



# FAMENET

## AT1.2

### CLLD achievements in Spain FAMENET Report

**Version 1.0**

**February 2025**

# FAMENET

## FAMENET subtitle

**Copyright notice:**

© European Union, 2025

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION – Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

**Disclaimer:**

The information and views set out in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Commission. The Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this report. Neither the Commission nor any person acting on the Commission's behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.

The approach and methodologies proposed do not constitute legal interpretation and are not binding. They are considered recommendations by technical experts to enhance exchange among stakeholders and to enrich the body of knowledge on EMFAF implementation.

**Recommended citation:**

EUROPEAN COMMISSION - Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Unit D.3 (2022): FAMENET report on CLLD achievements in Spain, Brussels

**Authors:**

Marta EDREIRA, Margot van Soetendael, Monica Veronesi Burch.

**Contact:**

FAMENET

Boulevard de la Woluwe 2

1150 Brussels

[info@famenet.eu](mailto:info@famenet.eu)

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	2
1 Introduction .....	3
1.1 Background .....	3
1.2 Purpose and target groups .....	3
1.3 Structure of the document .....	3
2 Methodology .....	3
3 Findings: FLAG capacity to involve local stakeholders in the development of their areas .....	5
3.1 Local stakeholders mobilised to drive CLLD implementation .....	5
3.2 A team on the ground providing outreach and tailor-made support .....	11
3.3 Delivery systems .....	16
4 Findings: FLAGs helping to empower local stakeholders .....	<b>¡Error! Marcador no definido.</b>
4.1 Supporting action on the ground .....	<b>¡Error! Marcador no definido.</b>
4.2 Developing knowledge and skills .....	<b>¡Error! Marcador no definido.</b>
4.3 Strengthening social capital .....	<b>¡Error! Marcador no definido.</b>
4.4 Contributing to improved governance .....	<b>¡Error! Marcador no definido.</b>
5 Findings: FLAGs bridging the gap between Europe and its citizens ...	<b>¡Error! Marcador no definido.</b>
6 Findings: FLAGs helping to improve socio-economic and environmental dynamics in coastal communities .....	<b>¡Error! Marcador no definido.</b>
6.1 Strengthening socio-economic fabric .....	<b>¡Error! Marcador no definido.</b>
6.2 Boosting local economies .....	<b>¡Error! Marcador no definido.</b>
6.3 Contributing to environment protection and conservation of natural resources .....	<b>¡Error! Marcador no definido.</b>
7 Conclusions and lessons .....	<b>¡Error! Marcador no definido.</b>

## 1 Introduction

Funded by the different European Structural and Investment Funds, Community-led Local Development (CLLD) is a participative, bottom-up approach to involve local communities in project development and decision-making processes. It has now been implemented in Spain since 2009 when the first Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) were set up in 31 fisheries areas – first under the EFF and then under the EMFF when the number of FLAGs increased to 41. The EMFAF period is now underway, and 44 fisheries LAGs have been selected in Spain.

This report is one of eight Member State reports (in ES, FR, IE, FI, HR, GR, IT and PL) which aim to shed light on the results of the FLAGs under the EMFF and the early achievements of the EMFAF Local Action Groups (FLAGs). The report brings together information from various sources and will feed into FAMENET's overall analysis of the benefits that CLLD can bring to fisheries and aquaculture areas.

### 1.1 Background

CLLD can be difficult to evaluate in quantitative terms, partly because each FLAG has its own objectives and targets, tailored to the needs of its area. Moreover, much of the value of CLLD is understood to come from the participative process itself, resulting in benefits that are hard to measure, such as increased social capital and improved local governance.

In February 2024, FAMENET launched a series of ancillary tasks to capture some of the different results from the 2014-2020 period, as well as the extent to which fisheries FLAGs manage to mobilise stakeholders that would not otherwise access EU funds or undertake specific projects to benefit their community or improve their livelihood.

### 1.2 Purpose and target groups

The purpose of this report is to bring together and offer analysis of the following information on EMFF and EMFAF CLLD in Spain:

- To assess CLLD's contribution to improving the socio-economic and environmental dynamics in local areas, including the integration and empowerment of small-scale fisheries
- To assess the fisheries FLAGs' contribution to bringing Europe closer to citizens
- To explore potential correlations between how CLLD is delivered and results on the ground
- To contribute to reflexions on future programming.

This information aims to support **policy makers at EU level and at national and regional level in Spain** who will be taking decisions linked to preparing for and programming the post-2027 period.

### 1.3 Structure of the document

The document is structured around four evaluation questions (Chapters 3-6). Chapter 2 summarises the methodology used to collect and organise the information and data. Chapter 7 presents the final conclusions on CLLD achievements in France and lessons for future implementation.

