

Maritime affairs and fisheries



Relevance of gender in the policy area

The European Union (EU) fisheries sector, the third largest in the world, provided approximately 6.6 million tonnes of fish in 2012. About 400,000 people in the EU have a full or part-time job in fishing and fish processing. EU fisheries policy promotes sustainable fish stocks and a sustainable marine ecosystem as a precondition for a competitive European fishing industry. Quotas for fishing have been established for each EU Member State to maintain sustainable fishing stocks. Each year these quotas are renegotiated based on changes in stocks.

Fishing and fish processing are male-dominated activities in Europe. Men provide the main labour on board fishing vessels, and the majority of fishing boats and aquaculture farms are owned by men. However, in most fishing communities women play a key role and make significant contributions to the industry. Despite their contribution, women remain largely invisible and their roles unacknowledged. Indeed, the statistics grossly underestimate the reality of women's work in some of these sectors, and the widespread economic crisis in some Member States has led to a growing number of women engaging in activities in the fishing sector, particularly land-based shellfish gathering, as a means of complementing or ensuring their family income.

According to the European Parliament, in 2014 more than 100,000 women worked in the fisheries sector in Member States. Of these women, 4% work in the extractive sector and in jobs linked to the activities of fishing boats (as net makers, port workers or packers), 30% work in aquaculture (chiefly shellfish gathering on foot), and around 60% work in the processing industry.

Unfortunately, the existing statistical data shows employment within the fisheries sector only if this employment is declared and remunerated. There are many problems associated with the figures available for this visible employment. In addition to women whose status is declared and remunerative, there are many other 'invisible' women workers in the fisheries sector. This category includes spouses, life partners, mothers, sisters and daughters, who play an active role in family fishing or aquaculture enterprises. Unpaid work by women in support of fishing family enterprises has long been seen as significantly important. In some regions, it's probably the major connection that women have with the fishing (i.e. fish capture) subsector. The types of activity in which women are involved range from what are clearly senior management tasks to basic administration (accounting, relations with banks, fisheries administration and organisations, etc.). In addition to this, women are responsible for childminding, household-management tasks and other support provided to a family fishing concern (especially when the husband or male partner is at sea).

All the above aspects are also reflected in the decision-making role women play in the fisheries sector. From the mid-1990s onwards, the spouses of those employed in the fisheries and aquaculture sector began to gather to form independent organisations. This trend continued into the first decade of this century. However, the initiatives undertaken by women's associations vary from country to country and depend on the financial support they receive.

Gender inequality in the fisheries sector is influenced by a set of factors, which are as follows:

- participation of women and men in fisheries subsectors
- women's invisible work in the fisheries sector
- women's participation in decision-making.

Issues of gender inequalities in the policy area

Participation of women and men in fisheries

In terms of employment, the fisheries sector plays a vital role in many European coastal areas and represents almost half of local jobs in some areas. Southern European countries have more jobs in the fisheries sector than northern countries. Fisheries activity involved 116,000 people in the processing industry and 69,000 people in the aquaculture sector in Europe in 2012.

Men dominate employment in the fisheries sector, although employment of women is significant in some specific subsectors. Women are employed in the catching sector, in aquaculture farms (mainly shellfish farming) and processing factories, in fish and shellfish sales and within the bodies that manage the fisheries sector ([Frangoudes, K., 2011], [Zhao, M. et al., 2013a], [Zhao, M. et al., 2013b]). Information from the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF), based on the data gathered under the data collection framework (DCF), indicates that in 2009, 28% of those employed in the aquaculture subsector and 57% of those employed in the processing subsector were women. The number of women employed within the catching subsector of the fisheries industry was not calculated. In all these categories, the existing statistical data only record employment within the fisheries sector (fisheries harvesting, aquaculture and processing). As mentioned above, figures available for employment declared and included might be not reliable, as not all employment is visible.

