required to prepare an "action plan" (sometimes also called a "business plan"), as a separate document or as part of the strategy. The objective is to describe **how the FLAG is going to proceed** in order to reach its strategic objectives. In some cases, such a plan consists of several "summary sheets", each describing one type of action, its specific objectives, targets and indicators, as well as funding. It is important to ensure that – even if each action is described in a separate sheet – they are not seen as separate measures but are coordinated and well-integrated as a coherent whole[13].

Another important element of the LDS that can be included in the action plan is the description of the practical arrangements concerning the operations of the FLAG partnership, decision-making processes and management arrangements. Some elements of what should go into the action plan are presented in Chapter 4.

Additional resources useful to FLAGs when developing their LDS:

> Guidance on LDS development for LEADER LAGs by ENRD CP (2016): **https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/enrd-guidance_lds_0.pdf**

> A simple template developed by the Swedish MA for LAG and FLAG strategies in the 2014-2020 period **https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/enrd_publications/leader-clld_strategy_template.pdf**

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13   Assessing the added value of LEADER. Rural Innovation Dossier no. 4 (1999). LEADER Observatory

3. Using cooperation effectively

Cooperation must be available at EMFF programme level, but it is not compulsory for every FLAG to make use of this opportunity. However, it is strongly recommended as it can enhance the impact at the local level. Local Action Groups have engaged in cooperation projects since the early days of LEADER[14] to broaden the scope of their strategies through cooperation with local stakeholders from other areas. This was then supported under LEADER II through the provision of start-up grants. From then on, cooperation became an integral part of the LEADER and CLLD approach to local development.

LAGs and FLAGs recognised that cooperation could enhance the results of their strategies and engaged in cooperation projects at different geographical scales: local, regional, national and transnational. The proposal for CLLD in the 2021-2027 Common Provision Regulation[15] stipulates that local groups will manage their cooperation budget directly in the same way as the budget for other local projects.

This should allow **a closer fit of cooperation projects with the overall FLAG strategy**. Cooperation can be used as one of the tools available to overcome certain limitations of the area or the partnership. When undertaking their SWOT analyses, the FLAGs should look for those strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that could be addressed through cooperation with other FLAGs.

Before launching cooperation, FLAG stakeholders should try to see how the envisaged cooperation project **contributes to achieving the strategic objectives**. This can often be done at the stage of designing the LDS. In other cases, cooperation opportunities can complement the FLAG's strategy and may emerge during implementation.

⚙️ A cooperation project starting from a local SWOT
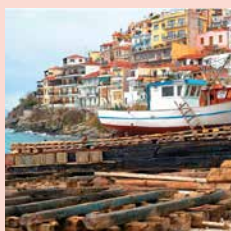
In its SWOT analysis for 2014-2020, the Greek **Kavala FLAG** identified the lack of interest in the processing of local fisheries and aquaculture products (including by-products) as both a weakness and a missed opportunity. This lack of interest resulted in a loss of potential added value, as existing processed products were not adapted to the modern consumer needs.

The FLAG saw that this could be a common issue of other FLAGs from the Mediterranean Sea basin with similar fisheries and aquaculture products, and that a cooperation project could be a good way to address it, by obtaining better marketing data as well as new recipes for the development of innovative products.

The LDS envisages complementary types of activities to address this theme: (a) funding **private investment** in processing and (b) funding a **cooperation project** focused on identifying and meeting consumer needs, marketing research, innovative packaging etc. The cooperation project is linked to the following LDS objectives:

1. Adding value to fisheries and aquaculture product

2. Creating jobs

3. Protection of the environment through processing of by-products

4. Introducing innovation

For the Kavala FLAG, cooperation facilitates faster and more efficient achievement of the local objectives (in the Greek context, it also enables the FLAG to implement actions that do not have a clear funding framework in the national OP, such as training and studies). The Kavala FLAG invited other Mediterranean FLAGs to cooperate using the FARNET website[16].

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14   The LEADER 1 Initiative was programmed in the 1991-1994 period. 217 LAGs were supported and many of these engaged in cooperation projects, despite the absence of a support mechanism.

15   **https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2018%3A375%3AFIN**

16   **https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/on-the-ground/cooperation/ideas/processing-and-retailing-fisheries-and-aquaculture-products_en**

3.1 **Why cooperation?**

What is the motivation of FLAGs when planning cooperation in their LDS? What added value do they expect from this type of project? In 1999, the LEADER Observatory undertook a survey of LAGs involved in cooperation projects[17] and identified three key motivations to cooperate, which are still valid today:

> To take advantage of similarities

> To take advantage of complementarities

> To obtain a critical mass

Taking advantage of similarities

Some cooperation projects come about because local groups have a similar asset or problem on which they want to work together. Similarities might include:

> **Similar geographic areas**, for example a sea basin. This is the case in cooperation projects organised around the Baltic Sea as shown in the "Seal and Cormorant" transnational cooperation project.

⚙️ The impact of seals and cormorants on fisheries in the Baltic Sea

Seals and cormorants are protected predators that have a negative impact on fishers catches and, consequently, on the viability of small-scale fisheries, in particular in the Baltic Sea. During the 2007-2013 period, the **South Finland FLAG** initiated a project aimed at finding sustainable solutions to this problem.

Since this issue is common to many fisheries areas around the Baltic Sea, the initiative developed into a transnational cooperation project, which aims to combine the results of studies of research institutes from different countries specialising in natural resources with the experience of professional fishers. In January 2020, the project involved 40 participants from 14 fisheries areas in Denmark, Estonia, Finland and Sweden, working together to research, analyse and raise awareness on the impact of seals and cormorants on fisheries communities and fish stocks in the Baltic Sea – and to find sustainable solutions.

> **A similar type of production**: some FLAGs are cooperating in order to promote the use of certain fish species (such as the round goby, an invasive species in the Baltic Sea), in order to reduce discards or bycatch as well as the pressure on more mainstream species.

> **A similar cultural asset** or a common historic context such as traditional small-scale coastal fishing.

