

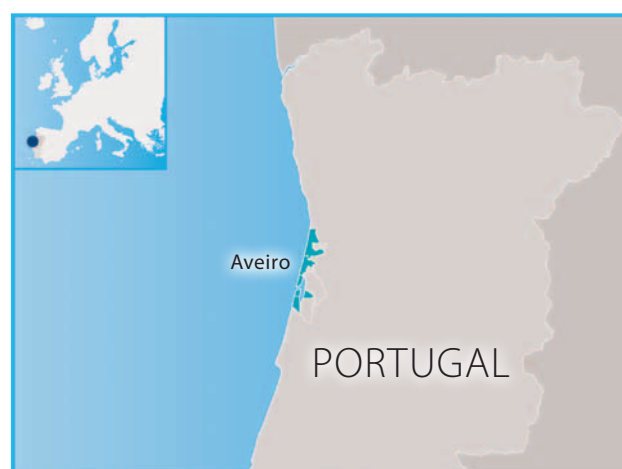
A future for the eel, fishermen and researchers cooperate

FLAG: Aveiro

Portugal

Project overview

Fishermen in Aveiro are participating in environmental conservation measures to help restore the sustainability of a once economically valuable species: the European eel. Their participation is allowing researchers to go further and faster in their study and giving fishermen a role in assessing eels stocks, and a voice in proposing conservation measures.



The European eel, once an economically important species in several EU countries, is facing extinction due to widespread changes to freshwater habitats, unsustainable fisheries practices and other environmental changes. In the Aveiro region of Portugal the species continues to be emblematic and local fishermen are participating in support measures to help it become an economically viable resource once again.

Since 2007, this migratory species is covered by the European regulation (CE) nº1100/2007 on eel management, requiring Member States to develop and implement conservation measures. Due to the historical, economic and cultural importance of the species within the region, the Aveiro FLAG decided to support a project in which local fishermen and researchers of the University of Aveiro cooperate to deliver better data and management advice so as to be able to tailor conservation measures to the local context. Under the project, fishermen have been contracted through the Regional Artisanal Fisheries Association to participate in data collection, site selection and specimen sampling. The study provides for the continuation of a sampling record dating back to 1987, with increased support and involvement of fishermen. It also assesses pollution levels of the area, helping to develop a better understanding of the relative impacts of fisheries and pollution on Aveiro's eel population.

Key lessons

- › **Relevance to FARNET themes:** Environment, Culture
- › **Results:** The study's local occurrence and abundance data are fueling the statistical and biological analysis used to refine the national eel management plan – and the participation of fishermen has allowed researchers to advance faster in field work and in accessing sampling sites over 87km².

The direct involvement of 7 fishermen in the development and delivery of the study has also sent a positive signal to the fisheries sector by fostering their participation and ownership in research and conservation work. As a result, it is giving fishermen a voice in assessing the influence of their activity on species mortality and a new role in proposing conservation measures. This, combined with financial compensation for their work, has motivated them to take part in future projects involving researchers and non-fisheries stakeholders.

- › **Transferability:** The European regulation on eel stock recovery is applicable to all EU Member States. This example of involvement of the local fisheries sector (inclusion in an interdisciplinary study, knowledge transfer, improving the sector's image...) could therefore be transferred to all fisheries communities in FLAG areas with current or historical eel catch.
- › **Final Comment:** The study is on-going and will deliver results on a regular basis in the two year project period. It is an example of one of the recommendations issued by the European Commission regarding the promotion of research and fisheries partnerships, an objective that Axis 4, by its participative approach, is well placed to facilitate.

Total cost and EFF contribution

Total Cost: €57 720

Axis 4 contribution: €43 290

National co-financing (CI Aveiro): €14 430

Project information

Title: A future for the eel, fishermen and researchers cooperate

Duration: January 2012 – January 2014

Case study date: December 2012

Project promoter

CI Aveiro (Inter-municipal Body of Aveiro)

José Alberto Anjos – jose.anjos@regiaodeaveiro.pt

+ 351 234 377 650

www.regiaodeaveiro.pt/

FLAG details

Ría de Aveiro, Portugal

José Anjos – gac@regiaodeaveiro.pt

+351 234 377 650

[FLAG factsheet](#)

Editor: European Commission, Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Director-General.

Disclaimer: Whilst the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries is responsible for the overall production of this document, it is not responsible for the content nor does it guarantee the accuracy of the data.