Women's invisible work in the fisheries sector

As indicated above, besides women who are formally employed in the fisheries sector, there are other women whose work is 'invisible'. This category includes spouses, life partners, mothers, sisters and daughters who play an active role in family fishing or aquaculture enterprises. These women are rarely remunerated and their efforts remain unacknowledged by society. Attempts at European level to recognise their contribution have only recently been successful, therefore they are absent from both national and European statistics.

Access to a legal status for all assisting spouses will provide formal recognition of these women's contribution to fisheries enterprises. It will give fisherwomen greater visibility in society. At the same time, it will push national fisheries authorities to recognise women's participation in the fisheries sector. The 'collaborative spouse' status (EU Directive 86/613) was a major step forward. This status, when available, gives women access to social benefits which in turn provide cover during maternity leave, pension rights, training and many other social benefits. However, this status is not yet available to all eligible women in the European Union. Indeed, some Member States have yet to accord this status to fisherwomen, despite the efforts of fisherwomen's organisations and the available EU directives (such as Directive 2010/41/EU).

Participation in decision-making

For many years, women working in the fishing industry were excluded from professional organisations representing workers in the industry. Male-dominated organisations considered women to be useful only in the social aspects of fisheries (helping families). This is changing gradually. In some countries (Finland, France and Spain), women have been accepted into these traditionally male-dominated organisations through the collaborative spouse status (CSS) or professional recognition. For example, after obtaining professional status, on-foot shellfish gatherers in Galicia built their own organisations, which became members of male-dominated umbrella organisations. Later they were 'accepted' as part of the executive board of the fishers' organisations (Cofradías). French women who opted for the CSS could join male-dominated organisations (fisheries and shellfish farming committees) in place of their husbands.

Fisherwomen's organisations are calling for the inclusion of women in decision-making processes relating to resources management, which are usually dominated by men. The application made by some fisherwomen's organisations to become members of fisheries organisations was unacceptable to their male counterparts as the seats were allocated to the fisheries sector. Women were not deemed to be part of the fisheries sector, as they did not harvest the fish directly. The men were of the view that women could have the seats on the councils that were allocated to non-governmental organisations representing civil society. This possibility was granted a few years later, following a decision by the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE), after a demand formulated by the European network AKTEA. Fisherwomen's organisations now have a greater likelihood of being included in European organisations such as the regional advisory councils (RACs) for fisheries management, which were established in 2004.

Gender equality policy objectives at eu and international level

EU level

European Commission

The European Strategy for equality between women and men for the period 2010 – 2015 refers to women in fisheries. It mentions the need to “support MS [Member States] in promoting gender equality in the EFF [European fisheries fund] programmes by drawing lessons from the mid-term evaluation”. It calls for the establishment “of a pan-European network of women active in the fisheries sector and in coastal regions to improve the visibility of women in this sector and establish a platform for the exchange of best practices”.

The European fisheries fund (2007 – 2014) affirms the principle of the promotion of equal opportunities between women and men in the fisheries sector and fisheries areas (Art. 4g). Several articles explicitly mention the need to promote gender equality:

- Art. 8.2: “Member States shall establish a broad and effective involvement of all the appropriate bodies, in accordance with national rules and practices, taking into account the need to promote equality between men and women”.
- Art. 11: “The Member States and the Commission shall ensure that equality between men and women and the integration of the gender perspective are promoted during the various stages of implementation of the EFF, including the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation”.
- Art. 15.2g: “The national strategic plan ... set[s] out the priorities, objectives, the estimated public financial resources required and deadlines for its implementation with particular regard to the strategy for preserving human resources in the fisheries sector, in particular through upgrading professional skills, securing sustainable employment and enhancing the position and the role of women”.
- Art. 19 (i): “In the preparation of the operational programme ... Member States shall take into account the promotion, during the various stages of the implementation of the operational programme, of gender balance in the fisheries sector through operations aiming, in particular, at reducing gender-based segregation in the labour market”.

