

WP5 – Deliverable 5.3.1

5 regional meetings among PPs, regional authorities, banks, chambers of commerce, private equity funds

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INDEX

INVESTINFISH PROJECT	3
The importance of dialogue.....	4
Trans-national meeting – “New technologies, techniques and methods in Adriatic fishery sector”	5
Veneto event.....	5
Istria event	6
Zadar event	6
Marche event.....	7
Puglia event - “On the Blue Growth wave”	8
The method.....	9
Event teams and themes	10
Conclusion.....	12
Table of Figures.....	15

INVESTINFISH PROJECT

INVESTINFISH - “Boosting INVESTments in INnovation of SMEs along the entire FISHerY and aquaculture value chain” is a project funded by the Italy – Croatia CBC Programme under the Priority Axis 1 “Blue Innovation”, Specific Objective 1.1 (S.O.1.1) “Enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area”.

INVESTINFISH sees the cooperation of n. 6 Partners from 5 Different Regions: T2I (LP – Italy – Veneto), Sviluppo Marche (PP1 – Italy – Marche), D.A.Re. Puglia (PP2 – Italy – Puglia), Punto Confindustria (PP3 – Italy – Veneto), Istrian Development Agency (PP4 – Croatia – Istria), Zadar County Rural Development Agency (PP5 – Croatia – Zadar).

INVESTINFISH main objective is strengthening of competitiveness of F&A production system through promotion of investment programs aimed at acquisition of innovation services. INVESTINFISH implements pilot actions providing some IT-HR F&A SMEs with a roadmap to innovation instruments & services, boosting creation of marketable innovative products and/or processes that will improve the SMEs potential market positioning.

Expected benefits for enterprises are: accelerate time to market, increase linkages with innovators, increase F&A enterprises R&D expenditures in new & greener components/technologies/services, to boost HR-IT competitiveness. INVESTINFISH intends also to offer to the F&A sector to substitute the value chain concept with value network, proposing a shift from traditional value chains towards more collaborative value networks.

The importance of dialogue

Any plan aimed at supporting a transition in thinking needs to include multiple stakeholder groups in order to ensure such change. To accomplish this goal, it is necessary to:

- **Create a sense of ownership:** involving stakeholders early in the process. Changing a vision alone is impossible. The change will need a plurality of stakeholders to make it happen;
- **Connecting priority actions and a few key personalities:** without a motivated person or organization capable of taking the potential strategic actions, change will remain just "a nice idea on paper." It is therefore necessary to spend time identifying the people who can drive the initiative forward;
- **Bring people together:** change depends on local collaboration; people like to work with people they know, trust, and share values and goals with.

In the Italian fishing and aquaculture sector, the situation is no different: dialogue and cooperation between central government, local administrations and companies in the sector play a crucial role in the industry's development.

The achievement of growth objectives, indeed, can only be achieved by improving organizational coordination and by encouraging the direct involvement of operators, institutional bodies and Regions, through periodic meetings and sharing of materials and information.

The aim of this kind of participatory approaches, in fact, is to develop practices of a democratic type, through the promotion of expression and communication of interested groups, taking into account all their interests and building a collective consensus in order to facilitate the realization of a sustainable change.

Moreover, such participation, especially if viewed in a systemic way as a set of surveys and focus groups, repeated in different phases, aimed at promoting the dialogue of more or less homogeneous groups, in a flexible way and on a small scale, can lead to great results.

This explains why the Investinfish project has included numerous encounters with F&A stakeholders of which, in this instance, the final event "On the Blue Growth wave" organized by DARE Puglia is just one small and final example.

Trans-national meeting – “New technologies, techniques and methods in Adriatic fishery sector”

On September 1st 2021 an event was organized in collaboration between the Interreg Italy-Croatia projects INVESTINFISH, PRIZEFISH, FAIRSEA, ITACA,

The event presented the closed cycle of marine ecosystem as application of new technologies, techniques or methods that are important for preserving the Adriatic marine organism population. In line with preservation, it gives an insight on how to monitor closely the fishing grounds, up to raising the quality in catch&handling and processing, and finally covering the efficiency of waste management.

The event saw the participation of regional authorities, banks, chambers of commerce, private equity funds.

Veneto event

The regional meeting INVESTINFISH project within the “**Tavolo Tecnico di Confronto Settore Primario**” (Primary Sector Technical Comparison Table) of Veneto Region, on February 25th 2021, that involves the Veneto Region and several key stakeholders of the primary sector, such as Universities, Regional Agencies for Agriculture and Fisheries, Regional agencies for environment. In the same event, also the focus group was organized to discuss the results and collect feedbacks from the stakeholders.

