

KICK-OFF EU-PROJECT 'CATCHING THE POTENTIAL'

7 EU MEMBER STATES WORK ON SUSTAINABILITY TRAINING FOR FISHERS

On the 28th of May it was time to officially kick-off the 'Catching the Potential' project with the partners from the seven EU member states that collaborate within this project. Originally it was supposed to be a 2-day meeting in IJmuiden (Netherlands), but the COVID-19 outbreak made us switch to a digital get-together in order to kick-off the project and meet each other. In the course of the next three years, these partners will work on the project goal to develop a European / international standard in the field of sustainability training for fishers.

Catching THE Potential

Logo of the Catching the Potential project

Reason for starting this project

The profession of fisher has changed greatly in the past decades. Demands for entrepreneurship and sustainability have increased. Complex (inter)national laws and regulations, increased competition with farmed fish products and a greater demand for responsible and sustainable fish products are developments that fishers have to deal with. In order to continue operating successfully as a fisher in a changing world, the knowledge and skills of fishers must also develop in order to cope with these changes.

Since 2004, the ProSea Foundation provides sustainability training (People, Planet, Profit) within the fisheries sector in the Netherlands. Topics such as entrepreneurship, communication, sustainable fisheries management, environmental challenges, and social acceptance are central themes of this training for fishers. In the past couple of years, other countries approached ProSea on

several occasions to share their materials, skills and approach. However, ProSea was reluctant at first take a step abroad with sustainable fisheries training.

"Compared to, for example, merchant shipping, fishing is much more diverse in nature", says Tim Haasnoot of ProSea. "You have to account for large differences in fishing techniques, fishing areas, languages, dialects and cultures to name just a few. There are already clear differences within the Netherlands between the north and the south, let alone when you cross the border."

Nevertheless, the first steps were taken in 2018 and 2019 with courses in Belgium and Spain. "The entire start-up process requires a lot of work. You have to establish contacts with local partners, get to know the local fisheries sector with associated culture and sensitivities and adapt the course material accordingly. In Belgium we had the advantage of being able to conduct the course ourselves, but in Spain we had to train other people, because we don't speak Spanish ourselves. It turns out that finding the right partners to conduct the training is important for its success".