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17 LEADER Magazine n°21, Autumn 1999

⚙ Cooperation to organise fish festivals

Two Lithuanian FLAGs teamed up to animate traditional fishing festivals in different regions of the country, to promote the use of local lake species which are often abundant, tasty and yet often undervalued. These festivals brought together different stakeholders from the fisheries sector to exchange knowledge and share their fishing techniques and culinary traditions with their community. More than 400 participants attended these festivals, increasing awareness about local fish species and the cultural heritage of the area.

One of these fishing festivals showcased typical seasonal winter fishing methods, including ice fishing, used in different lakes in Lithuania as well as offering sports competitions and concerts. Freshwater fish meals were prepared following traditional recipes, which children could eat for free and a "fish soup cooking championship" was organised in which 57 teams competed in preparing classic dishes.

Taking advantage of complementarities

In other cases, cooperation projects are an attempt to bring together areas with complementary assets or know-how.

> **Complementary assets:** some areas might be able to benefit from linking their different assets – be they natural, cultural or other – in order to broaden their offer and appeal to a wider market. This could involve cooperation between neighbouring coastal and inland areas to promote local agricultural and fisheries products alongside each other (for example in restaurants, hotels, food baskets, public canteens, etc.), or might involve expanding a cultural, leisure or touristic offer. The example below shows how Polish FLAGs benefited from cooperation to jointly promote the different types of fishing culture in their areas.

⚙ The "Northern Fisheries Trail" promotes the fishing culture of 11 Polish fisheries areas

The Northern Fisheries Trail offers a series of tourist trails linking and promoting different attractions related to the fisheries heritage of the FLAGs situated along the northern Polish border. The aims of the project were to develop the tourism potential of the fisheries areas, to bring together people, businesses and organisations involved in developing fisheries tourism, and to facilitate an exchange of knowledge and experience between the participating FLAGs.

Initiated under the 2007-2013 period, the project led to the establishment of an Education and Promotion Centre in each of the partner's areas. These centres are the "anchors" of the trail, around which further activities are developed. They carry out a wide range of educational activities, as well as promoting the area's fisheries assets. Each centre has a different thematic profile, adapted to the characteristics of the area (e.g. fishing heritage and history; aquaculture; fish cuisine; the marine environment, etc.). The project also involved the development of a visual identity for the trail, including a website, a brochure describing each centre and its attractions, and other promotion materials.

The project was developed further under the 2014-2020 period and grew to include 11 partners. Dozens of small businesses have been involved in each FLAG area (for example, the Slowinska FLAG involved 20 fisheries-related businesses and 10 other actors in promoting the project, through restaurants, hotels and tourism information stands). The inhabitants' sense of identity and willingness to cooperate has also been strengthened, and new actors are still joining the trail.

The Masurian Sea FLAG has integrated the project into its LDS as part of the general objective of "Improving the competitiveness of the area as a place of life, recreation and business activities", and the specific objective "Development of infrastructure serving the needs of local communities and tourists". It corresponds to the measure, "Organisation of public places linked to fishing tradition and history and supporting the revitalisation of existing public infrastructure in the area". It is expected that 300 participants will participate locally, whilst the cost for this FLAG was estimated at around €90 000.

> **Complementary know-how,** where the cooperating FLAGs share their skills, knowledge or solutions. This can cover a variety of themes, for example transfer of innovative, environmentally-friendly fishing techniques, methods to attract young people to the fishing sector, improving traceability or marketing of fish products or carrying out evaluation of FLAG work. Study visits, youth exchanges and peer learning can be useful tools in this type of joint learning between different fisheries communities.

⚙️ Transfer of sustainable fishing methods

The main goal of the **Fishing Intelligently** project was to promote the uptake of environmentally friendly methods of freshwater fishing developed in Lapland (Finland) in two Polish FLAG areas: **Zegrze Lagoon** and **Masurian Sea**.

Fishers in the **Lapland FLAG** had developed innovative fishing techniques that ensure high quality fish while protecting fishing resources and reducing eutrophication. Introducing such techniques and gear in Poland is expected to have a positive impact on the environment as well as income and image of fisheries sector.

The project, supported by the Polish Anglers' Association, involved training eight Polish fishers in Finland, who subsequently started training more fishers in Poland, as well as a series of awareness raising and promotion activities targeting further inland fisheries areas in Poland and neighbouring countries.

Obtaining a critical mass

Fisheries-dependent areas are often relatively small and have limitations that do not allow them to solve certain problems alone or take advantage of potential opportunities. By pooling resources, FLAGs can overcome these limitations and achieve results otherwise beyond their capacity.

> **To strengthen the voice of fishing communities**

FLAGs can join forces to influence decisions that affect fishers and fishing communities. This might involve lobbying together for a change in rules or legislation that would facilitate current activities or allow them to undertake new projects, such as pesca-tourism. For example, A cooperation project to present the potential of fishing tourism to decision-makers and to enable its implementation is envisaged by several German FLAGs, under the initiative of the FLAG **Innere Lübecker Bucht**.

> **Economies of scale**

Cooperation can help FLAGs invest in projects whose costs or scope would go beyond the capacity of a single FLAG. For example, two neighbouring French FLAGs joined their financial resources to support the development of an app (**MonPêcheur**) that facilitates direct sales in both their areas. FLAGs from Greece and Cyprus, working together on a network of **sustainable diving trails**, shared costs by each FLAG taking responsibility for a different element of the project (a study, leaflets, conference etc.). FLAGs can also cooperate to ensure a sufficient supply or raw material or product (e.g. fresh or processed fish for specific markets, old fishing nets for recycling etc.).

> **To strengthen the impact of actions**

This may be a solution when FLAGs try to address issues reaching beyond their area, for example the Sardinian FLAGs addressing **marine litter** around the whole island (see section 1.3 above). Such cooperation can also help FLAGs strengthen the impact of their promotion and marketing activities, especially if targeting national (or even transnational) markets, as in the example below.

> ⚙ **A quality system for fish products produced in Slovenia**

The three Slovenian inland FLAGs cooperate closely to **promote inland fisheries products**. By teaming up with the Biotechnical Faculty of Ljubljana they developed a quality label. This aims at helping Slovenian fish farmers to compare local fish products using objective criteria, to increase their value by driving up quality, and to offer assurance to consumers.

