

“RESPONSIBLE”

Sharing responsibilities in fisheries management

In its Green Paper on the future of the Common Fisheries Policy (2001), the Commission recognised the lack of stakeholder involvement in policy shaping and implementation. It stated the need to adapt and improve the governance of the CFP with a view not only to open up the policy-making process to interested parties but also to promote greater accountability for all those involved through a clearer definition of responsibilities at the European, national and local level.

The Commission therefore proposed:

- *the establishment of regional advisory committees in order to involve more effectively the stakeholders in policy-making;*
- *the decentralisation of certain management responsibilities in order to address local and emergency situations.*

The research undertaken in the **RESPONSIBLE** project aimed to contribute to good governance in European fisheries management by

- evaluating the division of responsibilities within the CFP and in the fisheries management of Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom and Norway; and by
- investigating decentralisation and delegation of responsibilities.

Throughout the project, the five criteria, as suggested in the EU communication on governance (EU 2001), were followed: Openness, Participation, Accountability, Effectiveness and Coherence.

There are many different ways in which responsibilities in management can be shared between EU/national authorities and stakeholder groups. In recent years the concept of co-management has been widely recognised as a promising option for reform of fisheries governance institutions.

In fisheries, co-management is commonly defined as a dynamic partnership, using the capacities and interests of user groups, complemented by the ability of

the fisheries administration to provide enabling legislation and administrative assistance. The fisheries administration and user groups share responsibilities and competence for fisheries management. Co-management involves delegation of management responsibilities, where user groups take responsibility for management tasks. It covers various partnership arrangements, degrees of power-sharing and the integration of user groups.

Depending on the nature of user involvement in decision-making processes, different conceptual types of co-management can be distinguished. During the RESPONSIBLE project, the fisheries management systems of the European Union and the six individual countries included in the study were examined. Three questions were at the core of the national and EU case studies:

- What is the actual division of power and responsibilities within these systems?
- To what extent, and how, have management responsibilities (already) been devolved within the CFP and the six countries studied?
- What, if any, is the role of user groups and other stakeholders in the management process and

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how does this affect the legitimacy of the system?

Few industries have such a deep fishing history as the fishing industry. Fisheries are production, commerce, and culture in one. Volatile resources and markets create dynamics that pose a constant challenge to governance. It is also to be expected that each country would have their unique way of governing their fisheries reflecting these broader institutional traditions and patterns of organisation. Thus, devolution of management authority and regulatory functions will have to occur within very different national contexts and as such, institutional reform will always have to be tailored to the particular socio-political and institutional circumstances that prevail in a given country.

The analysis of the various proposed fisheries management models has confirmed what would then be the hypothesis: **there is no definitive alternative management model that can be applied – given the wide spectrum of circumstances surrounding fisheries activity in the six countries included in the study or at least, none as clear-cut as the models proposed for regionalisation/devolution a decade ago.**

There are significant differences between these proposals for

more decentralised fisheries management systems. On the one hand, we are faced with proposals that are clearly inclined towards a greater decentralisation of fisheries management, such as in the United Kingdom and Spain; others, such as those currently on the table in the Netherlands and Norway, propose more timid reforms, whilst the case of France is at the opposite extreme, with no suggestion of further devolvement of management responsibilities.

However, there are points of common ground amongst all the alternative models that point towards certain changes. Key elements would be:

- an active presence of the local level in management;
- a decentralisation of certain functions towards organisations run by professionals; and, finally,
- an increase in participation.

To summarise, the various alternative fisheries management systems proposed require improved efficiency in the application of policies and highlight the importance of local level involvement, whilst providing the opportunity to confer greater legitimacy on policies through improved participation.

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