- Art. 37 (k): “The EFF may support measures of common interest which are implemented with the active support of operators themselves or by organisations acting on behalf of producers or other organisations recognised by the Member State and which aim, in particular, towards networking and exchange of experience and best practice among organisations promoting equal opportunities between men and women and other stakeholders”.

Moreover, Axis 4 (sustainable development of fishing areas) funds are managed by fisheries local action groups (FLAGs), partnerships between fisheries actors and other local private and public stakeholders. Together, they design and implement a bottom-up strategy that fits and addresses their area’s needs to increase economic, social and environmental welfare. Member States planned a gender dimension under Axis 4, which focused on the economic development of coastal areas, and women could benefit as economic agents of local development.

Most Member States repeated the principle of equal opportunities as it was written into the regulation. Some, however, went further and suggested specific actions to enhance the role of women in fisheries and strengthen the role of fisherwomen in local development. The European fisheries fund, in operation from 2007 – 2014, was replaced in 2014 by the European maritime and fisheries fund (EMFF), which has adopted a similar approach. The gender dimension is recurrent in the new European maritime fisheries fund (2014 – 2020). European fisheries structural funds promote gender equality first within the regulation texts but also through the financial support of projects run by or for women. Point 8 of the EU regulation on the EMFF states: “The Union should, at all stages of implementation of the EMFF, aim to eliminate inequalities and promote equality between men and women, as well as to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.”

In some sections, the regulation gives examples of specific actions in favour of women: “Investment in human capital is also vital to increase the competitiveness and economic performance of fishing and maritime activities ... In recognition of their role in fishing communities, spouses and life partners of self-employed fishermen should, under certain conditions, also be granted support for professional training, lifelong learning and the dissemination of knowledge, and for networking that contributes to their professional development” (European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, 2013, point 31).

To promote human capital, the creation of jobs and social dialogue, the EMFF calls on Member States to support “networking and exchange of experiences and best practices between stakeholders, including among organisations promoting equal opportunities between men and women, promoting the role of women in fishing communities and promoting under-represented groups involved in small-scale coastal fishing or in on-foot fishing.” This action refers to fisheries and aquaculture Articles 29 and 50. For the first time, and in accordance with Regulation 2010/41/EU, the EMFF expands the scope of its support “to spouses of self-employed fishermen or, where and insofar as recognised by national law, the life partners of self-employed fishermen, under the conditions laid down in point (b) of Article 2 of Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council. The same principle is available in fisheries and aquaculture.”

European Parliament

In 2005, the European Parliament adopted a resolution related to women’s networks in fisheries, agriculture and diversification. The resolution stated that “women’s active participation in fisheries-related activities helps to preserve cultural traditions and specific practices and aids the survival of their communities, thereby ensuring the protection of cultural diversity in these regions”. The parliament called on the Commission to produce a report identifying the nature, extent, objectives and activities of women’s networks in fisheries throughout the EU. The Commission was to examine specific measures to provide active support for both the development of existing women’s networks, particularly where they are less consolidated, and their creation where no such networks exist. The parliament also called, inter alia, for actions to increase and disseminate information on the situation of women in the various areas that make up the fisheries sector:

- to support existing women’s networks and the creation of new networks
- to develop training and access to funding and loans to encourage entrepreneurship
- to strengthen women’s effective participation in representative, decision-making and advisory fisheries bodies at European, national and regional level.

Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity gave visibility to women's unpaid contribution within family enterprises, including fisheries. Assisting spouses or life partners of fishers are now able to contribute to social security, which gives them access to social benefits including pensions, maternity leave, training and access to professional fishers' organisations. Spouses and partners of fisherwomen in some Member States obtained this status thanks to the directive.

Directive 2010/41/EU on the application of the equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity (and repealing Council Directive 86/613/ECC) provides the legal framework to recognise women's informal contribution to fisheries and aquaculture enterprises. The directive is to be applied to national laws.