An important element of the project was joint promotion to consumers in Slovenia and beyond, by a media campaign involving national TV, and by presenting their products in tasting events organised in the historical city centre of Ljubljana – activities which would have been difficult or impossible to launch by each FLAG individually.

3.2 Which level and type of cooperation?

When planning cooperation activities in their local development strategies, FLAGs can choose between a wide range of options.

Which level of cooperation?

Cooperation should be established at the level that will maximise its expected impact, whilst limiting the difficulties. The following cooperation options can be considered:

> With other FLAGs from the same country or region (inter-territorial cooperation)

> With FLAGs from another EU member state (transnational cooperation)

> With other CLLD structures such as LAGs

> With areas outside the EU

Although transnational cooperation seems attractive, FLAGs should remember that cooperation projects can be difficult to undertake and that it is important to set it at the right scale. Cooperation starts at home, it is not always necessary to seek partnership with remote partners, as the more distance (geographical, cultural, linguistic), the more difficult it will be to reach the expected results. One should also keep in mind the significant differences between implementation and eligibility rules in different countries.

Which type of cooperation?

Different types of cooperation will bring different types of benefits. FLAGs might want to consider:

> Study visits

> Mentoring

> Placements and traineeships

> Twinning

> Thematic workshops or conferences

> Joint action (e.g. joint promotion, product development, etc.)

Study visits, a first approach to cooperation

A study visit involves travel of one or more representatives or stakeholders from a FLAG area to another fisheries area. The most typical purpose of a study visit is **learning**: the visitors learn about particular issues, projects and activities in the host area by meeting the people involved, observing and hearing about their work, and by having the opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues directly. This form of learning can have a much greater impact on participants than written documents or remote presentations.

Study visits often involve **exchange of experience**: an opportunity for both sides (the visitors and the hosts) to share useful practices and solutions. It should be remembered that the process is not limited to visitors learning from the hosts, a lot of learning is also happening in the opposite direction!

 Study visits are often a starting point of long-term cooperation between FLAGs. For example, when the Swedish **Bohuskust FLAG** wanted to explore the possibilities of oyster production, it took its producers on a 5-day visit to several French FLAG areas with long-standing experience in this field (**Marennes Oleron**, **West Normandy**, **St. Brieuc** and **Thau**), to study different solutions for creating high value products, distinguishing them on the market and using them as tourist attractions.

The study visit has not only provided useful information and inspiration to the Swedish oyster producers, but also created a basis for long-term collaboration between Swedish and French FLAGs. "Fishing Intelligently", the Polish-Finnish cooperation project presented in section 3.1 above, was also the result of a study visit of Polish fishery stakeholders to Lapland.

There are different ways of seeking sources of new ideas and methods, which could provide an opportunity to expand existing projects or to develop new projects by pooling skills and resources and/or opening new markets or business development opportunities. Such exchanges can also provide motivation to local actors who recognise that they are not alone in addressing the challenges they confront. Eventually, they can lead to the development of joint actions that seek to exploit synergies or complementarity. These can involve, for example, joint studies or research, joint design (e.g. of IT applications or promotional material), development of norms and standards (e.g. quality labels), joint promotion and marketing or coordinated environmental conservation activities.

3.3 **Key steps of cooperation projects**

Most cooperation projects will consist of some or all of the following steps:

1 Identifying the need or opportunity

2 Developing the project idea

3 Finding a suitable partner or partners

4 Organising the first meeting of partners

5 Preparing the cooperation proposal

6 Concluding the cooperation agreement

7 Financial commitment

8 Implementing the project

9 Evaluation[18]

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18 Evaluation of individual projects is not an obligation under the EMFF, which only requires the evaluation of the LDS as such. However, some FLAGs might be interested to assess the contribution of cooperation projects to the LDS objectives

FLAGs that would like to include cooperation projects or ideas in their LDS should think through at least the following steps:

1 Identifying the need or opportunity

When undertaking the SWOT, the FLAG should identify the specific needs or opportunities which a cooperation project could address. The FLAG should also demonstrate that the expected benefit justifies the extra complexity of working with partners from other areas or countries.

2 Developing the project idea

Once the need and/or opportunity are identified, the project idea could be developed. This should include a description of the expected actions, what input is expected from a potential partner or partners, and an indication of the results the FLAG expects to achieve. Ideally, the FLAG would already identify other FLAGs, or LAGs, that could be relevant and interested in collaboration. However, the description of the project idea should be kept sufficiently open in the LDS, in order to leave room for the needs of future partners.

7 Financial commitment

The LDS can already include a specific budget targeting cooperation projects; or cooperation projects can be funded under the thematic budget line to which it belongs, such as adding value to local fisheries projects or improving the marine environment. Either way, each partner needs to contribute a share of the project's funding. This step should be made simpler and faster in the future, since that type of decision can now to be taken directly by the FLAGs following normal project selection procedures. Remember that your project will still have to be presented to the MA for eligibility check, like any other project.

FLAGs may also want to explore other sources of funding beyond their CLLD budget to support cooperation projects, as in the example below.

⚙ ENSAMBLE: FLAG applying for additional funding to transfer CLLD to Tunisian fishing communities

A call for proposals was issued by EASME[19] looking for blue economy projects in the Mediterranean. The Italian FLAG "**Costa degli Etruschi**" received funding for a project covering several Mediterranean countries. Beyond the FLAG's traditional stakeholders (fishing associations, fishing and aquaculture SMEs, municipalities and fisheries unions), partners in this cooperation project include Petra Patrimonia Corsica (an innovative cooperative), Legambiente Toscana (an Italian environmental Association), a Tunisian environmental NGO (WWF North Africa), as well as the Tunisian Ministry of Transport.

The project aims to create a network between local communities of fishers in Tunisia, France and Italy in order to facilitate the elaboration of a CLLD-type strategy in some fishing communities of North Africa, as well as the exchange of best practices between Italy and France on applying the CLLD approach in local fisheries communities.

