



**BLACK SEA ADVISORY COUNCIL /BISAC/  
CONSILIUL CONSULTATIV PENTRU MAREA  
NEAGRA**

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## **MINUTES**

**From a meeting of Focus Group 1 of BISAC**

**February 23, 2022**

**Topic: "Small-scale fisheries (SSF)"**

On February 23, 2022 via video link in ZOOM a meeting of Focus Group 1 of BISAC was held on the topic: Small-scale fisheries (SSF) ".

The meeting was attended by Mrs. Pinelipi Belecku from the EC, Mrs. Yordanka Chobanova from the EC, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Violin Raykov from the Institute of Oceanology Varna, Mr. Mihail Leonov State Secretary Ministry of Agriculture in the field of Fisheries, Romania, Mr. Gheorghe Vacaru Director-General in the Managing Authority of the Operational Program for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs - DGP AMPOPAM, Mr. Eduard Diaconeasa- DGP AMPOPAM, Mrs. Andreea Ionascu – Romanian National HUB for Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea; Mr. Gabriel Popescu Director of the National Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture / NAFA / Constanta, Mr. Catalin Balaban from the SSF Association in Jurilovca.

The meeting was opened by the Chairman of the BISAC, Mr. Daniel Buhai.

Mrs. Andreea Ionascu: represents the Romanian National HUB for Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea and presents its work related to writing and developing projects for applications for programs and funds related to the Black Sea. This National Center in Romania supports the participation of stakeholders in regional Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture projects by offering advice from its team. When the new Operational Program for Fisheries and Aquaculture is adopted, this center would assist those wishing to develop a project with which they can apply for funding.

Mr. Gheorghe Vacaru: It is very interesting what Mrs. Ionascu presented and it would be very useful for fishermen to develop projects.

Mr. Catalin Balaban from the DMR Association in Jurilovka: presents some challenges to the DMR of Romania. The association it represents was established in 2007. The fishermen in it are from five communities, both from the Danube Delta and from the coastal areas of the Black Sea. The main problem for fishermen is the access to the Black Sea, the previous strait that existed to the Black Sea is closed. The lack of ports and infrastructure is another important issue that needs to be addressed. Last but not least is the lack of fishing shelters, places where fishermen could stay overnight if the weather does not allow them to go fishing. DMR from Jurilovca carry out its activities in the Danube Delta Reserve, so there are many obstacles to the construction of such shelters in this area. The shelters made by the fishermen are made of nylon and you can't stay in them in worse weather conditions. Another important aspect is finding a solution to diversify fishing. Most fishermen catch only anchovies and Danube mackerel. If there are opportunities to catch other species, there will be additional opportunities for these fishermen, as well as ports where tourists can come and visit these fishing villages. The creation of a fisheries market is also needed in this area in order to present fishermen's catches there, which will attract buyers and give greater value to production. It would be good to have other additional activities to support fishing communities. Information on European fisheries funds does not reach a large number of fishermen and they do not have the opportunity to search the Internet. Asks Mr. Diaconeasa - how can the days of fishing in the Black Sea be proven.

Mr. Eduard Diaconeasa: similar information is provided by the National Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture /NAFA/. Fishermen themselves must send this information to the Agency. The managing authority only checks whether this condition is met when applying for a certain measure.

Mr. Catalin Balaban: this cannot be the condition for applying for funding. Very often the weather is not suitable for SSF fishing or the sea is full of jellyfish. The requirement of 60 days at sea should not be the only reason and there should be some other way to prove fishing activity.

Mr. Daniel Buhai: large ships have a logbook that can easily prove how many days they have been at sea and they send this information to NAFA. But he doesn't know what the SSF procedure is.

Mr. Gabriel Popescu: the only way to prove fishing activity is the logbook. When there is a catch with nets and they have been in the sea for more days, then there is a possibility for another entry in the diary - collecting the catch. The same goes for the pound nets. If the fishermen have gone to sea but return without a catch, then this is also recorded in the fishing logbook. Otherwise, NAFA cannot determine the days of fishing.

Mr. Catalin Balaban: another challenge for SSF is co-financing under certain projects. The moment the fishermen realize that there is co-financing, they cannot afford to participate in the project, and no bank would give them credit as sole traders. There must be state support for SSF.

Mr. Eduard Diaconeasa: is aware of this difficulty for fishermen - to provide their own co-financing, which was an obstacle in the programming period 2014-2021. There are cases in

which funding reaches 100%, especially for coastal fishing. A new program is now being developed, and simplified application opportunities for fishermen need to be developed. There are already 100% funding mechanisms in place, such as payment when an invoice is presented.