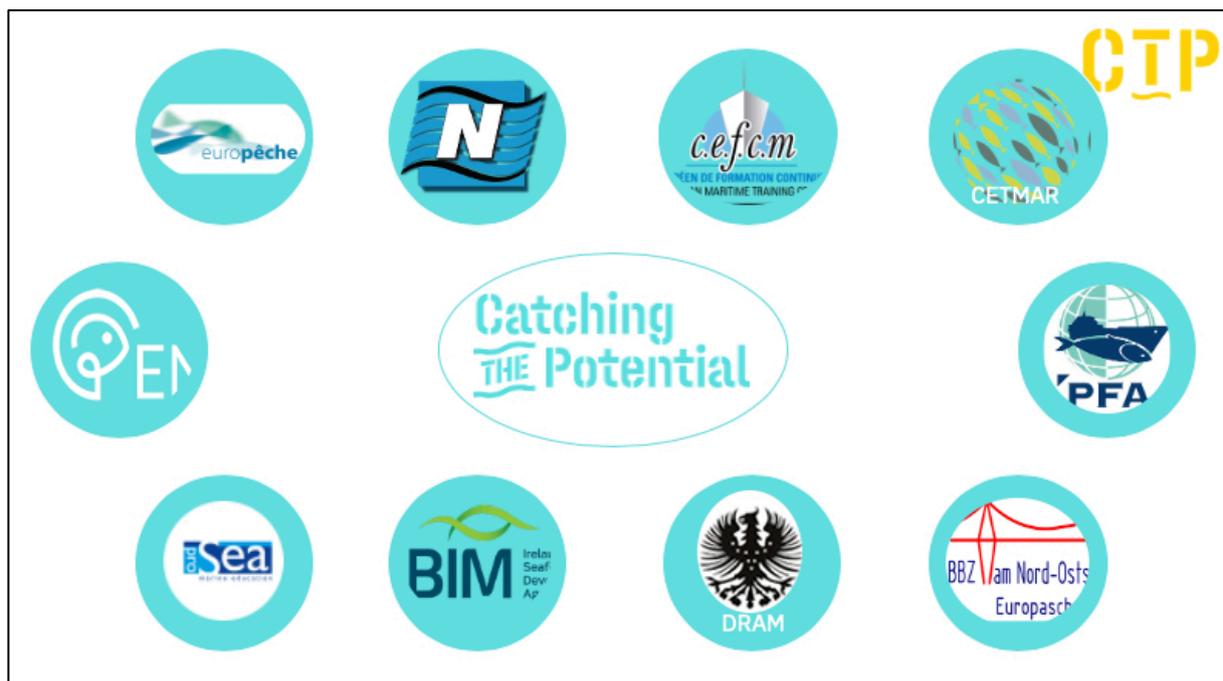


At the end of October 2019, the fishing school in Ondarroa (Basque Country, Spain) participated in a sustainability training for fishers. The training included a trip to the local fish auction and a cruise with the Mater, an old wooden tuna boat that is now used for educational purposes and as a sailing museum.

Overall, the experiences in Belgium and Spain were positive. Despite the differences, a large part of the course proved to be effective across the border, thereby fulfilling a need. "Our approach was successful and local partners were enthusiastic about the training. This gave us the courage to see whether we could work towards a standard in the field of sustainability training for fishers at a European / international level, since ProSea believes in a structural approach to including sustainability in the training of fishers".

Project partners

Potential partners in different European member states were approached, taking into account the geographical distribution over the different European seas. Ultimately, a group consisting of 10 partners was brought together that jointly bring together experience in the fields of sustainability training (ProSea), the European fisheries sector (Europêche and the PFA) and the training / education of fishers (CEFCM-France, Novikontas-Latvia, BBZ-Germany, Enaleia-Greece, BIM-Ireland, CETMAR-Spain, DRAM-Azores, Portugal).



Logos of the various project partners participating in the Catching the Potential project.

The 'Catching the Potential' (CtP) project proposal was submitted in early 2019 under the Blue Careers call from the European Commission. In June 2019 the proposal was granted, and it was considered to be one of the best positioned and qualified proposals for this call. Subsequently, the project officially started in November 2019. “During the first months, we worked hard behind the scenes to set up a communication strategy, project management and to launch the website (www.catchingthepotential.eu). For ProSea it is a great challenge to coordinate such a large EU project for the first time”.



In early February 2020, the Catching the Potential core team, consisting of CEFCM, Europêche and ProSea, met for the first time in Utrecht. From left to right you see Jerry Lust (ProSea), Roos Swart (ProSea), Catherine Germillac (CEFCM), Tim Haasnoot (ProSea), Bopp van Dessel (ProSea), Alain Pomes (CEFCM), Thomas van Schie (ProSea) and Rosalie Tukker (Europêche).

Project approach

The Catching the Potential project approach consists of three steps. First step is to build a network of schools and training institutes within the fishing industry. Experiences, methods and materials in the field of sustainability training can then be shared within this network. Naturally, we also involve the Spanish, Belgian and Dutch fishery schools, and anyone who is interested in joining and contributing to this network. Through a desk study the project looks into existing initiatives and materials in the area of sustainability training for fishers. This is an important step, since the project wants to avoid reinventing the wheel.

Next step is to conduct pilot courses in seven EU member states. Each course will be adapted to the local context in collaboration with the local partners within this project. In addition, ProSea will train local experts to conduct the course, as offering the course in English is not an option in most of the participating EU member states. This step in the project will yield a lot of experience and input for the development of the training standard.

The third step consists of drawing up a European / international standard in the field of sustainability training for fishers based on the experience gained during the project. Ultimately, this standard should provide a basis for sustainability training

for all European member states, but also leave sufficient room for each EU member state to adapt it to the regional/local circumstances.



The Catching the Potential project approach.

“We are confident that the project will achieve its goals with its fantastic group of partners. It is great to see that we can already learn a lot from each other, for example in the field of e-learning. In addition, I believe that the project will contribute to the harmonization of training requirements for fishers. This will ultimately result in better trained fishers in the areas of safety and sustainability and increase cooperation within fisheries at the European level”.

If you are interested in following the project "Catching the Potential", you can subscribe to the newsletter at www.catchingthepotential.eu which is published every three months or follow the project via LinkedIn. For questions or additional information, you can also contact info@catchingthepotential.eu or +31683197180.



With the contribution of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund of the European Union

The content of this memo represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility; it cannot be considered to reflect the views of the European commission and/or the executive agency for small and medium-sized enterprises (EASME) or any other body of the European union. The European commission and the agency do not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.