Guidance and other useful material:

> FARNET Guide no. 2, **Working together for EU fisheries areas**

> presentation on the **key steps for implementing cooperation projects**

> a **dedicated "cooperation in action" page** on the FARNET website

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19 **The European Union Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises** (EASME) manages amongst other tasks call for proposal using the direct management budget of the EMFF.

4. Putting it into practice

In previous chapters we focused mainly on **what** should be included in the local strategy. In this chapter we will provide some practical suggestions on **how** this can be done. The EU legislation requires that local strategies must describe[20]:

> the community involvement process in the development of the strategy

> the management, monitoring and evaluation arrangements, demonstrating the capacity of the LAG to implement the strategy.

Some of these themes, for example designing project selection criteria for achieving results, or arrangements for monitoring and evaluation, are extensively dealt with in other FARNET Guides[21]. In the present chapter we will primarily focus on the following questions:

> how to involve the local community in strategy development

> how to plan your work with key local stakeholders

> how to design the management and organisation of your FLAG

> how to plan communication activities in your strategy.

Before going into the detail of these questions, we would encourage FLAGs to address another question: **how to ensure our strategy is *better* this time?**

The start of a new funding period is an opportunity to improve the way your FLAG has worked in the past. We propose two tools that can be particularly useful to FLAGs that want to ensure their activities in the new period are not a simple repetition or a slightly improved version of the old period, but rather find new, more mature responses to local challenges. These are:

> **the U Theory**, a way to disconnect from the past and make a new start towards the future,

> **reflection exercises**, making sure all the lessons from the past are taken into account when designing the new period.

Making a new start – the U Theory

FLAGs who would like to address new challenges in their strategy and/or avoid repeating mistakes from the past, might find it interesting to use the approach called "U Theory". This theory, developed by MIT researcher Otto Scharmer, helps organisations and companies design future activities with a fresh mind, without being attached to the models and paradigms from the past. This is done by reaching deeper into reality, to a point when one can disconnect from the past and then go back up towards a different future.

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20   see draft CPR, Art. 26 on the contents of local strategies (points (b) and (e))

21   no. 15 "**Evaluating CLLD – a handbook for LAGs and FLAGs**" and no. 11 "**Results-oriented CLLD in fisheries areas**"

In the graph below, the red arrow represents a situation when the future is envisaged as a mere repetition of the past (it is called "downloading"). The U-shape, on the contrary, represents the effort needed to let go of the past images and habits, which will allow the new future to emerge.
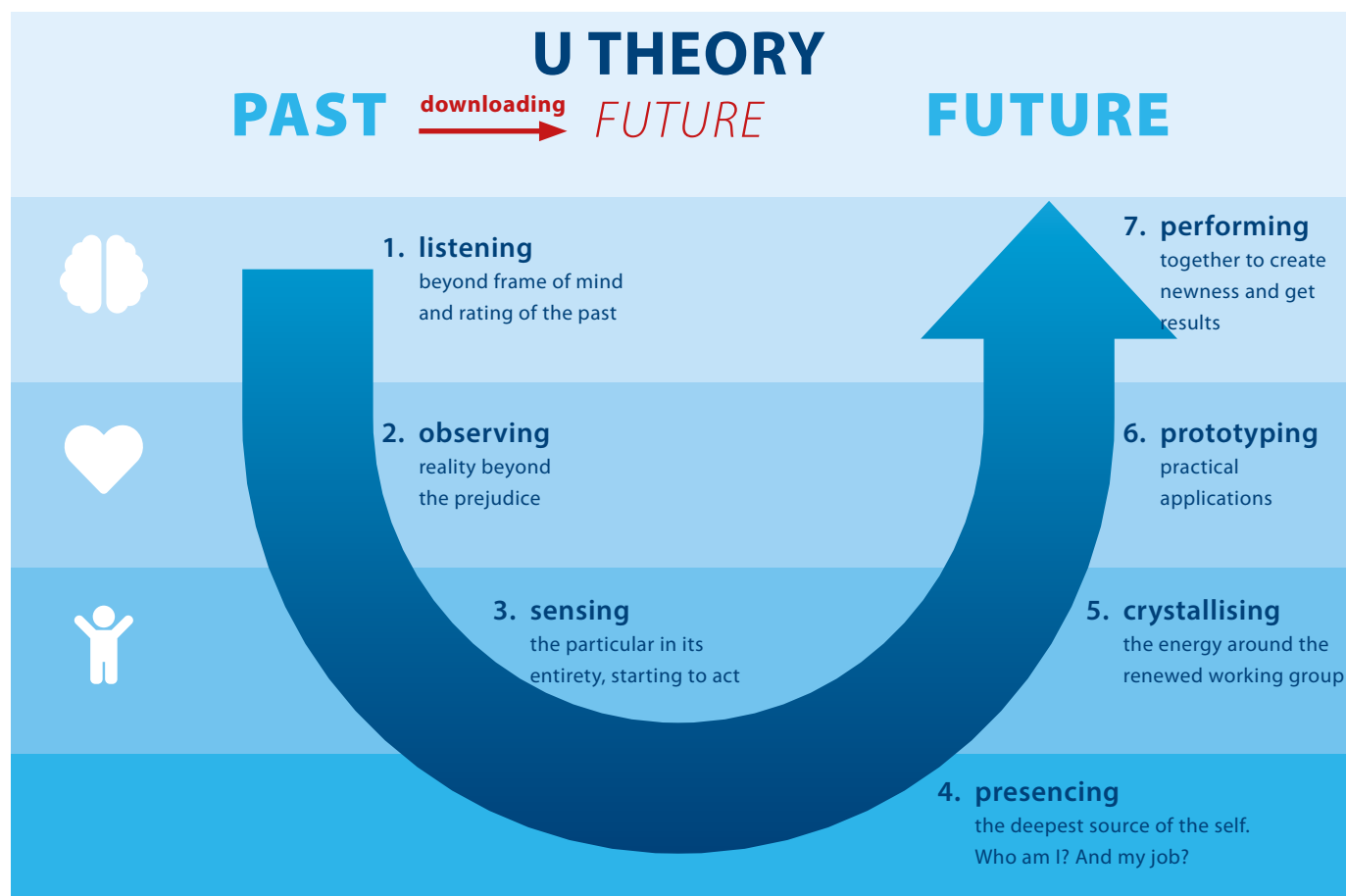
This approach has been applied to some rural development initiatives (e.g. by the Dutch National Rural Network) and can be a good way to start developing a new FLAG strategy.

