

The Fisheries Local Action Groups (Flags) and the Opportunity to Generate Synergies Between Tourism, Fisheries and Culture



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1 Introduction

The *European Maritime and Fisheries Fund* (EMFF) is one of the five *European Structural and Investment Funds* (ESI Funds) for the period 2014–2020 that contributes to the achievement of the objectives from the *Common Fisheries Policy* (CFP), the *Integrated Maritime Policy* and the *Europe 2020 Strategy*. This fund, like the previous *European Fisheries Fund* (EFF), incorporates the aid to the territorial development of fishing areas as one of its priorities and does it by seeking to implement *community-led local development* strategies (CLLD) through the *Fisheries Local Action Groups* (FLAGs).

The creation of FLAGs opens up the possibility to finance projects of a very diverse nature that help territorial development and job creation in fishing areas. This possibility has led to an intense debate about the need to seek diversification alternatives to the traditional fishery (Gallizioli, 2014). Morgan et al., (2014) argue that diversification approaches are needed which complement and maintain a direct or indirect link to fishing, so that fishers can exploit their professional skills, knowledge and social networks gained through fishing (Symes, 2007).

In countries such as Spain where fishing shares territory with a very powerful tourism industry, the opportunity that these funds can represent when designing projects that seek to create complementarities and synergies between tourism and fishing becomes evident. Traditional fisheries are the repository of an enormous cultural heritage, both tangible and especially intangible. Many of the major Mediterranean tourist destinations are located in former fishing villages where, in just a few years, fishing was pushed aside in favor of tourism. However, in many cases, fishing and fishermen are still there, contributing with their products to the local gastronomy

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and providing prints that travelers admire and photograph because they recognize in them part of the lost essence of these places.

The fishing diversification projects linked to tourism and financed from the FLAGs are numerous and have been a subject of analysis (Miret et al., 2018, Herrera et al., 2018). However, another line of financing that explicitly appears in the fishing funds is linked to cultural projects. These projects are not easy to identify and analyze because many times they are confused with touristic projects and in their epigraph, they are mixed with social projects that have nothing to do.

This paper hypothesises is that in recent years have emerged numerous projects seeking to recover and to value the richness, both tangible and intangible, linked to fishing cultural heritage. These projects have made flourished numerous cultural routes, museums, fairs, etc. However, there is no work quantifying and analyzing these projects and showing the relationship between the European fishing funds, the FLAGs and the emergence of an entire cultural infrastructure linked to the fishing and marine world. For all these reasons, this work aims to identify, quantify and characterize the cultural projects financed in Spain through the European fishing funds.

To achieve this objective set out in this first section, we will analyze the operation and expenses made at European and Spanish level by the European fishing funds in the second section; the methodology and database used will be explained in the third section, and in the fourth section, we will present and discuss the results. Finally, we will present the conclusions, the limitations and the related future research opportunities linked to this study.

2 The European Fisheries Funds

The last two European fisheries funds, both *the European Fisheries Fund* [EFF] (2007–2013) and the *European Maritime and Fisheries Fund* [EMFF] (2014–2020), incorporate an axis (4th axis in the EFF or UP4 in the EMFF), which highlights the specific objective of increasing employment and territorial cohesion in fishing areas. This supposes the novelty of incorporating a territorial vision in a sectorial fund.

For the management of these funds, numerous *Fisheries Local Action Groups* (FLAGs) have emerged in recent years. The FLAGs are public–private partnerships formed by representatives of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, as well as by other members of the local community, working to implement a *community-led local development strategy* (CLLD) for their territory.

There are currently 367 active FLAGs in Europe, which therefore act as facilitators of the territory, assuming direct responsibility in managing and applying of the *European Maritime and Fisheries Funds* (EMFF). While in the EFF period, there were 30 FLAGs in Spain. They covered six regions: Galicia, the Canary Islands, Andalusia, Catalonia, Asturias and Cantabria. In the period of the EMFF 10, Spanish coastal regions joined the funds. In addition to the above-mentioned areas, Murcia,

the Valencian Community, the Basque Country and the Balearic Islands, currently totaling 41 FLAGS.

The main objective of the FLAGS is achieving the UP4 objective, ensuring the sustainable development of fisheries communities in social, economic and environmental terms (Marciano & Romeo, 2016), with decision making coming from a bottom-up approach which brings together representatives from the public, private and civil sectors (Budzich-Tabor, 2014).

For the whole of the planned period (2014–2020), the EMFF has a total budget of € 6,4 billion (of which € 1,161 billion are managed by Spain). The *Union Priority 4* (UP4), which is the one we are studying here, has assigned a total of 547 million euros. In the specific case of Spain, 107,6 millions are dedicated to the 4th axis.

Each country has assigned a portion of the fishing fund depending on the size of its fishing sector. Each country develops its own national *Operational Program* (OP) where the funds are distributed among the different union priorities (UPs). The funds in the UP4 are distributed among the different FLAGS. FLAGS select the projects that they are going to finance based on their own criteria, although the national authorities are in charge of reviewing and finally approving the projects.