The directive is to be effectively implemented in the fisheries sector with the objective of recognising women's invisible contribution and offering them the opportunity to access social benefits such as pension rights, maternity leave, training and decision-making. Suggestions to undertake gender studies at the local level to identify women's activities within fisheries enterprises and quantify this activity are provided. A document describing women's activities and time spent should be produced to convince the authorities regarding women's involvement in the sector, leading to legislative modifications and allowing women to gain collaborative spouse status. The EU directive should be applied to national law. Checks should also be in place to ensure that it's also being applied to women in the fisheries sector.

In 2014, the European Parliament approved a resolution on specific actions in the common fisheries policy for developing the role of women. In this resolution, the European Parliament urges the Commission to, inter alia:

- launch a specific statistical programme for regions that depend on fishing, paying particular attention to artisanal and coastal fishing, traditional fishing methods and specific marketing channels
- improve the collection and analysis of statistical data on employment in the fisheries sector, broken down by gender
- ensure the collection of gender-disaggregated data also covering the catch sector and introducing new indicators
- establish clear definitions regarding the statistical indicators used for the collection of workforce employment data in fisheries, aquaculture and related sectors

- grant legal and social recognition of the role played by women in the fisheries and aquaculture sector and in the sustainable development of areas that depend on fishing
- recognise that the work carried out by women helps to improve the traceability of fishery products
- foster and provide financial support for the establishment of women's associations through national and European women's networks, in order to increase the visibility of women in the fishing sector and to facilitate access to funding for women's organisations in fisheries, aquaculture and related sectors
- promote and strengthen women's effective participation in consultative bodies, advisory councils and decision-making, representative, regional and professional bodies, guaranteeing their participation in decision-making in both public and private sectors on equal terms with men.

International level

Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 (1992) on oceans and coastal areas is an international policy document with a focus on women in fisheries. It calls on states to support the sustainability of small-scale coastal fisheries by taking into account the interests of fish workers, ship owners, women, local communities and indigenous peoples. In 1992, the convention on biological diversity reiterated the need for the participation of women at all levels of policymaking and implementation for the conservation of biological diversity. The 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement (straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks) calls on states to ensure access to subsistence fisheries for artisan and small-scale coastal fishers and women fish workers.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) pays attention to women working in the fisheries sector. Actions could be taken to promote women's economic independence including employment, and to eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty. This can be achieved through changes to economic structures and ensuring equal access to the labour market for all women, including those in the fisheries sector.

In several objectives, actions for improvement in the situation of women are suggested, in particular in terms of combating poverty, eradicating illiteracy and facilitating access to resources:

- Strategic objectives A.1. Review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and

development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty: formulate and implement policies and programmes that enhance the access of women agricultural and fisheries producers.

- Strategic objectives B.3. Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education: increase training in technical, managerial, agricultural extension and marketing areas for women in agriculture, fisheries, industry and business, arts and crafts, to increase income-generating opportunities and women's participation in economic decision-making.
- Strategic objectives K.3. Strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women. Provide technical assistance to women, particularly in developing countries, in the sectors of agriculture, fisheries, small enterprises, trade and industry to ensure the continuing promotion of human resource development and the development of environmentally sound technologies and women's entrepreneurship.

Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

Gender equality is central to the mandate of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). This is to achieve food security for all by improving agricultural productivity, levels of nutrition and the lives of rural populations. This means the FAO will work towards gender equality in all areas of its work:

- food and nutrition security
- agriculture and consumer protection
- economic and social development
- fisheries and aquaculture
- forestry, natural resource management and environment
- technical cooperation
- knowledge exchange
- research and extension.

Working simultaneously towards gender equality and the empowerment of women as agricultural and fisheries producers is central to the FAO's effort to accomplish its goals. The FAO policy on gender equality serves as a framework to guide the FAO's work on gender equality. It supports women's roles in agriculture and fisheries, and mainstreams gender equity in all of its programmes.