More information on U Theory can be found here:

https://www.skilla.com/en/blog/otto-scharmer-s-u-theory-for-reacting-to-the-critical-stages_32/

https://medium.com/torustimelab/u-theory-the-methodology-that-seeks-to-emerge-the-new-7b18b227ff7b

Reflection exercises

We strongly encourage FLAGs to start preparation of the new period with a "reflection exercise", critically looking back on their activities, including involving the local community, supporting projects that brought benefits to the area, managing the organisation etc. Such a "reflection exercise" need not be very formal, it would be enough to organise an open discussion (or a series of discussions) with the FLAG board and/or general assembly, ideally moderated by an experienced facilitator.

In the sections below you will find some suggestions for questions you can ask during such a meeting; they are indicated by **a blue background**. Please remember that the lists of questions are indicative and by no means exhaustive! Depending on the needs of your FLAG and the time available for such an exercise, you can add or modify questions, or choose to focus only on some of them.

4.1 **Involving the community in strategy development**

It is in the nature itself of **community-led** local development that the local community "leads" the process of the area's development – the community should be in the driving seat, taking key decisions about the broad strategic directions. It is not enough that the community is simply *informed* about the strategy – it must have the ownership and responsibility for its design (and later implementation). While **external experts** might be invited to help with the strategy design (for example, to facilitate meetings or to prepare some input to the final strategy document), it is important that they do not dominate the process.

The FLAG team and members should mobilise as broad a participation in strategy design as possible. Having a large proportion of the community involved in the strategy from the start will make it easier to get the key persons and organisations to be active later on, in the work of the partnership and/or in the implementation of projects. It will also mean that project promoters will be fully aware of the objectives of the LDS and will develop their initiatives that are better aligned with it. It may also help avoid situations where people or organisations not involved in designing the strategy adopt a negative attitude to the FLAG activities or even try to jeopardise them.

Experienced FLAGs know that it is not always easy to get the community to participate: taking part in discussions and debates, putting forward ideas, reading and drafting proposals for activities, requires a lot of time and effort that few people are able or willing to contribute. When CLLD was first introduced to the FLAG area, some people may have been attracted by the novelty of the approach – for the first time, their voice could be heard! However, with the update of the strategy for 2021-2027 this novelty may have worn off, so it is important to find new ways to motivate and involve the local population.

> **T I P**
>
> **It is not enough just to invite people to express their views, they need to be encouraged!**

There are certain **groups** of the community that are particularly important for the success of the strategy – for FLAGs these are typically representatives of the fisheries sector (especially small-scale coastal fisheries) and aquaculture producers. It can be very difficult to get a significant proportion of them involved in the development of the local strategy, and special effort might be needed by the FLAG. If FLAGs wish to address issues such as job creation, generational renewal or social exclusion, they may need to ensure the participation of specific groups, for example young people or long-term unemployed; sometimes also the business community. However, involving them in the local strategy can sometimes be challenging.

Here are some activities and tools that FLAGs may use to ensure the participation of the wider community or specific target groups in strategy design.

> **surveys and questionnaires**: this is a useful way of collecting information from a large number of respondents, for example concerning consumer habits or people's perceptions of how to improve the area. Sending a survey (postal or on-line) is also a way of disseminating information about preparations of the LDS;

> **visioning exercises and workshops**: this is usually carried out in the form of a meeting where the participants, assisted by an experienced facilitator, develop together a common vision of their area or sector in the future;

> **village meetings**: this is a simple way to inform the inhabitants of one or more villages about the preparation of the LDS; they can be organised at different stages of the process (e.g. at the very beginning, to collect needs and preliminary ideas, or after the initial formulation of objectives and/or types of action, to get feedback);

> **targeted meetings for specific groups of stakeholders**: these meetings facilitate the participation of key target groups (e.g. fishers) and should be organised at a time and place convenient for the target group;

> **thematic working groups**: these are very useful to pool expertise and focus on a specific challenge to be addressed by the LDS, go more in-depth and propose solutions;

> **capacity building to facilitate participation**: certain groups (e.g. people with disabilities or at risk of exclusion) may not be able to fully participate in the strategy design process without support, e.g. training in public speaking or workshops to develop self-confidence – so the FLAG or one of its partners should be responsible for organising such capacity building;

> **facilitated social media groups and discussion forums**: these are useful both to collect initial ideas from the community and to disseminate periodic reports of the strategy development process, or drafts on which the discussion participants can provide feedback and comments;

> **hackathons**: dedicated events where people come together to find innovative solutions to problems[22].

The table below presents which of these tools are particularly useful for certain types of stakeholders:

	Broader community	Fishermen and aquaculture producers	Local businesses	Unemployed and at risk of exclusion	Young people
Questionnaires, surveys	X				
Visioning exercises & workshops	X				
Village meetings	X				
Targeted meetings for specific groups of stakeholders		X	X		X
Thematic working groups	X	X	X	X	X
Capacity building to facilitate participation				X	X
Facilitated social media and discussion forums	X				X
Hackathons	X	X	X		X

More ideas and methods to reach out to different stakeholders of the fisheries community can be found in FARNET Guides:

> no. 7, **Axis 4: A tool in the hands of fisheries communities**, especially chapter 1, "Bringing fisheries communities together and strengthening their influence"

> No. 1, **Starting up**, especially chapters 3, "Building local partnerships" and 4a, "A participative process of strategy development"

The starting point of encouraging a broad participation of the local community is an **analysis** of its involvement in the previous period. **Here are some questions that could facilitate such reflection**:

> what was the response of the community during the preparation of the 2014-2020 strategy?

> what percentage of the population attended meetings? what percentage took part in exchanges online or via social media?