The participant included:

- Regione Veneto
- ARPAV (regional agency for environment)
- AVEPA (regional agency that manages funding for the primary sector)
- Consorzio di Bonifica Acque Risorgive
- Anbi Veneto (association of the 10 “Consorzio di Bonifica” in the Veneto Region)
- Coldiretti
- CREA (research agency for the primary sector)
- ETIFOR

- CRPM
- GAL Adige
- GAL Alta Marca
- GAL Patavino
- GAL Valle Brembana
- University of Padua
- Unioncamere Veneto (Union of Veneto Regions Chamber of Commerce)
- Veneto Lavoro

Istria event

IDA organized a two-day event that was held in Pula (Croatia) on December 27th and 28th 2021. on the topic of introducing innovations in the fisheries and aquaculture sector of the Istrian County; the event was attended by regional authorities, banks, chambers of commerce:

1. Erste&Steiermärkische Bank d.d.: Deni Antonić, Aldo Rojnić
2. Head of the Administrative Department for Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting, Fisheries and Water Management of Istria County; Ezio Pinzan
3. Istrian Chamber of trades and crafts; Eros Sorić

Signature lists in the attachment as well as the program for the event on the June 30th 2020.

Zadar event

The regional meeting was held on June 25th

The participant included:

- Šime Mršić (Ministry of Agriculture)
- Tomislav Sokol (European Parliament)
- Božidar Longin (Zadar County)
- Antonio Vučetić (Zadar County)

- Zoran Šikić (Zadar County)
- Daniel Segarić (Zadar County)
- Martina Glavić (Zadar County)
- Davor Čerkuč (Zadar County)
- Ivan Župan (University of Zadar)
- Tomislav Šarić (University of Zadar)
- Petar Pedišić (Croatian Chamber of Commerce)
- Marijana Pirović (FLAG Lostura)
- Ante Miletić (FLAG Tri mora)
- Ante Župan (Zadar County)

Marche event

The seminar was held on line on 7th of October in the presence of Svim project representatives, Marche Region European policy officer and the other project partners to assess together with finances and crowdfunding experts the possible use of public funds in support of Civic Crowdfunding initiatives (Match-funding). The seminar offered the chance of identifying and sharing good practices of matchfunding in relation to civic crowdfunding initiatives as well as the related lessons learned. To this aim public bodies with recent experiences in the implementation of Civic Crowdfunding and Match Funding initiatives at local or regional levels were identified and took part to the event.

In the discussion took part the project partners of 13 partners from 8 MED countries, includes 4 blue economy clusters / chambers, 3 crowdfunding experts, 2 academia and 4 regions. In particular, a thematic session entitled “Potential use of crowdfunding per ESIF thematic objectives” was held on following and involved a number of experts in crowdfunding working at international level. (Goteo, Crowdpolici and European Crowdfunding Network).

Additionally, from the analysis and the seminar clearly emerged how the crowdfunding is an important tool of match-funding, to be considered one of the finance tools that might foster the realization of Structural Funds and European Investments. According to the trends and commitments that have emerged over the years in the Cohesion Policy, crowdfunding is to be considered as a further option to be included in the existing mix of financial tools

complementing the resources from the European Union. As widely shown by the analysed initiatives in this work, there are some advantages offered by the Crowdfunding tool, although there are also some critical factors.

Puglia event - “On the wave of blue growth”

On December 20, 2022, **DARe Puglia** organized the event “**On the wave of blue growth**” to discuss the results achieved within the project and the new European challenges. The event was held within the spaces of the Department of Agriculture, Food, Nutrition and Engineering of the University of Foggia. The location was specially set up with removable interior design elements to create a favorable working environment for the teams involved.



Figure 1 - Poster of the event

During the event, particular attention was paid to the diversification of the invited audience, reaching not only stakeholders and industries of the F&A sector but also scientists and researchers belonging to the same sector and others complementary to it.

The diversification of the audience, indeed, has been an essential goal to achieve a real contamination between different ideas and perceptions. This contamination has allowed to obtain, as an overall result of the event, a lateral inspiration to be used as a strategic basis for new investments and perspectives for the industries.

The agenda of the workday was articulated in two macro moments: the first one based on the dissemination of results and experiences gathered during the Investinfish project and, the second one, focused on a team-work experience developed by **TERRA TERRA COOP** specifically for the event: “**the Agora of sharing**”.

The method

This method is based on a social-innovation technique that allows to obtain results of *brainstorming* and *circle-time*¹ activities from a diverse audience. This is a participatory approach that DARE Puglia has decided to implement because perfectly suited to the project activity requirements.

The “**Agora of sharing**” was created with the aim of creating paths and ideas from the bottom through participation. In this method have been used seats arranged according to a circular pattern and furniture designed specifically to make participants “*feel at home*”. This perception, indeed, allows participants to communicate with a greater depth of language, sharing more easily opinions and personal thoughts, thus obtaining relationships with a higher level of trust.