The FAO's voluntary guidelines for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication, approved by the FAO in 2014, represent a crucial shift in the conception of the fisheries sector. Worldwide small-scale fisheries contribute about half of global fish catches, and up to two thirds when catches for direct human consumption are included. Inland fisheries are particularly important and "small-scale fisheries employ more than 90% of the world's capture fishers and fish workers, about half of whom are women". The guidelines recognise:

- the importance of adhering to human rights standards and gender equality as fundamental to development
- the vital role of women in small-scale fisheries, and that equal rights and opportunities should be promoted
- the importance of encouraging women's leadership and the elimination of prejudicial gender-based customary practices.

Policy cycle in maritime affairs and fisheries

How and when? 'Maritime Affairs and Fisheries' and the integration of the gender dimension into the policy cycle

The gender dimension can be integrated in all phases of the policy cycle. For a detailed description of how gender can be mainstreamed in each phase of the policy cycle visit EIGE's Gender mainstreaming platform.

Below, you can find useful resources and practical examples for mainstreaming gender into research policy. They are organised according to the most relevant phase of the policy cycle they may serve.

Practical examples of gender mainstreaming in maritime affairs and fisheries

France

In France a fisheries law was debated in parliament in 1995. Spouses of fishers initiated the issue of formal recognition of women's contribution to the family fishing enterprise. In their view, the legalisation of the collaborative spouse status (CSS) would give women an opportunity to represent their family enterprise and community on representative bodies. It would also give them access to social security and other social benefits – in the agriculture sector spouses were already entitled to such a status. Fisherwomen's associations lobbied politicians at the national level and obtained the CSS with the fisheries law of 1997. This decision gave women the opportunity to join fishers' organisations and access training schemes, the right to maternity leave, and to build pension rights.

Spain

At the beginning of the 1990s, 90% of shellfish gatherers in Galicia were women. They were working informally (illegally) and without any recognition, social benefits or access to professional fishers' organisations. With the support of the Galician fisheries authorities, women who gathered shellfish on foot succeeded in regulating their activity through a licensing system, providing each permit-holder with a quota. Professional training programmes were organised by the regional authorities to improve women's knowledge and skills through EU structural funds. Women understood that it's important to become professional fishers and have access to a social security system. They also built their own local organisations and became members of fishers' organisations. Currently some of these women are leading fishers' organisations.

Following the example of women shellfish gatherers, another group of women undertook the same process for professionalisation: women net makers in Galicia. The work of these women was very poorly paid, with no access to opportunities that would help them improve their professional skills; as a result, many of them gave up the work. Once more, with the support of regional fisheries authorities, meetings were organised, bringing these women together at the regional level to discuss their working conditions and their ambitions for the future. Following this process a regional organisation of women net makers was established with the intention of gaining professional recognition and improving working conditions. Through government-sponsored training programmes, net makers aimed to improve their skills and explore new business opportunities.

Timeline

The key milestones in EU fisheries policy are presented below.

Treaty of Rome

Treaty of Rome calls for a common policy for fisheries.

1957 - 1957

Principle of equal access to Member States' waters

Principle agreed of equal access to Member States' waters except for a coastal band.

1970 - 1970

Extension of fishing rights

Extension of fishing rights from 12 to 200 nautical miles.

1976 - 1976

Common fisheries policy (CFP)

Common fisheries policy (CFP) formally established; first regulation agreed, and introduction of total allowable catches (TACs), quotas and structural policy.

1983 - 1983

First review of the CFP, and intention to redress the balance between stocks and resources.

1992 - 1992

Report of the United Nations conference on environment and development (

Report of the United Nations conference on environment and development (Rio de Janeiro, 3 – 14 June 1992), chapter 17. Protection of the oceans, all kinds of seas, including enclosed and semi-enclosed seas, and coastal areas and the protection, rational use and development of their living resources, A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. II), 13 August 1992. Read it [here](#).

