

## ***Sustainable coastal fishery in the Baltic Sea in Jurkalne, Latvia***

Jurkalne in Latvia can be described as an example of how to activate and find out ways of necessary solutions for solving the problem – the fishery crisis. The Jurkalne parish is on the open-sea Baltic coast. An initiative of the Latvian Fishermen Federation and the local fishermen union has been launched.

The Jurkalne parish is placed in the Ventspils district (Western part of Latvia) at the Baltic Sea coast. The territory is only 99.6 sq. km and the number of inhabitants about 420 people. The coastal landscape is characterized by steep cliffs – about 20 m high, pine - tree forests, meadows and grey dunes. The Jurkalne parish is the smallest in Latvia, but at the same time one of the important ecotourism centres. The coastal fishery is also a significant source of employment for the inhabitants. The level of unemployment is low – less than 5%. The fishery, specially the coastal fishery and to some extent also the recreative fishery and its sustainable development is proposed to be one of the main directions of economic activities in Jurkalne for the next 5 years.

### **Long-term benefit**

The long-term benefit can be seen in the interaction of scientists, local authorities, teachers and environmentalists. A local coastal fish resources management system is established today. The Jurkalne region fishermen union deals with the organizing of coastal fishery, its administration, the protecting of fish resources and elaborating recommendations for legislation. At the same time scientists from Latvian Fisheries Research institute carry out coastal fish surveys (integrated coastal fish monitoring) three times every year. Periodically school children from Latvia have been involved in coastal research activities through the children's ecological summer camps.

### **Capacity building and institutional strengthening**

2 years ago a project was launched in order to strengthen the local institutions concerning coastal fisheries when the Council of Jurkalne Fishermen was established in connection with the local municipality. The capacity for environmental management for this area was improved. The Jurkalne area is also a reference area for coastal fish monitoring in

Latvia included in state monitoring programs and in the state action plan. Obtained scientific information concerning fish population structure, stock size, recruitment, health condition and pollution level with contaminants is relevant for local authorities and fishermen. Annual seminars for coastal fishermen are organized, during which the research results, state fisheries policy, fish resources protecting measures, activities of the Latvian Fishermen Federation are presented and discussed with interested stakeholders and fishermen. The seminars also provide for capacity building. However, capacity building needs to be enhanced among certain key stakeholders, e.g. fishermen, and further links need to be improved with the central and the regional government organizations in the area.

### **Sustainability**

Many of the activities of the local fishermen, authorities and fishermen NGO's are sustainable, especially in view of the establishment of the Council of Jurkalne Fishermen. Scientific knowledge is systematically transferred to local administrators and key stakeholders. All social and educational activities contribute to sustainable private sector activities especially in the field of coastal fishery and to some extent in ecotourism, both creating ecologically -friendly income sources in the local economic environment.

### **Transferability**

The local fishermen activities of Jurkalne parish are possible to transfer to other coastal municipalities of Latvia. That is mainly because the coastal fishery is a relatively important economical branch and has ancient roots and old traditions in the coastal areas in comparison with some other European countries today. The volume of experience in the Latvian local coastal fish resources management today is not big but nevertheless fishermen from neighbouring municipalities permanently obtain the oncoming information and try to realize in their own parishes and towns.

### **Consensus building**

The permanent activities have helped to develop consensus within certain groups of stakeholders and individual fishermen involved in fishery. Conflict issues were defined, discussions were initiated and compromise agreements between bigger and smaller fishermen negotiated and partially implemented. The rights of local fishermen are

protected; the increase of fishermen today is stopped although sometimes conflicts occur. In many cases the Council of Jurkalne Fishermen have acted as moderators and have helped to facilitate the consensus building process.

### **Participatory process**

Participatory approaches have no long tradition in Latvia and existing fishermen NGOs have a limited membership, about 200 people. Consultations concerning coastal fish resources, state policy and fishery have been held in two levels; within the local Jurkalne area fishermen union and local stakeholders groups and secondly during meetings in Riga with the National Fisheries Board and with the Latvian Fishermen Federation Council. There is a new tradition to held annual seminars in Jurkalne which provide the owners of the fishery enterprises and the individual fishermen with the opportunity to discuss issues and findings in an open forum.

### **Effective and efficient communication process**

Effective communication is a key component of the Jurkalne fishermen activities and has included one-on-one discussions and dialogues, seminars and meetings. Periodically there has been extensive media coverage of the activities in the Jurkalne area. Some activities have been included in special national radio program, central and regional newspaper articles and leaflets for tourists. Several foreign TV companies have made documentaries about the coastal fishery in the Jurkalne area. Presentation of the Jurkalne coastal fishery and social activities of local fishermen seems to be a good example in Latvia although is rather difficult all the time to inform society, because fishery is a rather hard and long-time occupation.