## 2 Methodology

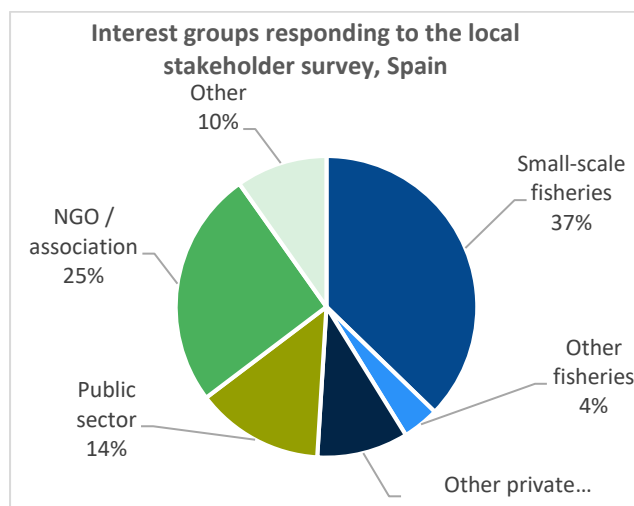
Four evaluation questions helped organise and structure the collection and analysis of information:

1. To what extent are FLAGs active and effective in mobilising local stakeholders to take part in local development processes?

2. To what extent have the FLAGs empowered members of the local community to undertake actions to improve life their area?
3. To what extent have the FLAGs brought Europe closer to citizens?<sup>1</sup>
4. To what extent have FLAG-supported initiatives and projects contributed to a positive change in socio-economic and environmental dynamics in the local areas?

The different sources of information that were analysed included:

- **Infosys data** on CLLD results under the EMFF.
- **The results of a survey of all EMFF FLAGs** still in operation in 2024, to collect information on their results from the 2014-2020 period. 149 EMFF FLAGs (43% of the 348 EMFF FLAGs, but around 65% of those still operational in 2024) completed the survey. In Spain 35 out of 41 EMFF FLAGs were operational in 2024. 18 FLAGs completed this survey.
- **A survey to all EMFAF FLAGs** operational in 2024 to collect information on the representativeness of the FLAG partnerships and strategies, as well as on outreach activities and early achievements of the new EMFAF LAGs. 113 FLAGs (around 50% of all EMFAF FLAGs selected at the time of the survey) completed the survey. In Spain, the 44 EMFAF FLAGs were selected in early 2024, of which 37 FLAGs were fully operational. 16 FLAGs completed the EMFAF survey, including 3 newly set-up FLAGs.
- **The results of the survey disseminated to local stakeholders<sup>2</sup>** by FLAGs in eight Member States (MS) to collect information on their experience of CLLD and the contribution that FLAGs make to local communities. 900 local stakeholders completed the survey, of which 155 from Spanish FLAG areas<sup>3</sup>, 37% of which from small-scale fisheries (see figure below).
- CLLD delivery under the EMFF, FARNET 2019
- FLAG actions contributing to the European Green Deal, FARNET 2020



Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

<sup>1</sup> EU Policy objective, CPR Article 5 (e) a Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives.

<sup>2</sup> FLAG members, beneficiaries, candidates and other organisations that knew the FLAG.

<sup>3</sup> Of the local stakeholders who responded to the survey in Spain, 34% were board members and 66% other stakeholders.

### 3 FLAG capacity to involve local stakeholders in the development of their areas

This section aims to answer the evaluation question:

⇒ *To what extent are fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) in Spain **active and effective in mobilising local stakeholders** to take part in local development processes?*

In particular, we will analyse local participation in the preparation of the FLAG's local development strategy (LDS); the extent to which the decision-making body is representative of the local community; the extent to which FLAGs in Spain are adequately staffed and FLAG members are active in supporting the CLLD process; the extent to which there is an effective delivery system and animation and networking are taking place.

#### 3.1 Local stakeholders mobilised to drive CLLD implementation

By 2024, most operational FLAGs in Spain are well-established development agencies, many of which are entering their third programming period. In Spain, FLAGs are viewed as a vital driver of local development in fisheries areas and central to achieving the national EMFAF goals. To support this, efforts have been made to ensure that the entire Spanish coastline is covered by a FLAG by creating four new FLAGs and extending some existing ones to include additional areas.

The preparation of local development strategies for the 2021-2027 period provided a new opportunity for coastal communities to assess both persistent and emerging challenges in their areas and to envision new or adapted responses. It was also an opportunity to invite new or diverse stakeholder groups to join the FLAG boards, influence strategic decisions, and determine which local projects should receive funding.

##### 3.1.1 Commitment and decision-making

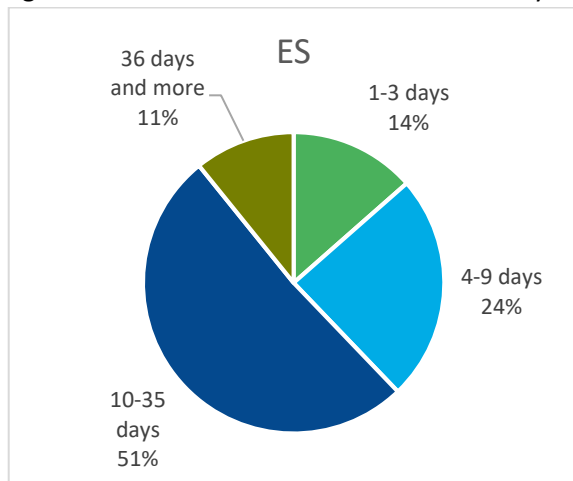
The Spanish FLAGs answering FAMENET's EMFAF survey indicated that between four and 21 people sit on their decision-making boards, averaging 11 people. These members give up time to attend discussions around their local development strategy and to discuss and select project applications from candidate beneficiaries.