1992 - 1992

United Nations, Convention on biological diversity

Read it [here](#).

1992 - 1992

Agreement for the implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

United Nations. Agreement for the implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks, A/CONF.164/37, 8 September 1995. Read it [here](#).

1995 - 1995

Council of the European Communities, Green Paper

Council of the European Communities, Green Paper: The future of the common fisheries policy (COM 135 final 1), 20 March 2001.

2001 - 2001

Second review of the CFP

Second review of the CFP; revised basic regulation to protect and conserve marine ecosystems; structural reform with public funds and creation of regional advisory councils (RACs).

2002 - 2002

Resolution of the European Parliament

European Parliament, Resolution of the Parliament related to women's networks in fisheries, agriculture and diversification (2004/2263(INI)). Read it [here](#).

2004 - 2004

Council Regulation (EC) No 1198/2006

Council Regulation (EC) No 1198/2006 of 27 July 2006 on the European fisheries fund. Read it [here](#).

2006 - 2006

Third revision of CFP

Third revision of CFP; conservation and fleet policy pillars.

2012 - 2012

FAO

FAO, policy on gender equality attaining food security goals in agriculture and rural development. Read it [here](#).

2013 - 2013

Motion for a European Parliament resolution on specific actions in the common fisheries policy for developing the role of women

European Parliament. Motion for a European Parliament resolution on specific actions in the common fisheries policy for developing the role of women (2013/2150(INI)). Committee on Fisheries Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A7-0070/2014) 30.1.2014. Read it [here](#).

2013 - 2013

Regulation (EU) No 508/2014

Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on the European maritime and fisheries fund. Read it [here](#).

2014 - 2014

FAO, voluntary guidelines for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries

FAO, voluntary guidelines for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication. Read it [here](#).

2014 - 2014

Current policy priorities in the fisheries sector at EU level

At fisheries level the most important priority is the implementation of the new common fisheries policy (CFP) and the financial aid – European maritime and fisheries fund (EMFF) – related to this policy. The new CFP has been effective since January 2014. The European Commission is supervising the preparation of the national strategic plans and the operational programmes related to the fund. The EMFF, as all the other development funds, have been operational since the beginning of 2015.

The CFP's four main policy areas are:

- 1 Management of fish stocks: the aim is to ensure high long-term fishing yields for all stocks by 2015 where possible, and at the latest by 2020. This is referred to as the maximum sustainable yield. Another increasingly important aim is to reduce unwanted catches and wasteful practices to the minimum or avoid them altogether. The management will be more focused on regionalisation and stakeholder consultation. Fisheries management can take the form of input control, output control or a combination of both (European Commission, DG MARE, 2014b).
- 2 Alignment with international policy: European fishing boats currently catch more than 25% of the fish outside EU waters. Around 8% of these catches (2004 – 2006) are made under fishing agreements with countries outside the EU, while another 20% are taken on the high seas, mainly in regions under the care of regional fisheries management organisations.

Alignment with the Law of the Sea and International Fisheries Law and good governance in the global fisheries sector includes close cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations system, including the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) (European Commission, DG MARE, 2014c).

- 3 Market and trade: sustainability and self-regulation by the stakeholders in the sectors are important elements of the new market and trade policy in fisheries.
 - 4 The funding of the policy: the EMFF has a budget of around €5.749 billion for the period 2014 – 2020. It will support the rebuilding of fish stocks and the progressive elimination of wasteful discarding. Priorities for the new fund are improving fisheries data collection – allowing decisions to be based on robust evidence – and reducing the impact of fisheries on the marine environment. It will also focus on fisheries control programmes to ensure that the rules on responsible and sustainable fishing are complied with. The EMFF will also focus on the integrated maritime policy by investing in identifying and addressing barriers that hinder growth in coastal communities and emerging maritime sectors (European Commission, DG MARE, 2014e).
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Want to know more?