

Mid-Term Conference “The Future of Sustainable Coastal Angling Tourism”

08 November 2017
Peenemünde (Germany)

Conference Report



Having completed the first half of the three-year CATCH project, the partners invited stakeholders from science, NGOs, administration and the angling community of the South Baltic region to its Mid-term Conference in Peenemünde on Usedom Island.

Peenemünde represents one of four case study regions of the CATCH project where the project partners establish stakeholder networks with local and regional actors from angling and tourism and thus try to strengthen sustainable coastal angling tourism on the very local level. Against this background, the conference did not just offer excellent networking opportunities and interesting presentations and sessions, but also allowed for first-hand impressions of a region where angling tourism is being developed in terms of economic, social and environmental sustainability.

At first, the CATCH project was introduced by the Lead Partner (Katharina E. Poser and Katja Rummelshagen, University of Rostock) with a focus on main goals and objectives of the project. While the main output - a multilingual and transnational knowledge and information platform for anglers, service providers, communities and tourists - is still in the development phase, significant groundwork has already been undertaken during the first one and a half years. This accounts for the strengthening of regional networks as well as for analyses of the angling tourism market. To exemplify the latter, the Lead Partner presented preliminary findings from a survey on habits, motivations, travel arrangements and expenditures of anglers in Denmark, Germany, Lithuania and Poland. The survey results will be published on www.catch-southbaltic.eu in early 2018.



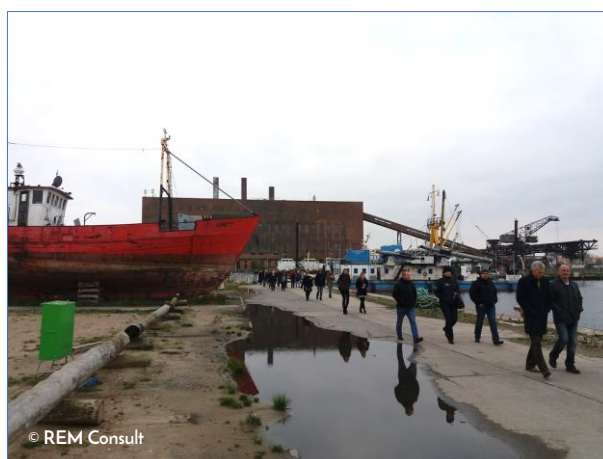
Thereafter, closely related to the first presentation, Theresa Horn (EUCC-D) guided through a session on the four regional networks developed within the CATCH project, namely the “Pike Factory” in Denmark, Peenemünde in Germany, Klaipėda region in Lithuania and the Szczecin Shoreland in Poland,. After explaining the setup of the networks, their activities and how they contribute to the

promotion of sustainable coastal angling tourism, an interview session was held with representatives of the CATCH partner organisations. Together they discussed the first local workshops, conducted in spring 2017, as well as their expectations for the future development of the networks in their regions.

Gerd Lange, Policy Area Coordinator Tourism of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and Head of the Tourism Unit at the Ministry of Economics, Employment and Health of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern followed. In his speech, he briefly reported about the 10th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum and stressed that Baltic Sea Tourism needs a sustainable concept concerning trends on traveling and digitalisation. Further, he highlighted the importance of angling tourism for the regional economy in rural parts of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

In a presentation titled „Marine Recreational Fisheries in the Baltic Sea - Impact, data collection, management“, Dr. Harry Strehlow from Thünen Institute of Baltic Sea Fisheries presented latest scientific data on the economic impact of angling tourism and stock management and explained which tools are promising when collecting such data. While exact numbers for the economic impact of angling tourism - such as the annual expenditure per fisher - can be identified, the respective data is difficult to collect and significant knowledge gaps remain. Apart from the economic impact, the data generated during extensive surveys also allows to draw conclusions on the correlation of angling tourism and fish stocks. As data simulations for cod show, bag limits do have a significant impact on the overall catch reduction, while the number of affected anglers is relatively low.

In the afternoon, after a guided tour through the neighbouring angling camp „MoLa Beach“, three other projects were presented. All of them revolve around angling tourism, yet from very different perspectives. Niels Lagergaard Pedersen introduced the Fishing Zealand project. Fishing Zealand is a cooperation of various municipalities from Denmark's Zealand region and other partners and aims at promoting sustainable angling tourism to the benefit of both the regional economy as well as environmental matters. Thereafter, Karl Kliefoth presented his start-up



called Fiskado, a young company that runs an online angling portal focused on the provision of information regarding regulations, fishing maps and the like. While such information is currently still

spread over many different institutions and other sources, Fiskado aims at providing them in digital form and from one hand. This way, existing information barriers between anglers and institutions should be lowered, which benefits anglers as well as authorities. Finally, Håkan Haggström (County Administrative Board in Stockholm) presented RETROUT, a „sister” project of CATCH that deals with sustainable coastal angling tourism, too, realized in the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme. The project sets a special focus on trout and wants to balance tourism and environmental concerns by implementing a destination management service and a booking service on one hand as well as tools for developing angling tourism and restoring rivers on the other hand.



The conference concluded with a panel discussion on the future of sustainable coastal angling tourism. The CATCH project partners would like to thank the five panelists for their commitment and participation, namely Kaare Manniche Ebert (Denmark Sportfishing Association), Sandra Hippauf (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourist Board), Antanas Kontautas (Fishery Service under the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania), Iwona Krępic (Local Tourist Organization of Stepnica) and Daniel Melin (Swedish Board of Agriculture). The discussion touched upon topics such as the following:

- As to the main challenges regarding angling tourism and sustainability - whether economic or environmental sustainability - the panelists identified a broad spectrum of issues that are important in the different countries. Speaking of economic sustainability, one of the challenges mentioned for the case of Poland was that the number of entrepreneurs in the angling tourism sector is still insufficient. However, from the economic perspective, angling tourism does represent a chance to overcome imbalances between both coastland and hinterland as well as low season and high season. Concerning environmental sustainability, an improved

management of regulations would be worthwhile and much more focus should be set on restoring rivers, not just on economic aspects, one of the participants argued.

- These and other challenges can partially be overcome by cross-border cooperation, all panelists agreed. First and foremost, protecting the environment is an issue that concerns the region as a whole, because ecosystems do not correspond with national borders. In the same context, Swedish efforts for creating a so-called Nordic Recreational Fishing Center were highlighted. Such cross-border institutions could help raising awareness for the topic.
- Additionally, cooperation across borders could strengthen the concerns of recreational fisheries vis-à-vis decision makers. In this context, the idea of a common research center was mentioned. An institution like this could contribute to generating much-needed knowledge and data and thus convince decision makers on issues like stock management.
- However, when it comes to raising awareness for sustainability, not just decision makers, but anglers, too, are important. In this regard the panelists pointed at different educational approaches that are being undertaken in the countries represented in the panel. One of the approaches mentioned was a (not yet published) best practice handbook from Sweden that could inspire the angling community as well as administrations and service providers. In Denmark, a smartphone app that warns and informs anglers about regulations as soon as they enter a protected area is currently being developed. In Poland, on the other hand, NGOs play a major role when it comes to educational offers for angling tourists.
- Speaking of the economic potential of angling tourism, one of the panelists highlighted that healthy fish stocks are of major importance, not just from the environmental perspective, but also as prerequisite for economically sustainable tourism. Against this background, another panelist pointed at flaws of marketing strategies that inhibit balanced tourism development and instead lead to overcrowding of a few specific angling sites.

The CATCH project partners would like to thank all speakers and all conference participants for embarking on the journey to Peenemünde and for all contributions, whether in the form of presentations, in the panel, or in all other discussions.