The **FLAG members that responded to the survey indicated that on average they dedicated 16 days per year to FLAG activities**<sup>4</sup>. This included members who spent just 2-8 days a year on FLAG work (38% of the 37 FLAG members answering the survey), to those who dedicated 10-20 days a year (38%), and finally those who dedicated 25 or more days a year to driving local development work for the FLAG (24%). These data show a high number of days worked (and unpaid) by the FLAG members, demonstrating the strong commitment of the Spanish fishing and aquaculture communities and the mobilisation skills of the Spanish FLAGs. Not all FLAG members have the time to dedicate more than a few days a year to the FLAG. Some take part mainly in project selection activities and general assembly meetings, while others dedicate effort throughout the year to pushing forward the FLAG's local development agenda.

---

<sup>4</sup> Four responses indicating more than 100 annual days were excluded after verification with the FLAG managers.

Figure 1: Commitment of FLAG members: days dedicated annually

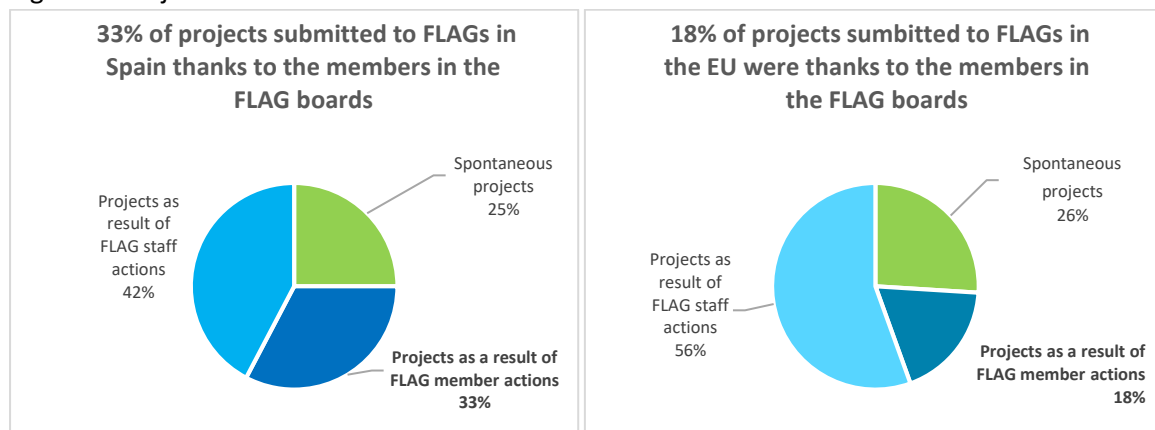


Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

The survey results show that in Spain all responding FLAGs have members reporting different levels of time dedicated to FLAG work. Indeed, in almost all cases, the FLAGs appear to have a group of active members – dedicating between 10-60 days to the FLAG – and other members who contribute at specific moments of the year- dedicating between 2-8 days to the FLAG.

As well as helping to define the strategic direction of CLLD in their areas and participating in project selection, **board members also contribute to encouraging local stakeholders to submit projects**. In Spain this is considerably higher than the EU average. According to the Spanish FLAGs, 33% of projects submitted in 2023 emerged due to the actions of the FLAG members, compared to 18% around Europe.

Figure 2: Projects submitted to FLAGs in 2023



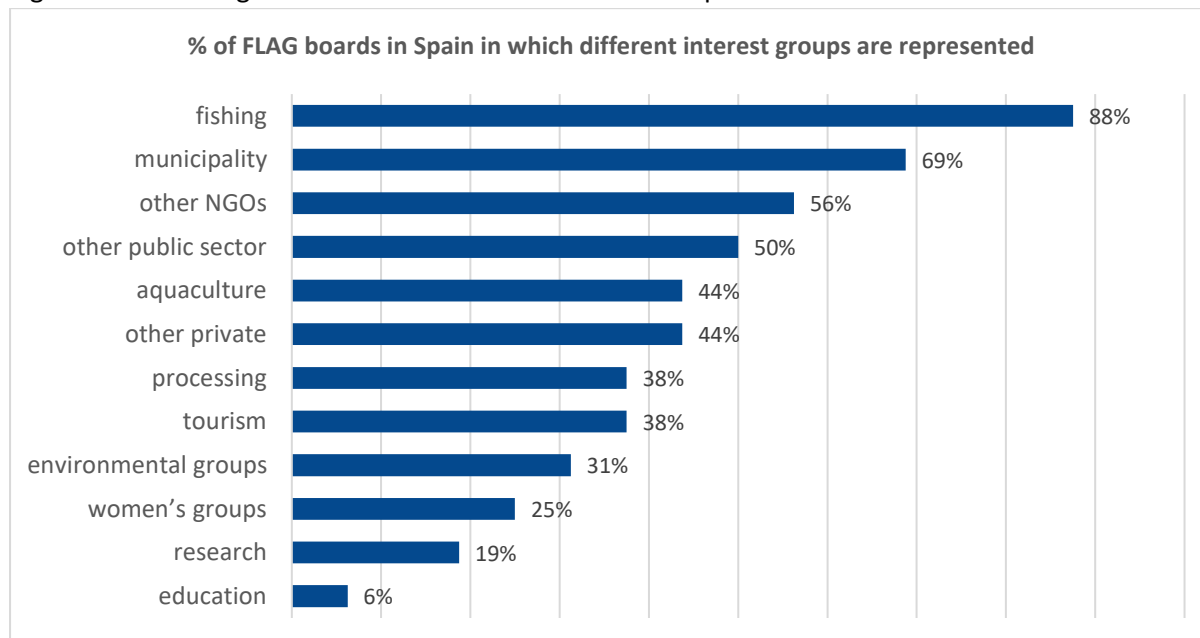
Source: FAMENET survey of EMFAF FLAGs, 2024

