

# FISHERNET

## European Network of Fishing Cultural Heritage

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### The Wealth of Sea and Coast

On the 4th of May, when night stays as bright as day in Iceland, the staff of the Stefansson Arctic Institute welcomed their partners in the Fishernet project.

Following an informative journey through initiatives related to fishing cultural heritage in the capital Reykjavík, including meeting Iceland's sole boat building and maintenance apprentice, young Jón Ragnar Daðason, we found ourselves in the herring town of Siglufjörður (English: mast fiord), Iceland's northernmost commercial town.

In 1903 Norwegian herring fishermen settled in Siglufjörður and shared knowledge with the locals, thus starting the "Silver of the Sea" period, a time of great prosperity in which the town flourished. The small hamlet turned into the fifth most densely populated town in Iceland, boasting a population of 3000. Everything evolved around herring: catching it, laying it down in barrels with salt and spices or reducing it into fish oil. Dubbed the "Atlantic Klondike", prospectors came and went, sometimes leaving wealthy, sometimes poor. In treacherous weather European ships would seek shelter, and life could resemble the multicultural buzz of big cities.

Today about 1500 people live in



Local grassroots initiative for young people © Embla Eir Oddsdóttir

Siglufjörður and things have changed. In the town centre we visited the prize-winning Herring Era Museum where the charming curator served us dinner on the pier while local bards recited Icelandic poetry set in traditional metric form. People travel from all over Iceland and abroad to enjoy the festivities in the summer when gutting and salting of herring is re-enacted with music, spirit and magic in the air. We then sailed

around the Polar circle to the town of Húsavík, renowned as one of the best whale-watching centres in the world.

The Fishernet partners visit culminated in our seminar "The Wealth of Sea and Coast", formally opened by Mr. Kristján L. Möller, the Minister for Fisheries and Transport. The event was well attended and a small souvenir bookmark was presented to all participants. The souvenir was a joint initiative of the Fishernet project at the Stefansson Arctic Institute and a local grass roots initiative to support unemployed young people exploring new skills and opportunities. The well-crafted, fish-shaped bookmark is made from local wood and fish skin, and was so well received that it has gone into wider production and can be found in a variety of outlets all around Iceland. A fine beginning for the youngsters.



The Herring Era Museum in Siglufjörður © Steingrímur Kristinsson

FISHERNET is a three year project involving collaborators from six European countries. It aims to investigate best practices for collection and dissemination of fishing cultural heritage and to establish a network for ongoing development of fishing heritage opportunities and maintenance of fishing communities. This newsletter provides up-to-date information about the programme and fishing heritage issues.

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VALORISATION (verb): In a European Union context the term valorisation means sharing and trialling the innovative best practices resulting from projects. Using and benefiting from these and incorporating them into general training and learning experiences.

For full EC definition see [http://ec.europa.eu/dqs/education\\_culture/valorisation/doc/def\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dqs/education_culture/valorisation/doc/def_en.pdf)



«This bulletin does not represent the point of view of the European Commission. The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors»



## Slettnes Lighthouse: 71° 05`33"N



*Slettnes Lighthouse workers just before completion of construction in 1904 © Gamvik Museum*

fully automatic in 2005. Slettnes was destroyed by German troops in 1944, and was rebuilt in 1945-48. The architects Blakstad and Munthe-Kaas designed the new tower 39 meters high, with 9 stairs and 139 steps. You can visit this lighthouse, the northernmost on the European mainland, to have a coffee in the café or just to see the exhibits in the tower while viewing the white waves of the Barents Sea.

The Museum for Coastal Heritage and Reconstruction in Finnmark recently took responsibility for administration of the lighthouse at Slettnes for this summer season. This is the start of a longer process, especially inspired by participation in Fishernet.

After the lighthouses became automatic, the Coastal Administration chose to sell or hire out several lighthouses, principally to take care of the cultural heritage that this infrastructure represents.

Slettnes lighthouse started operating on September 15th 1905. Until 1973, the workers lived there with their families. Later, only staff members stayed during their shifts and the lighthouse became



*Slettnes Lighthouse May 2010 © Thorstein Johnsrud*

## O Pindo - A public face to fishing heritage

A week full of activities for children and adults, "A Sea of Possibilities", was offered by Fishernet to local people and visitors from 19<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> June 2010 in O Pindo, Galicia.

The event focused on whaling in the region, an activity which, although it has now stopped, still has a visible presence. Former workers, experts on the topic and decision makers came together to share and discuss their experiences, knowledge and opinions with the audience. People could also enjoy related music, films, literature and food, as well

as legends and stories told by the locals in visits to the old processing factory and



other places relevant to whaling.

A photography contest and workshops about knots and net-making, and responsible fishing, were also organised and widely attended.

Alongside all the activities an exhibition about Fishernet was provided including a display item on the evolution of whaling in Iceland - from fishing activity to tourist industry - as an example of best practice.

*People attended on-location story telling © Confraría do Pindo*

## A Sea of Knowledge - European Maritime Day

On May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2009 an event was organised to commemorate European Maritime Day in Galicia. “A Sea of Knowledge” was a joint initiative involving three EU-funded projects focused on different European maritime heritage elements: DORNA (Planned and Sustainable Development of Resources in the Atlantic), NEA2 (Water Sports in the Atlantic Area) and Fishernet.