Mrs. Pinelipi Belecku: He gave a presentation on "Small-scale fisheries in the Black Sea." The main components of the SSF Regional Action Plan for the Mediterranean and Black Sea RPOA-SSF are:

- Scientific research;
- Data collection;
- SSF management measures;
- Value chain.
- SSF's participation in the decision-making process;
- Capacity building;
- Decent work;
- Participation of women in the sector;
- Climate change and the environment.

All this will contribute to the sustainability and capabilities of SSF. Data collection is crucial to increase knowledge of the needs of this segment of fisheries and what decisions need to be made. It is very important to integrate SSF into the overall fisheries management in the area. It is also important how the value of the chain can be increased - how to help these fishermen increase their profits, how to cooperate and sell their catch. Last but not least, it is important to say that SSFs are the protection of the sea - they are the ones who know exactly what is happening there. It is also necessary to build the capacity of young fishermen and pass on the knowledge of the older generation to make them more efficient. The climate and the effect on the environment are also a big challenge. For 2022 it is very important to increase the profit of the products, to reduce waste, which will help local economies; tracking and control and how to use new technologies in this control; fishery products are of high quality, which would support SSF and its contribution to food safety; the important role of the SSF in the survival of coastal communities; equal opportunities for women and increasing their knowledge and role in the fisheries sector; ensuring the transfer of knowledge between generations; to assess the interaction between SSF and recreational fisheries; engaging fishermen in the management process.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: indeed, some of the topics presented are discussed in the BISAC. SSF is becoming an increasing priority. It is true that many small fishermen form a large diaspora, catch large quantities of fish and seafood under environmentally friendly conditions, because many of their techniques are environmentally friendly. At the same time, in order for the funds under the programs to reach the SSF, they must unite in associations and register their catches - not every fisherman can register a company, but all fishermen in a village can make an organization. In terms of raising the price of fish, this can happen if the sector "brightens up". In order for a fish to bear the stamp of quality and to claim to be a high-quality product, it must be packaged (whether the packaging will be one kilogram or 100 kg) and originate from a regulated site. Currently, trade on the Black Sea

coast by SSF is exercised by so-called resellers. They have received permission under one point in the law, which says that the first buyer may be individuals or entities who have permission to do so. But the idea is that the first sale should always be performed in regulated sites and this is not incorporated into the law. When trade takes place in ports that are not registered as places of first sale, do not take place in exchanges, markets or enterprises on the coast, the fish goes to the "gray sector". Therefore, there is no traceability and there can be no cross-checking. In order for SSF to be secure, it must be integrated into organizations. The state administration must take on the role of cross-checking, not only the administration for control of fishing, landing and first sale, but also the control of food safety agencies, which are obliged to control the places of first sale. They must be state-registered sites with an identification number. This is the way to trace and control. Regarding control at sea - fishermen are the best control bodies, they know who is poaching, who places unauthorized facilities and who is entering with high-speed yachts not for pleasure but to fish.

Mrs. Dimitrina Kostova: the created platform is very important, which will be extremely useful for DMR. This is exactly what we need to bet on - more publicity and information. As far as producer organizations are concerned, this is an extremely successful tool already proven in the field of agriculture.

Mrs. Pinelipi Belecku: adds that the new fisheries fund supports sustainable fishing and its low environmental impact. The aim is to avoid past mistakes, to have innovative and creative ideas and to implement the Common Fisheries Policy at local level, as well as to involve Member States more with stakeholders. There are many funding opportunities under the new program, but Member States decide which projects to fund.

Mr. Daniel Buhai: The platform "Friends of Small-Scale Fisheries" is very useful and BISAC will send this information to more fishermen's organizations. Another important topic for the Black Sea is rapan fishing, which is on the agenda of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean /GFCM/ meeting in May and BISAC expects to receive an invitation so that the voice of the Black Sea fishermen could be heard. At the end of the meeting it can be said that the main emphasis was placed by the institutions and associations of SSF, that the conditions for providing funding were quite restrictive in the old Operational Program, and in the future will be slightly more accessible to fishermen. Also, the lack of basic infrastructure for ports and places of unloading, shelters and places of sale are the main challenges facing Black Sea fishermen.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: it is important to note that the guests present at the meeting from the Romanian state administration mentioned the lack of feedback and contact, and that they see the BISAC as a mediator between fishermen and the administration. This can only happen if both parties are looking for a connection to the BISAC. In this regard, a recommendation to the administration to turn to the BISAC for opinions on various issues may be considered. Another idea for a recommendation is to identify the fish caught, mark it and trace it back.

Mr. Daniel Buhai: in Romania, the low VAT on foodstuffs of 9% contributes to the "lightening" of the sector, but a limitation in front of it is the lack of infrastructure, the lack not only of ports but also of places where they can sell their products openly.

Next: closing the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting were kept by: Mrs. Elena Peneva

Chairman of BISAC: Mr. Daniel Buhai