> which methods turned out to be most successful in getting people to participate?

> think of your community in terms of target groups (e.g. fishers, businesses, youth, people at risk of exclusion etc.); which of these groups were most active in the development of your strategy? Which were the most difficult to reach?

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22 see **how the method was used** by the French FLAG Littoral Opale

4.2 **A good partnership for a successful strategy**

Some experts claim that the composition and motivation of the FLAG partnership is more important than the content of its strategy: "*a good partnership with a mediocre strategy can be successful, but a poor partnership with a good strategy is likely to fail*"[23]. It is therefore of crucial importance to reflect on the composition and functioning of the current FLAG partnership and look for ways to improve it.

Usually, FLAG partners are organisations or institutions (in some cases also individuals) that share the objectives of the strategy and are willing to contribute and take responsibility for its implementation. Some FLAGs have the legal form of a membership-based entity, e.g. an association, and the partners are members of the association. In case of partners which are themselves legal entities, the usual practice is to designate one person to represent the organisation in the FLAG partnership – for example, the mayor may represent the municipality, or one of the teachers can represent a school. It is important that such a representative has strong motivation and is also capable of securing the contribution of his/her organisation as a whole.

> ⚠️ **Remember: formal membership is not enough for successful implementation of the strategy! Much more important factors are the skills, resources and good will of the partners.**

If the FLAG is planning to address new themes with its strategy, it should make sure the key stakeholders relevant for those themes are involved in the partnership. See Chapter 2 for suggestions regarding **which stakeholders should be involved for specific challenges** that FLAGs might want to address.

The composition of the FLAG partnership should be flexible, so that new partners can join when necessary during the programming period (and some existing partners may drop out). However, it is particularly important to enable renewal of the partnership composition when starting a new implementation period, especially if there are significant changes in the scope of the local strategy. New partners can strengthen the capacity of the local partnership to face new challenges, contribute new skills and enthusiasm, and bring new resources. In parallel with the work on the new strategy, the FLAG should, therefore, reflect on the organisations and institutions that should be invited and encouraged to join the partnership.

In preparation for the new period you may want to change not only the **composition** of your partnership, but also its organisation and **the way it operates**, for example the functioning of decision-making bodies and the distribution of tasks between partners. These elements should be planned already at the strategy design stage, although it should be possible to modify them if the need arises.

> ⚙️ **Rotating membership in FLAG bodies**
>
> In the **South Finland FLAG**, the term of office of members of the decision-making body is three years, and one third of the members is renewed each year. This makes it possible to bring in new ideas while maintaining continuity.

23 Paul Soto's presentation at EWRC workshop "CLLD – EU funding from the bottom up" (2018): **https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/sites/farnet/files/1._paul_soto_enrd_1.pdf**

At the decision-making level[24] of the FLAG, there should be a good balance between different types of partners: public, business and NGOs, fisheries and non-fisheries related, keeping in mind that no single sector should dominate. The roles of different decision-making bodies will depend on the national or regional tradition and culture, but in nearly all cases the role of the **chairperson** (or president) will be of key importance. Where this role is played by someone with strong leadership skills, neutrality and ability to resolve conflicts, combining experience with enthusiasm, the FLAG has strong chances of success.

TIP

Think of gender balance on the decision-making body! The FARNET study on "**FLAG support to women in fisheries and aquaculture**" shows a positive correlation between representation of women in the FLAG and the number of projects supporting women.

Some of the decisions taken by FLAG partners may require technical knowledge – this is particularly true of the body responsible for the analysis and selection of projects. While every effort should be made to secure the participation of the most competent people on these bodies, there may be also be a need to provide them with **capacity building**, for example by organising training on the new themes of the FLAG strategy. The possibility of inviting **experts** to provide advice (without having decision-making role) could also be envisaged.

More information on working with local partners can be found in FARNET Guide:

> no. 4, **Steps for success**, chapter 1 "Managing Effective Partnerships".

Questions for FLAG reflection:

> what was the level of activity of FLAG partners in the last period? Were these always the same organisations which were most active? What can be done to involve others?

> do we still want the less active partners to be with us in the new period? Why?

> what new skills are we going to need in the decision bodies in the context of the new themes of our LDS? How can we ensure these skills (co-opting new members, training, inviting experts?)

> who are the key stakeholders for the new themes, and which ones are already in the partnership? Which ones should be invited, and what would be their motivation to be involved?

> do we want them to be formal partners (e.g. members of the association), or do we envisage close cooperation without membership?

> which new businesses/organisations have been set up or moved to our area over the past few years? Are they aware of the FLAG? What would be the arguments for and against their involvement as partners?

> read the section on the stages of partnership building in FARNET Guide no. 1, **Area-based development in EU fisheries areas**, pp. 15-17: have you gone through the whole partnership cycle? If not, what stage are you at? What lessons do you draw from this experience for the new period?

> if there was a Lead Partner or accountable body: has the organisation which played this role met expectations? Should another entity play this role in the next period? What criteria does it have to meet to play this role?

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24   in many FLAGs the role of the decision-making body envisaged in EU legislation (in particular, for the selection of projects) is taken by the FLAG board, but in some MS it is a dedicated body separate from the board

4.3 **Planning implementation**

The EU legislation makes it possible to use up to 25% of the FLAG budget for running and animation costs, although this can be further limited by national legislation. When preparing the strategy, FLAGs must reflect how much of this amount should be allocated to the functioning of the FLAG office, i.e. staff, office space, equipment, telecommunications etc.

While the voluntary work of FLAG members and other stakeholders is extremely important, the role of **competent staff and good organisation** of the FLAG office is absolutely crucial for implementing the LDS successfully. A competent, well-organised and motivated FLAG team is invaluable to ensure that all the administrative and financial responsibilities are correctly carried out, as well as all the animation and communication activities.

The responsibilities and organisation of work will vary greatly depending on:

> the size of the FLAG budget, and within this, the budget for running and animation costs,

> the size of the FLAG area (in terms of square km, population, size of the fisheries community),

> the legal form of the FLAG (is it a separate legal entity or part of an existing organisation which acts as the accountable body?),

> if the organisation also manages LEADER or other Funds,

> the organisational culture of the country/region.