### Interest groups represented on FLAG boards in Spain

In Spain, the FLAGs generally demonstrate a good variety of different interest groups on their decision-making boards. Most Spanish FLAGs reported that **between three and ten different interest groups were represented on their boards**. Two FLAGs, created in the EMFAF period - Ceuta FLAG (ES337) and

Daurada FLAG (ES322)- indicated representation from just one sector<sup>5</sup>. Leaving aside these two irregular responses, on average, 5.4 interest groups sat on the FLAG decision-making bodies in Spain. This is lower than the EU average of six interest groups. However, as we will see later a good level of collaboration is seen with different sector in the projects selected by the FLAGs.

Figure 3: The fishing sector sat on 88% of FLAG boards in Spain



Source: FAMENET survey of EMFAF FLAGs, 2024

The figure above shows that the **fishing sector was the most widespread of all interest groups**, represented on the decision-making boards of 14 out of the 16 responding Spanish FLAGs. Two FLAGs in the Canary Islands - La Palma FLAG (ES343) and La Gomera FLAG (ES342)- indicated that the fishing sector is not represented on their boards.

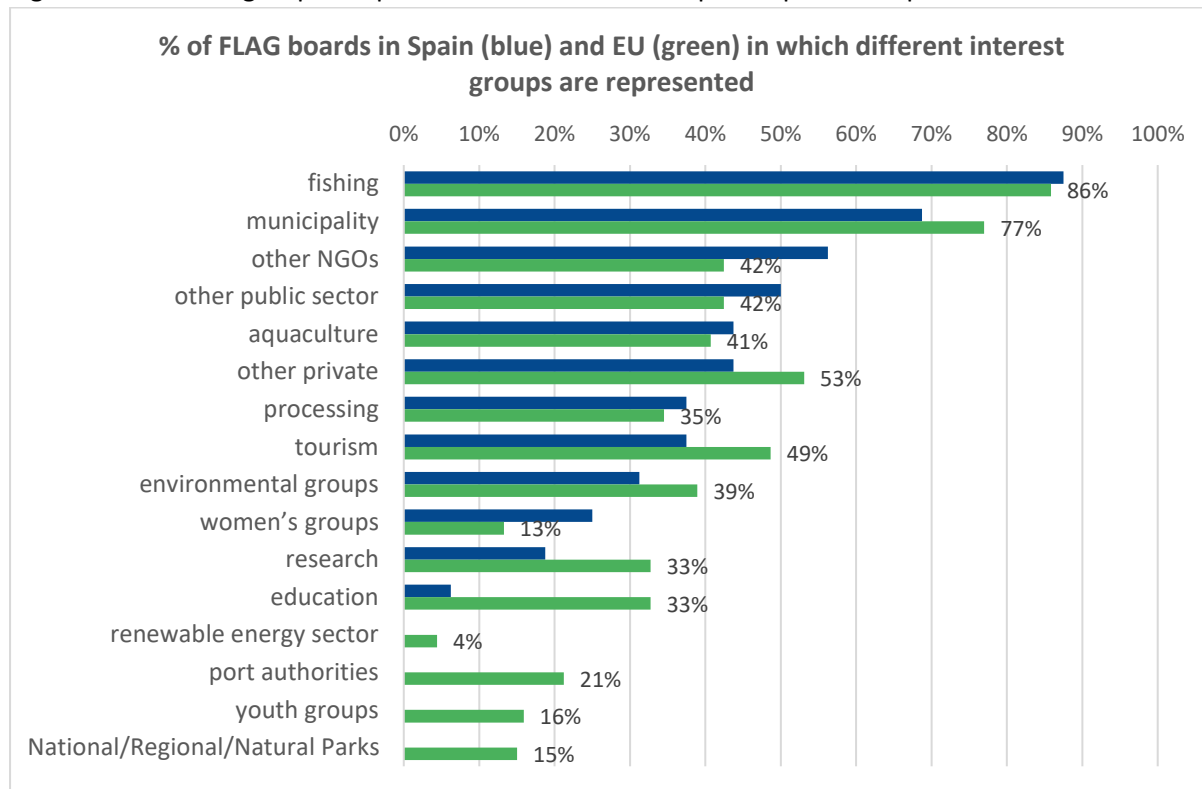
This sector was followed by the municipalities, that were found to be present on nearly 70% of FLAG boards (although this percentage is below the EU average of 77%). While it is common for the fishing sector to be present on most FLAG boards around the EU, the **involvement of NGOs and other public sector stakeholders (beyond local municipalities) appears to be a strong priority for Spanish FLAGs** (56% and 50% respectively), which is higher than the EU average of 42% for both. Another group that was more represented than the EU average was the processing sector.