The normative of the EMFF foresees that UP4 funding can be used to achieve the following objectives (FARNET, 2019):

1. *Adding value*, which includes adding value to local fisheries products.
2. *Diversification* of fisheries activities into other sectors.
3. *Sociocultural*, promoting social well-being and cultural heritage.
4. *Environmental*, including operations to mitigate the climate change.
5. *Governance*, reinforcing the role of fishing communities.

The five objectives set out in the regulation Article 63 (EU, 2014) are mandatory and used for the categorization and reporting of projects once they are approved. The EMFF projects in Spain therefore follow this classification that it is common to the rest of the countries. The EFF projects followed another similar classification but based on four sections: (1) diversification; (2) governance and management, (3) environment, culture and society; and (4) added value from fishery products.

According Miret et al. (2020) work, based on the latest data on the FLAG projects reported by countries to the European Commission, in Spain, a total of 461 projects had been financed, with an amount of € 9,998,202. The projects were distributed as follows: 165 added value projects, 168 diversification projects, 39 environmental projects, 75 sociocultural projects and 14 governance projects (Fig. 1).

The sociocultural projects, from which we will extract to be analyzed in this study, are a total of 75 projects with a total amount of €1.616.870. These projects are not all those that appear in our analysis, since the database used here has been updated more recently, so the number of projects considered is greater. Remember, on the other hand, that these are data from the EMFF, to these projects we added those from the previous period (the EFF).

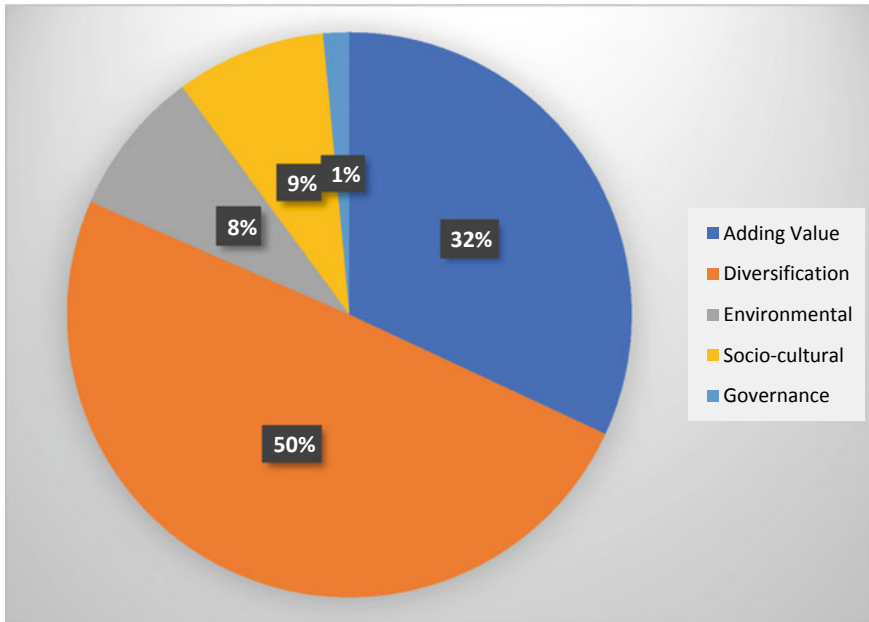


Fig. 1 Average expenditure in Spain for each objective in UP4

3 Methodology

We collected the data used in this analysis from *Spanish Network of Fishing Groups* website database. The website includes information on the different projects financed by both the EFF and the EMFF. The database is constantly being updated. We used data from July 2020 to this study. Therefore, the data covers until the first half of the last year's EMFF. However, we should consider that, in practice, European projects work with the $n + 2$ rule. That is, EFF projects do not end in 2013, but go all the way through 2015. Similarly, EMFF projects they do not end in 2020 but span two more years.

For the EFF period, we can filter projects based on the fourth axis theme. As mentioned: diversification; governance and management; environment, culture and society and added value for fishery products. This classification into four large groups can be broken down into subgroups. Thus, within "Diversification," we found three sections: "use of by-products," "new activities and products" or "tourism." Similarly, the "Environment, Culture and Society" section is divided in "Social area" subgroups into "Culture and Fishing Heritage," "Infrastructures," and "Environment." In this case, it is easy to identify the target projects within the "Culture and Fishing Heritage" section. Within this section, we identified 90 projects. The project initial screening suggested that some projects should be removed to be able to compare with those in the EMFF. We finally remove 21 projects to maintain coherence between the two

programs. For example, we decided to remove those actions carried out in schools, those aimed at promoting the consumption of fish, etc.

Unlike, EMF, cultural projects were more difficult to select in the EMFF program since subsections have been eliminated and there are only the five thematic axes: added value, diversification, governance, environment and sociocultural. That is, the classification is too broad, heterogeneous and difficult to shape.

For example, tourism projects have usually been classified within diversification projects, but since there is a section on sociocultural projects, this epigraph has been also used, creating some confusion. Cultural projects (museums, routes, exhibitions, etc.) can be classified either as tourism projects (diversification) or as sociocultural projects. In practice, tourism projects are usually projects related to hospitality, accommodation, fishing tourism, recreational fishing, etc. While most cultural tourism projects, appear in the section on sociocultural projects (as they were already for EFF).