How many employees in the FLAG?

Although the number of employees in the FLAG will to a large extent depend on its budget, there are significant differences between MS. As a general rule, FLAGs in Germany, Estonia, Finland, Spain and Croatia tend to have few employees, while FLAGs in Greece, Italy and Romania have more staff, even with relatively small budgets. See examples in the graph below:
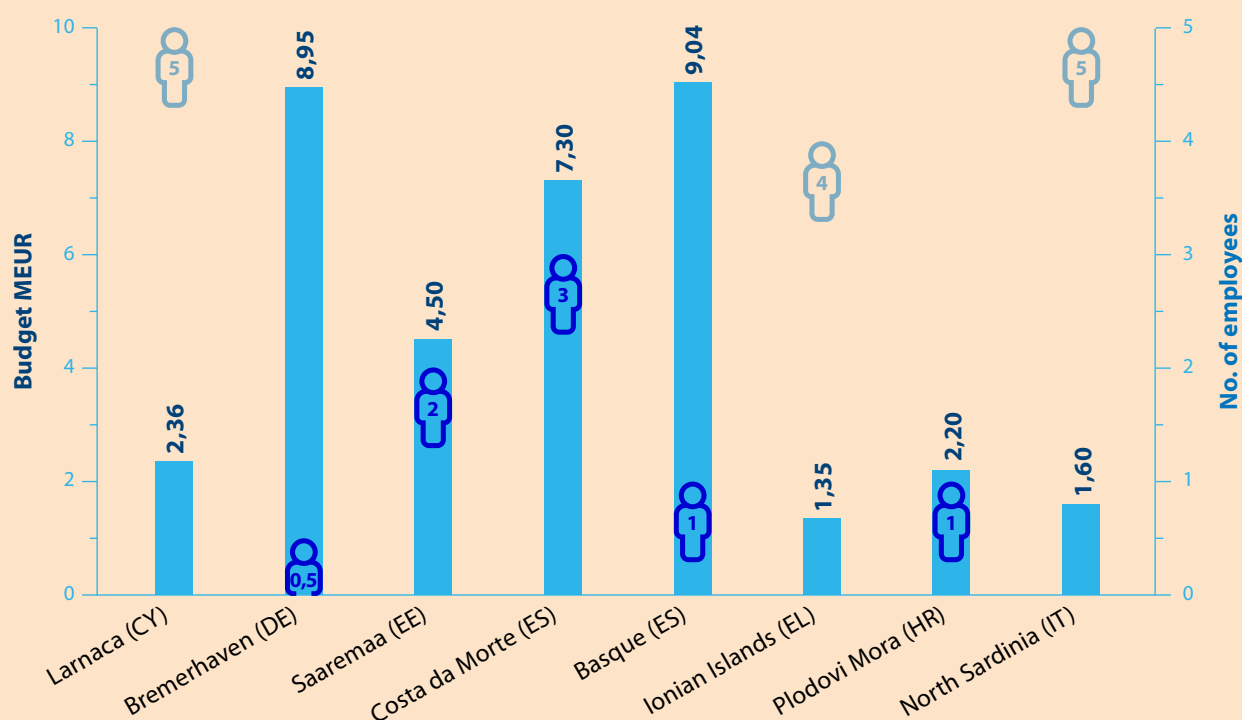
Source: **Farnet FLAG Factsheets**

Taking into account these differences, it is very difficult to provide detailed recommendations concerning the human resources and the planning of FLAG work. However, there are a few **key principles** that may be worth keeping in mind, irrespective of the FLAG size and structure:

> ensure that the FLAG has at its disposal **three types of skills**: firstly, **community outreach** (animation, communication) and capacity to create linkages; secondly, staff with **knowledge of the fisheries and/or aquaculture sector** and ability to engage with it and gain its trust; and finally strong **administrative and financial skills** (including the ability to stick to deadlines and keep documents in good order). If it is difficult to find such combination of skills with the budget available, be creative and build relationships with those who can support you. The **Vättern FLAG** in Sweden, for example, has signed a contract with an experienced LEADER LAG to carry out most of its administrative work, so the FLAG manager can focus on animation;

> when designing the FLAG team, do not try to replicate the working style and hierarchy typical for corporations or large public-sector institutions – a flat, **flexible structure** and **collaborative, consensus-based decision-making** are more appropriate for managing CLLD;

> think of **motivating** the people involved in FLAG work (FLAG manager, personnel, volunteers etc.). The level of remuneration you foresee for FLAG staff will often determine the competence of the team you can hire, often with a direct impact on their effectiveness at implementing the FLAG strategy. However, also look for non-standard methods, such as recognition and appreciation of initiative or skills development opportunities. This may have to be taken into account when planning the FLAG budget;

> make sure that all people involved in FLAG work to have **clarity** concerning the **operating procedures,** including **responsibilities and decision lines** (how certain tasks are to be done, who is responsible, to whom, who should take decisions, who should be informed about them etc.);

> find a **workable balance** between the "**formal**" and the "**informal**" style of work, without going to one extreme or the other (e.g. developing overly elaborate procedures and reporting forms vs. relying exclusively on informal oral exchanges). A pragmatic and problem-solving approach should be prioritised;

> don't forget good **internal communication** within the team and ensure time and space to allow it to happen. It is important to facilitate regular meetings or sharing of reports and documents between team members.

> In order to maximise the budget available for hiring a good team, look for ways to **reduce other types of costs**, e.g. by finding a partner who would provide office space or part of the equipment (e.g. access to wi-fi, printer etc.) free of charge or at a minimum fee. Public sector partners can often do this, but don´t forget other possibilities, for example a local NGO or cooperative bank. LAGs and FLAGs have demonstrated a great deal of creativity in cutting costs through good local collaboration.

Here are some **questions which might be useful to reflect** on how the FLAG management has worked in the previous period and what needs to be changed or improved:

> what has been the balance of powers between FLAG decision bodies and paid staff? What could be improved?