The aquaculture sector was represented on the board of 44% of responding Spanish FLAGs. At the EU level, 41% of responding FLAGs indicated that aquaculture representatives were mobilised to sit on the FLAG board. Also, **women's groups** stand out for their strong involvement in Spain (25%), compared to the EU average (13%).

<sup>5</sup> This is an irregularity, according to Article 31.2 b) of the Common Provisions Regulation which states that Local Action Groups must be 'composed of representatives of public and private local socio-economic interests, in which no single interest group controls the decision-making;'. However, as they are newly created groups, this single representation of a sector is probably due to the fact that they do not have a full partnership in place at the time of the survey.



Figure 4: Women’s groups are present in the 25% of the Spanish partnerships

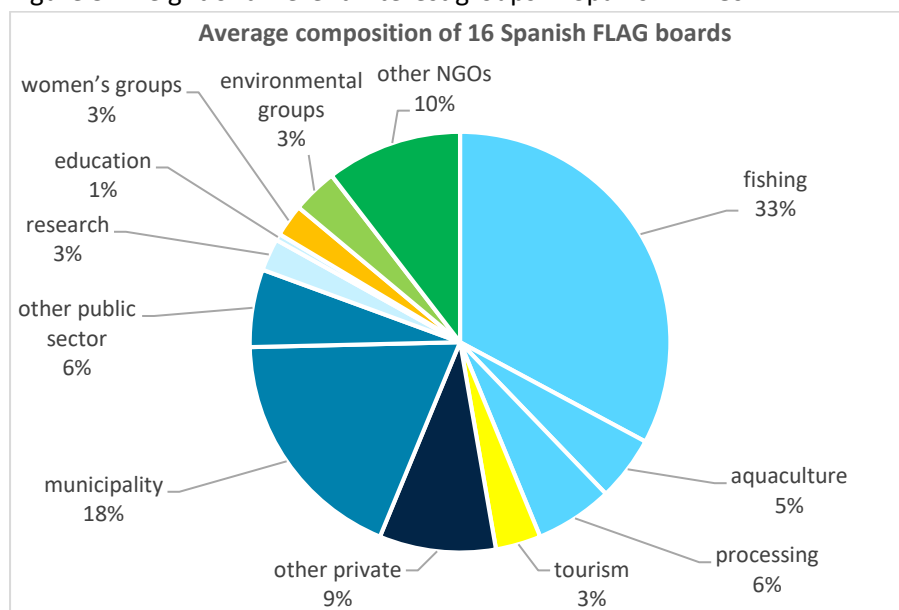


Source: FAMENET survey of EMFAF FLAGs, 2024

On the other hand, **youth groups were absent on all responding Spanish FLAG boards**. This group demonstrated low participation in FLAGs EU-wide (represented on 16% of FLAG boards).

Not all interest groups have the same weight on the FLAG boards. Indeed, certain sectors may have two or more people participating in the FLAG. The **weight of the multiple sectors is different in every FLAG**. Figure 6, below, shows the average weight of the different sectors on the Spanish FLAG boards.

Figure 5: Weight of different interest groups in Spanish FLAGs



Source: FAMENET survey of EMFAF FLAGs, 2024

This shows that fishing makes up, on average 33% of the FLAG board members. Together with aquaculture and fish processing, **fisheries in general accounts for 44% of board members** and the private sector accounts for 56% of board members. The **public sector makes up 24% of board members**, with 18% coming from local municipalities. NGOs, including women's groups and environmental groups make up 16% of board members. Education and research are also present within the Spanish FLAGs, making up 4% of board members.

This information demonstrates that FLAGs in Spain, on one hand, have a **low level of sectoral diversity** in their decision-making bodies. On the other hand, they have successfully ensured that **no single interest group dominates decision-making**, thus respecting the principle of balanced representation. It also highlights that while fisheries interest groups and the public sector are particularly well-represented on FLAG boards, environmental group and NGOs are involved to a lesser extent.

### *Gender equality*

As mentioned above, although organised women's groups are minimally represented compared to other interest groups, they are still more represented in Spanish FLAGs than the EU average. Three of the 16 responding FLAGs (Murcia FLAG- ES328, Cadiz FLAG- ES335 and La Gomera FLAG- ES342) reported having at least one women's association on their board, and one (Pontevedra FLAG- ES302) reported two.