Galicia’s maritime heritage is rich and widespread but is still at risk of being lost. Conserving and valorising this heritage is the common element shared by the three organising projects, with spe-

cial emphasis on fostering its potential to be used and generate income.



In the event, opened by the Galician Sea Minister, Fishernet used the opportunity to launch a new book about traditional fishing boats in the region. The day also offered a session on maritime poetry reading and visits to traditional boat-building companies on traditional sailing boats.

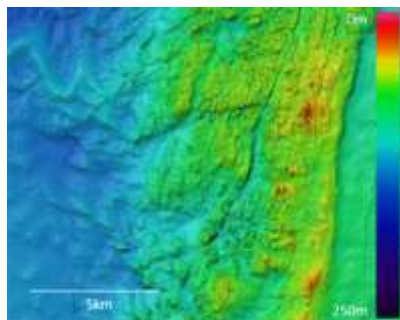
A Fishernet exhibition about the local fishing heritage was displayed in the local fish auction hall where the event was held.

*Presentations were well attended and received © Confraria do Pindo*

## Changing Status of Fishing Knowledge

Traditionally, knowledge of good fishing grounds and of local sea and weather conditions have been highly valuable and hard-won skills handed down through generations of fishermen. Modern information technology seems set to change this core part of fishing culture and heritage.

In today’s computer age, ships at sea often have easy internet access and keep track of all that was previously a closely guarded secret. Weather satellites beam down instant records of weather across the oceans and feed ever-more detailed and accurate weather forecasts. Medium



*Example of northern UK bathymetric data © Aquatera*

-scale and larger fishing vessels are now often fitted with electronic tags that

allow them to be tracked whilst they are at sea, providing a previously unavailable insight into where they are. Our knowledge of the sea and seabed itself is advancing hugely with new mapping techniques that record every rock and canyon and there is the constant march of fish detection technology able to look ahead of a vessel and guide its net to the right place to catch all the fish in a shoal.

This technological innovation is very helpful to modern fishing and may have even saved lives. In parallel, it is changing the nature of fishing and future fishing heritage for ever.

## Diversity and Convergence of Fishing Heritage - Cyprus and beyond

The Fishernet project provides an opportunity to better appreciate the similarities and contrasts that exist amongst European sea fishing traditions. The following anecdotes are small examples linked with Cyprus.

The clear blue waters of Cyprus attract millions of tourists but fish are scarce. Consequently, the price of local fish is well above those in more prolific fishing areas. Tourists also thus mainly dine on imported seafood rather than Cypriot produce.

Catch size challenges are exacerbated by invasion of the poisonous *Lagocephalus* fish from the Red Sea, which destroys nets and has little sale value. By com-



*Preparing local catch for sale © Aquatera*

parison, in northern Norway the invasive “king crab” is to some extent welcome due to its high catch value.

Boats lie at the heart of any sea fishing culture and in Cyprus records of fishing

vessels and sea-going activity go back well before the times of the ancient Greeks. There are thousands of modern leisure craft but traditional wooden boat building skills are under threat, often no more secure in areas where fishing boats are predominant. Recent EU regulations favour a series of different shapes and sizes of vessels so traditional vessels have in many places been scrapped or sold on for non-fishing uses.

It is hoped that increased sharing of knowledge, through growth of the Fishernet network, will help develop solutions for tackling issues that fisheries communities are now facing.

## Bulgarian Black Sea Lighthouses - 2010 project

Fishermen undertake one of the most dangerous lines of work, and for them lighthouses are beacons of hope along with being warnings of danger. As part of the Fishernet project activities in Bulgaria a poster of the Black Sea lighthouses is being produced. This will tie in with International Lighthouses Day which will be celebrated during August

2010 around the world. At the moment, 51 nations and 450 maritime lighthouses have already expressed their support. Black Sea institutions and municipalities are taking part and a lighthouses calendar has been published.

In 2010, in partnership with the Black Sea municipalities, the Europartners

2000 foundation is organizing the celebrations for a range of major events to be held in all the municipalities, such as World Oceans and Sea Day, the International Year of the Sailor, the International Day of the Black Sea, the International Weekend of Maritime Lighthouses (August 20-21), the Day of the Bulgarian Black Sea Fleet and the Week of the Sea.



The lighthouse in St. Anastasia, Black Sea © Morski Vesti

### Bulgarian Schools - Fisheries competition

As part of the Fishernet project, the Europartners 2000 Foundation has launched a national essay writing, photography and painting competition for secondary school students from the Black Sea towns of Bulgaria. Schools from inland Bulgaria are also taking part.

More than 20 secondary schools are going to participate. Some entries will be composed in English. During their summer holidays students can visit, photograph and paint fishing cultural heritage sites in the coastal area.

Awards and certificates for each participant will be presented by the evaluation **teams of teachers and parents' representatives**. The final competition ceremony will be held in October 2010.

The best essays, photos and paintings will be published in a book and uploaded onto the internet.

### European Funding - for Romanian fisheries communities

On 25 March 2010 the EU announced **the availability of €100m** for the development of alternative economic

activities in Romanian fishing communities. Available under Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund, the money can be accessed by local communities, and consortia with local partners, for proposals to improve living standards and prevent emigration. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mihail Dumitru, advised that partnerships can receive up to €30,000 to develop and present a proposal. Local governments are eligible for 100% financing while private partnerships are entitled to 50%. Proposals will be evaluated by the end of the year so that implementation can commence in 2011.