Through the experience conveyed by this method, it is possible to introduce the concept of “**furnishing relationships**”: placing the participant in a welcoming place, where he/she feels completely at ease, surrounded by people who encourage dialogue and sharing, allows to manifest the true point of view of the participant, in a certain sense “his/her truth”. Lastly,

¹ The circle-time is an educational and didactic methodology that foresees the disposition of the components in a circle, in order to ensure to each of them the attention of all participants.

through the sharing of this "truth", it is then possible to create impactful pathways able to strike at the heart of participants' real needs.

From a methodological point of view "Agora of sharing" foresees the division of participants around "*circles*" and a "**facilitator**". Each circle can include a **maximum of 5 participants**.

The facilitator represents a person with a specific need or idea that is placed "on the table" and acts as a starting point for dialogue.

During the process, this idea is discussed and enriched through the collaboration of professionals from the various fields who sit in the same circle and, in some cases, the need initially expressed can also be resolved through the aforementioned comparison and exchange.

The dynamic behind this is the following: the facilitator introduces and presents the themes, then numbers the people creating groups to be gathered around the circles and gives them time to get to know each other.

At the end of this phase, each "circle" identifies its own reference person and begins its own brainstorming session on its own theme. This phase is called the "**circle time session**" and typically takes an hour and a half.

Once the time for discussion is over, all the circles meet in the central Agora where the representative of each circle exposes the work carried out by his or her group and the results obtained, thus obtaining a restitution shared by all the groups.

The facilitator takes notes in a systemic way of these results and inserts them into a final document.

Event teams and themes

During the event organized by DARE Puglia a total of n.4 working groups have been created with this method.

For each group was ensured the participation of heterogeneous subjects belonging to different business realities and specialized in different fields of action (regional authorities, researchers, university representatives, etc). These groups have therefore worked on four different themes

in order to define new mechanisms and strategies to stimulate innovation and investment in F&A production companies, especially the one related to sustainable growth.

An important participation to be highlighted in one of these four groups was the presence of Dr. **Giuseppe Scordella**, *FEAMP representative for the Apulia Region*.



Figure 2 - The four groups

Following, indeed, the directives and macro trends foreseen and already financed by the EMFF funds, the four tables have respectively addressed the following themes:

- **Quality:** intended as all those innovative aspects that could improve product quality, its perception in terms of safety and hygiene, sustainability, ethics, etc.;

- **Packaging and labelling:** packaging and labeling as means of communicating quality to consumers through labels, but also as the possibility of having innovative packaging that supports the above concepts of quality and sustainability;
- **Circular economy – focus sustainability:** related to innovative processes that lead to coherence with the sustainability goals within a circular economy perspective and therefore to innovation as a way to develop processes and actions that allow reuse, up-cycling and other sustainable practices;
- **Environmental protection:** referring to all actions that support the conservation of the environment through regulation, technologies and possible collective actions.

Conclusion

These "on the table" meetings allowed to obtain interesting and undoubtedly productive exchanges that will allow the regional authorities to better address those funding lines aimed at the real funding requests of F&A companies and solving the real problems perceived by them, allowing to strategically and efficiently allocate the available resources.



Figure 3 - A moment of dialogue on one of the four thematic tables

From the common lines obtained from the comparison of the four tables, it emerged above all the need to **strengthen funding** for those actions **aimed at a more effective communication of quality and sustainability of production**. In fact, there is still a general perception of lack of knowledge among consumers on the quality attributes of fish and aquaculture products.

The access to funds and investments of F&A companies in relation to all those interventions aimed at promoting the quality and added value of fish productions through traceability, certification, marketing, communication and promotion of products becomes strategic.

Essential become those actions aimed at encouraging the organization, for example, of conventions, seminars, conferences, workshops, show-cooking and tasting of ichthyic products, taste routes, cooking courses with tasting, creative ludic didactic activities, web platforms,

surveys and market research, fairs and events aimed at promoting the quality of the ichthyic product and aquaculture.

In relation to these activities, the participation of the **EMFF** through **Measure 5.68 – “Marketing measures”** becomes a great resource to be considered in the promotion of quality and transparency in the production and commercialization of the products of the F&A sector.



Figure 4 - Giuseppe Scordella, FEAMP Representative for the Apulia Region

Table of Figures

FIGURE 1 - POSTER OF THE EVENT.....	8
FIGURE 2 - THE FOUR GROUPS	11
FIGURE 3 - A MOMENT OF DIALOGUE ON ONE OF THE FOUR THEMATIC TABLES.....	13
FIGURE 4 - GIUSEPPE SCORDELLA, FEAMP REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE APULIA REGION	14