So for the EMFF, we have focused on sociocultural projects, but bearing in mind that a large part of the projects that appear are social projects (gender, youth support, emigrants, etc.) and also considering that this section often acts as a junk box where many projects difficult to catalog are incorporated.

4 Results

Firstly, we proceeded to identify cultural projects within the database, and later, we classified them into five major groups: routes, tangible heritage, intangible heritage, museums and festivals. Within the routes section, we have the adaptation, enhancement and signaling of tourist routes with very diverse characteristics, both nature and heritage.

The tangible heritage section usually refers to the recovery, rehabilitation or enhancement of fishing- or sea-related buildings. They are usually historical buildings or monuments, and sometimes, they are the buildings that house the Fishermen's Guilds. However, we can also find projects for the recovery of traditional boats or the recovery and cataloging of documentary collections.

In the intangible heritage section, projects for the recovery, dissemination and enhancement of culture, history or seafaring traditions are incorporated. On many occasions, this work ends up being reflected in a book or in some type of audiovisual material.

Festivals, fairs, markets, days, etc., are included in the festivals section. These are specific actions, where the marine culture and its products are exposed and promoted.

Finally, the museum section incorporates the permanent exhibitions for which buildings have been adapted. However, in many cases, they go beyond simple exhibitions and become interpretation or research centers of seafaring culture. In most cases, they are sea or fishing museums.

Table 1 Number of cultural projects financed with fishing funds

	EFF period (2007–2013)	EMFF period (2014–2020)	Total
Routes	12	8	20
Tangible heritage	15	14	29
Intangible heritage	17	14	31
Museums	17	19	36
Festivals	6	14	20
TOTAL Cultural projects	67	69	136

We have identified a total of 136 cultural projects for the two periods analyzed. We classified the projects in Table 1 in groups five groups: routes, tangible heritage, intangible heritage, museums and festivals.

Over the EFF period, there are were a total of 710 projects in the database, while over the EMFF period, we found 834 projects. Therefore, this implies that cultural projects were just under 10% of the total projects in the EFF period and around 8% of the total in the EMFF period.

Data indicated that the number of cultural projects is similar between in the two periods analyzed. However, two aspects must be taken into account. First, the EFF period is already completed while the EMFF period, due to the $n + 2$ rule will still be running for at least two and a half more years. On the other hand, the EFF only covered six of the ten Spanish coastal autonomous communities, while EMFF covers a larger territory. The FLAGS over the two programs have increased from 30 to 41. Figures in each section indicate that similar number of projects related to tangible and intangible heritage and museums are presented. On the contrary, we observed a decrease in projects linked to routes and an increase in the number of festivals.

5 Conclusion

This work has made it possible to identify and quantify the cultural projects linked to the fishing and maritime world that have been financed through the FLAGS and from the 4thaxis of the last two fishing funds.

The results show a total of 136 cultural projects (67 in the EFF period and 69, so far, in EMFF). Cultural projects, once identified, have been classified into five different categories: routes; tangible heritage; intangible heritage; museums and festivals. The distribution of projects among these five categories is quite uniform. It can be said that the European fishing funds are helping to create a network of cultural and environmental routes, as well as a network of sea and fishing museums. They are also contributing to the enhancement and recovery of the numerous and valuable tangible and intangible heritage linked to fishing, as well as to value and spread it through different kinds of materials and events.

All these efforts are important to highlight, but we must not lose sight of the fact that the objective of the 4th axis of the fishing funds is the development and job creation in the fishing-dependent territories, as well as the job creation. Therefore, this financial effort must be rewarding the fishing communities. Valuing the marine culture is a laudable goal, but it is necessary to combine this with the job creation and an emphasis on the territory development, which involves creating synergies between tourism, culture and fishing.

The creation of all these cultural networks linked to fishing must also be linked to tourism policy. Tourism is in a time of a profound transformation where a new tourism model is being shaped (Segarra et al., 2012). Sun and beach tourism is no stranger to these changes and seeks to move away from a massive, Fordist and impersonal model. For this, the destinations are betting on more sustainable and original models (Aguiló et al., 2005), where destinations position themselves offering their own heritage, cultural, gastronomic products, etc. In this context, adding value to cultural products linked to fishing can increase the touristic offer of many beach destinations.

This work is a first step to study the emergence of tourism linked to the marine culture from the fishing funds. However, the work is very limited due to the scarcity of existing quantitative data. Undoubtedly, important questions remain to be analyzed. Among others, to analyze whether these projects favor fishing communities: Do they increase their income? Do they create jobs? Do they increase the value of the fish they capture? For many people, valuing their culture is a necessary step to value their product and their work, but others understand that it is a way to divert funds from fishing to tourism or, even worse, one more step in the attempt to end fishing as an extractive activity and transform it into a folkloric and tourist product. In any case, these issues do need other methodologies and a much deeper discussion.

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