> what has been the proportion of the administrative vs. outreach/animation work (e.g. in terms of working hours/days spent on these two types of activities)?

> have we experienced shortage of manpower to deal with some tasks? What can be done to improve the situation? Try to think of low-cost, out-of-the-box solutions, such as involving retired people with administrative experience to help with office work etc.

> what can be done to improve the efficiency of meetings? What other tools can be used to ensure good internal communication?

> think of all the management tools used in your FLAG (project management software, regular activities such as weekly meetings, templates for key documents, staff assessment, etc.). Which ones did you find particularly useful? Which ones were not useful or need to be simplified?

4.4 **Planning information and communication activities**

Good information and communication is a crucial factor of success for FLAG work. It should start at the strategy preparation phase and continue through the whole period of strategy implementation. Most FLAGs will include in their LDS some information about planned communication activities, and in some countries a **communications plan** is a mandatory section of the strategy (or part of the action plan). While your communication plan will have to take into account the specificity of your FLAG, below we propose some elements that could be useful building blocks of such a plan.

Types of messages and target audiences

Some of the most common **types of messages** that the FLAG may want to convey are:

> encouraging the involvement of the community and specific target groups in strategy development and implementation,

> promoting the contribution of EMFF and national funding to the area's development,

> disseminating information about FLAG work and progress with strategy implementation.

These messages will have to be adapted to the **target audiences** of the communication activities. The main target audience of the FLAG is the **local community**, which is composed of different groups – fishers, entrepreneurs, families, public sector actors etc. The needs and capacities of these groups should be taken into account when planning your communication channels and messages.

A significant part of FLAG communication is going to target **potential project promoters**, who will need to be informed about the availability of support and all the conditions they have to meet. In addition to written information (disseminated through websites, social media, leaflets, local press etc.), communication with potential beneficiaries may involve meetings, information points at events or a helpdesk to answer questions.

However, it is also important to reach out to people who are **not directly involved** in FLAG work, i.e. who are not members of the FLAG or beneficiaries of its projects. FLAG members and beneficiaries often think that the whole community is aware of its achievements – but this is not necessarily the case, as shown by Kim Pollerman's research of LEADER groups in Germany[25]. Pollerman studied stakeholders' opinions about the extent to which the LAG is open to participation of all community members and its legitimacy to take decisions on public funding. He found that persons directly involved in LAG work tend to be much more optimistic in this respect than the general public. Bridging this gap between participants and non-participants of the FLAG activities will require a well-planned communication effort.

⚠️   **Remember: people who are not directly involved in working with EU funding may not be familiar with technical vocabulary, such as "implementation", "beneficiary", "Managing Authority" etc. Make sure you formulate your messages in simple, everyday language!**

You should not forget to also communicate with **people outside the FLAG area**, including the Managing Authority and Intermediate Bodies, or potential visitors and consumers of products from your area.

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25 Kim Pollermann (2019): "Participation in rural development – the view of non-participants", **https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/209647/1/ RSA-2019_Pollermann.pdf**

Potential communication channels and activities

⚙️ Examples of communication channels

📰 press releases and articles for local or national media (press, radio, TV)

🎵 production of videos and podcasts disseminated via website or at events

🗔 news items on FLAG website, or websites of FLAG partners (e.g. municipality)

👍 posts in social media

⛺ organisation of events (e.g. local festival)

📍 participation at events (e.g. fair of local products)

⚠️ **Remember: communication should not only be one way (from the FLAG to a given target group) but rather allow for feedback and opinions from the community to be heard!**

In your plan you should envisage opportunities for **two-way communication**, to identify stakeholders' needs and expectations, get feedback on FLAG activities, to collect ideas for new projects or to facilitate exchange between different stakeholders. A variety of interactive tools can be made available on the FLAG website and social media. However, some stakeholders will prefer direct face-to-face communication, and such opportunities should also be foresee (for example, by the presence of FLAG representatives at events or "open days" at the FLAG office).

⚙️ Interesting communication activities by FLAGs

Communicating with the wider community about the fisheries sector: a series of festivals connects fishers and aquaculture producers with the public, **Emilia-Romagna FLAG** (IT)

FLAG uses online surveys to foster two-way communication with participants of fish festivals: 30% of those attending filled in this evaluation survey, helping to better target future activities, **Barycz Valley FLAG** (PL)

A cooperation project of Italian FLAGs supports **an on-line radio station to give a voice to the fisheries sector**, promoting the image of fishing and the coastal culture of the Mediterranean, **Porta a Levante multifund LAG** (IT)

Visibility and transparency

In communication activities FLAGs must follow all the requirements related to the **visual identity**[26] **of EU funds** and the relevant national rules. However, it is equally important to maintain the **visibility** of FLAG support – this not only encourages stakeholders to get involved and target groups to apply for funding, but it can also help increase the credibility of the FLAG, attract high quality employees and improve access to other funding sources.

Transparency of the FLAG work is equally important and great care should be taken to make information accessible, in particular about the contents of the LDS and the process of project selection. One of the key tools here is the **FLAG website**, where one should be able to find the following information:

> the full text of the local strategy,

> contact details of the FLAG Manager/FLAG office,

> information on how projects can be submitted (including deadlines for calls, if there is no on-going call),

> project application forms and requirements for applicants,

> project selection criteria,

> the composition of the decision-making body,

> the minutes of the project selection meetings, including the list of projects selected (with the name of beneficiary and amount allocated)

> minutes of other important meetings (e.g. of the FLAG General Assembly), if relevant.

Some ideas and tips about effective communication and promotion can be found in FARNET Guide:

> no. 9, **Fisheries and tourism: creating benefits for the community**, especially chapter 3 "Promoting fisheries tourism".

Here are some **questions your FLAG might ask** when preparing communication activities for the next period:

> how visible is our FLAG and its strategy in the local community? How do we know?

> which target groups were easiest to reach? which were the most difficult? Why?

> what messages would we like to share with our community? And with the outside world?

> how long has it been since we asked our stakeholders to evaluate, for example, our website or social media?

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26   see for example the EU **Visual Identity Manual**