In this regard, it is important to recognise the systematic efforts by both FLAGs and certain Spanish regional governments to support the professionalisation of jobs traditionally carried out by women, such as shell-fishing and net-making. For instance, the regional government of Galicia has been providing support since 1990 to help develop women's associations. This support has played a significant role in enabling these associations to participate more effectively in FLAG partnerships once they were established<sup>6</sup>. The FLAGs, as local agents have also played a key role in improving the organisation and rights of women's groups. For instance, the Arousa FLAG promoted the creation of the Association of Women of the Sea of Arousa in 2016, now known as the Association *Mulleres Salgadas* (Salted Women), which represents all women working in the sector across Galicia, initially through animation costs. This women's association continues today independently, applying for FLAG funding for projects, and has increased its range of action to the whole region of Galicia. The Arousa FLAG continues to strengthen this group through annual trainings for all women of the sea on labour rights, leadership skills, and supports efforts to advocate for professional improvements, not only for shellfish gatherers but for all women working in sea-linked sectors.

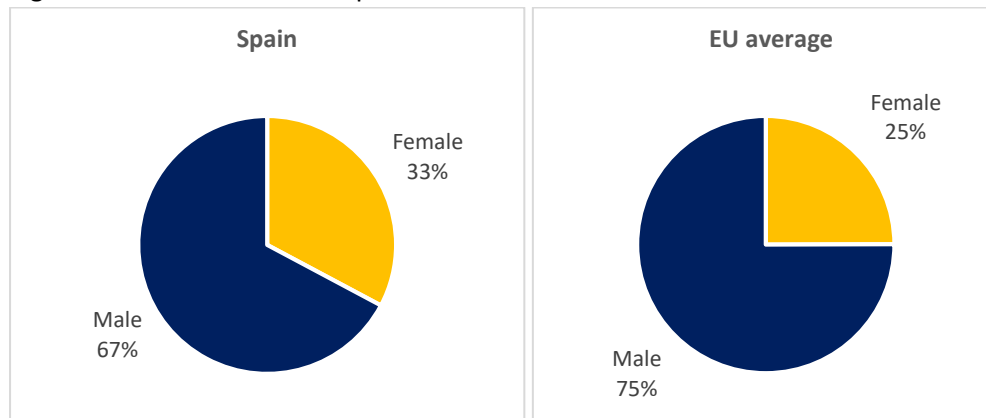
In terms of the board members in Spanish FLAGs, **33% are female**. This ranges from 0% on one FLAG board (the new Ceuta FLAG -ES337, with just four members in the decision-making body) to 60% of board members in the Daurada FLAG (ES322). Apart from these two outliers, all other Spanish FLAGs indicated that 14-45% of board members are female. Moreover, almost 57% of FLAG managers in Spain are women<sup>7</sup>.

---

<sup>6</sup> Source: [FARNET Study FLAG Support to Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture](#)

<sup>7</sup> Source: [CLLD Factsheet 2021-2027: SPAIN](#).

Figure 6: Female and male representation on FLAG boards



Source: FAMENET survey of EMFAF FLAGs, 2024

This places Spanish FLAGs above the EU-wide average of gender equality on FLAG boards, where only 25% of board members are women. However, in both cases, there is still significant room for improvement.

### 3.1.2 Local participation in strategy development

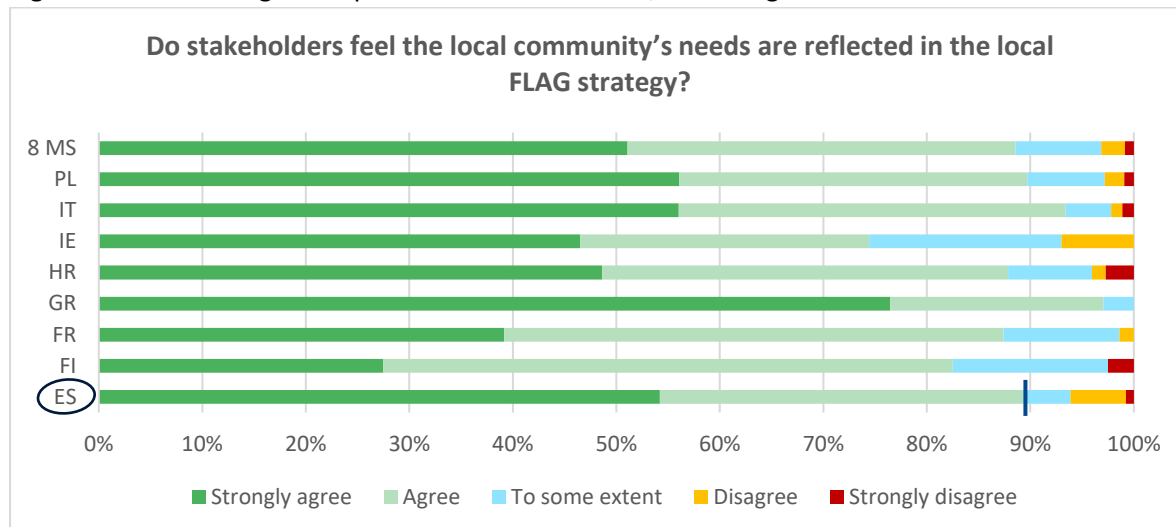
Under CLLD, FLAGs are expected to draw up a local development strategy for their area in a bottom-up, participatory manner. The FAMENET survey of EMFAF LAGs asked how many different individuals and interest groups were mobilised to contribute to the development of the FLAG strategy.