### **Strengthening local identities**

The activities of the Jurkalne Fishermen Council, helping stakeholder groups solve their own problems, also help to promote self-sufficiency, and thereby strengthen local identity. Some of the leaders and owners of the coastal fishery owners started to improve fishery equipment, selectiveness of fishing gears and tried to start with other business connected with coastal fishery. They actively work with the documentation for EU funding for local projects after the Latvian accession. The building of a fishermen guest house and a small fish processing plant will be finished shortly in the centre of Jurkalne.

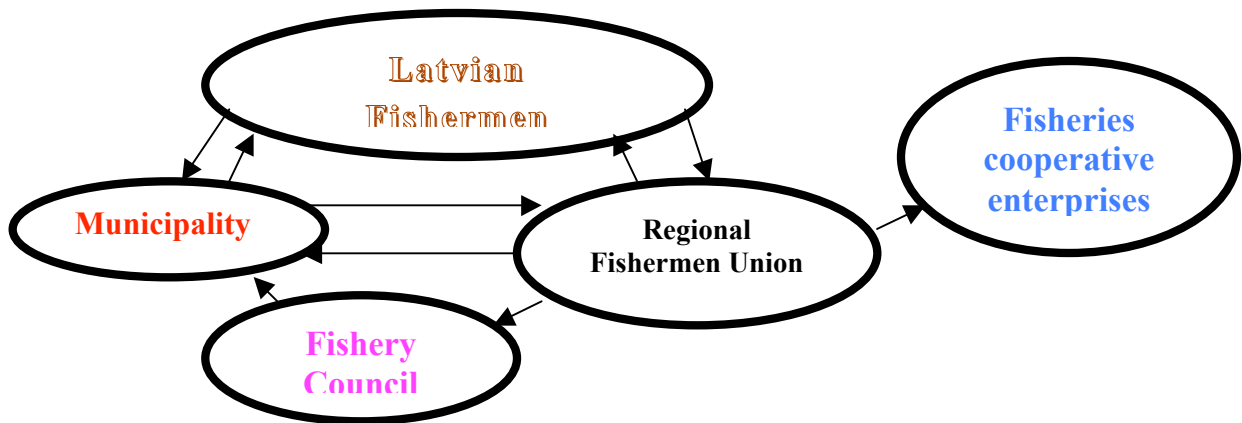
Improvement of knowledge in different courses, seminars and other activities strengthens the local identity and the development of fish trade.

The activities of the Jurkalne Fishermen Council have helped to shape common fishery policy at a more local level. Also proposals to improve the situation with fishery resources are regularly discussed in meetings with the National Fisheries Board and considered. After the annual seminars proposals for action are objectives for changes, e.g. in fishing rules or in the Fisheries Law. Today the coastal fishery in Latvia is limited by 2 nautical miles from the coast. It is a rather sharp restriction because in EU mostly fishery is not divided in two parts such as in Latvia – coastal and open-sea fishery. The Jurkalne Fishermen Union urges to extend the coastal fishery zone up to 12 nautical miles as in Sweden, Finland and Denmark. The Latvian Fishermen Federation is acting on proposals of local fishermen unions and acts as a moderator and an active roundtable partner in discussions with authorities of government to gradually realise these proposals.

Today activities are at a too early stage to include the regional dimension, because the contacts with fishermen from other countries are not so good. The activities in Jurkalne parish have been carried out mainly on empiric experience or information obtained from only several information sources. Unfortunately the Latvian Fishermen Federation has not yet their own homepage in the global infonet system.

The Jurkalne Fishermen Union and Council include all active fishermen in this area. The coastal fishery is a rather hard and dangerous occupation, especially in open-sea areas where strong winds and storms are rather common. 99% of Latvian coastal fishermen are men but in Jurkalne the situation is a little bit different because one of the active fishermen and leaders in Jurkalne Fishermen Council is a 55-year old woman, Daina Dadze, which is also a good example for gender issues.

**The pattern of coastal fish resources local management, the Jurkalne municipality example.**



The Fishermen Unions realizes following functions according to local regulation concerning coastal fishery:

- 1) leads the Fisheries Council consisting of local fishermen and officials,
- 2) summarizes proposals of fishermen for further commitment to Latvian Fishermen Federation or National Fisheries Board,
- 3) organizes and realizes seminars or fishermen meetings,
- 4) carries out fisheries self-control in coastal or internal waters,
- 5) coordinates projects and develops connections with ecotourism.

The Local Fisheries Council has rights to:

- 1) estimate the applications of fishermen enterprises or individual fishermen for fishery rights,
- 2) make recommendations for confirmation or refusal of fishing rights based on criteria as payments in municipal budget, new job vacancies, fishery or trade violations,
- 3) control the money from fishermen licenses in the municipal budget.

The Fisheries Councils are implementing the principles of professionalism and democracy. The experience and results in coastal fishery are good example for other coastal municipalities.