In Spain, FLAGs indicated that, on average, **9.5 different sectors had been involved in developing the local strategy**. This ranged from six sectors in two FLAG areas to 13 in another three. However, in most cases, FLAGs had involved between 8 and 12 different groups.

In terms of the number of individuals mobilised to provide input into the FLAG strategies, this varied widely from one FLAG to another: from just 20 people in two new FLAG areas (Mallorca FLAG -ES330 and Daurada FLAG- ES322) to up to 500 people in the Tenerife FLAG area (ES341). However, it was rare for less than 50 people to participate (only four of the 16 FLAGs) and, **on average, FLAGs had mobilised 118 people to contribute to their local development strategy**.

The mobilisation of various individuals and interest groups led to a perception among the local stakeholders surveyed that the FLAG strategies in Spain reflected the needs of the local community. Of the 131 local stakeholders who had seen their local FLAG's strategy, 89% felt that it was well focused on the local community's most important needs. Seven individuals (5.3%) disagreed, and only one person indicated that none of the local community's needs were addressed.

Figure 7: FLAG strategies in Spain fitted to local needs, according to 89% of local stakeholders



Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

### 3.2 A team on the ground providing outreach and tailor-made support

The FLAG team (the staff and the board members) is at the heart of the added value of CLLD. They play a fundamental role in reaching out to different local stakeholders to understand their needs and helping them to develop solutions that are sustainable long-term for the different interest groups in the area.

Adequate resources therefore must be dedicated<sup>8</sup> to ensuring the FLAG has enough qualified people to cover tasks as diverse as communication and outreach activities; project development support; networking and cooperation; monitoring and evaluation; and administration and coordination.

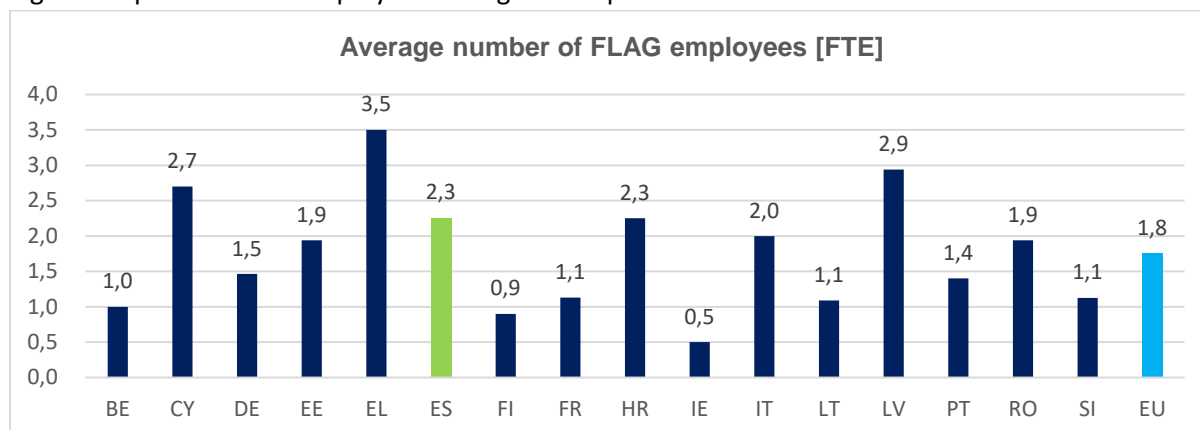
The FAMENET surveys, therefore, collected information on the number of people employed by the FLAGs, in full-time equivalents (FTEs); the number of years of relevant experience the staff had; and how many FTEs were dedicated to community outreach (as opposed to administrative tasks). We also asked local stakeholders how accessible and competent the staff were.

#### Staff resources in the Spanish FLAGs

With an average of 2.3 full-time equivalents (FTEs) employed per FLAG, **Spain is on average above the EU average** of 1.8 FTEs. However, this hides large disparities ranging from FLAGs reporting just one person employed, to others reporting up to four FTEs.

<sup>8</sup> [European Commission guidance](#) (see p25) developed for the four ESI Funds in the 2014-2020 period recommended a minimum budget of EUR 3M for LAGs, stating that, “below this level it seems difficult to (...) support the running costs of the partnerships and the animation of the local community”. During the 2014-2020 and the 2021-2027 periods, LAGs can dedicate a maximum of 25% of their budget to running and animation costs.

Figure 8: Spanish FLAGs employ an average of 2.3 persons each

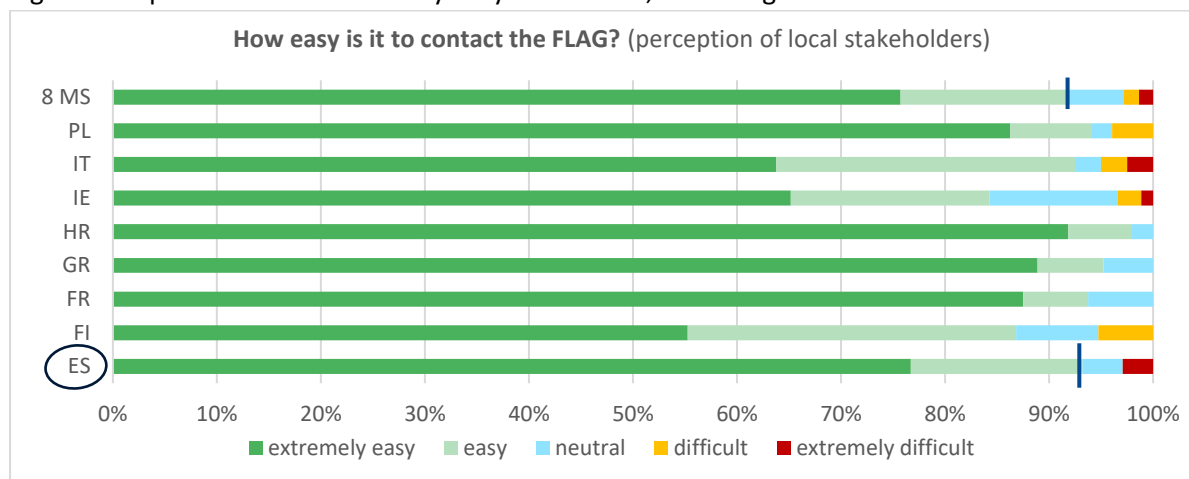


Source: FAMENET survey of EMFAF FLAGs, 2024<sup>9</sup>

The Spanish FLAG managers reported on average, almost 17 years of relevant professional experience - slightly higher than the EU average of 15 years, indicating that the FLAGs in Spain have well prepared and experienced people on the ground to implement CLLD. However, other important factors also influence a staff member's ability to perform effectively. Communication and networking skills, dynamism, commitment, and availability are all essential, although these are more difficult to quantify.

Instead, we asked local stakeholders for their opinions of the FLAG managers based on two criteria: *availability and competence*. On both criteria, the Spanish FLAG Managers were scored in line with the EU average: Approximately **93% of stakeholders reported that their FLAG Manager was easy to contact**, with around 77% indicating that they were “extremely easy” to contact. Only three stakeholders indicated difficulties in reaching their FLAG Manager.

Figure 91: Spanish FLAGs “extremely easy” to contact, according to 77% of local stakeholders

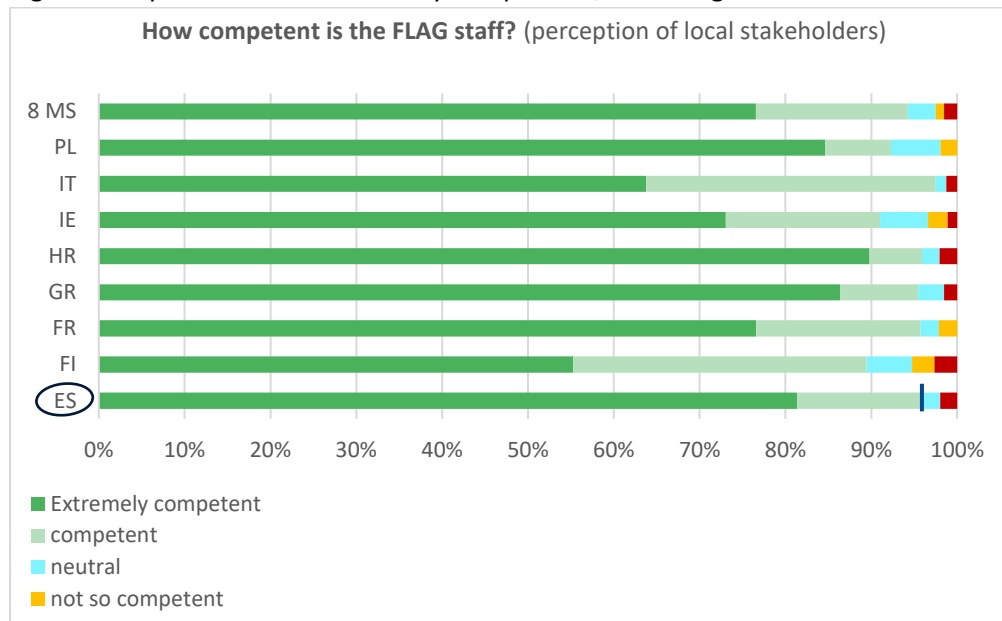


Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

In terms of competence, 96% of the local stakeholders surveyed in Spain rated the FLAG managers as competent, with 81% rating them as “extremely competent”.

<sup>9</sup> As an outlier, Ireland has been added manually, based on information from the EMFF period (EMFAF FLAGs not selected at the time of the survey)

Figure 10: Spanish FLAGs "extremely competent", according to 81% of local stakeholders



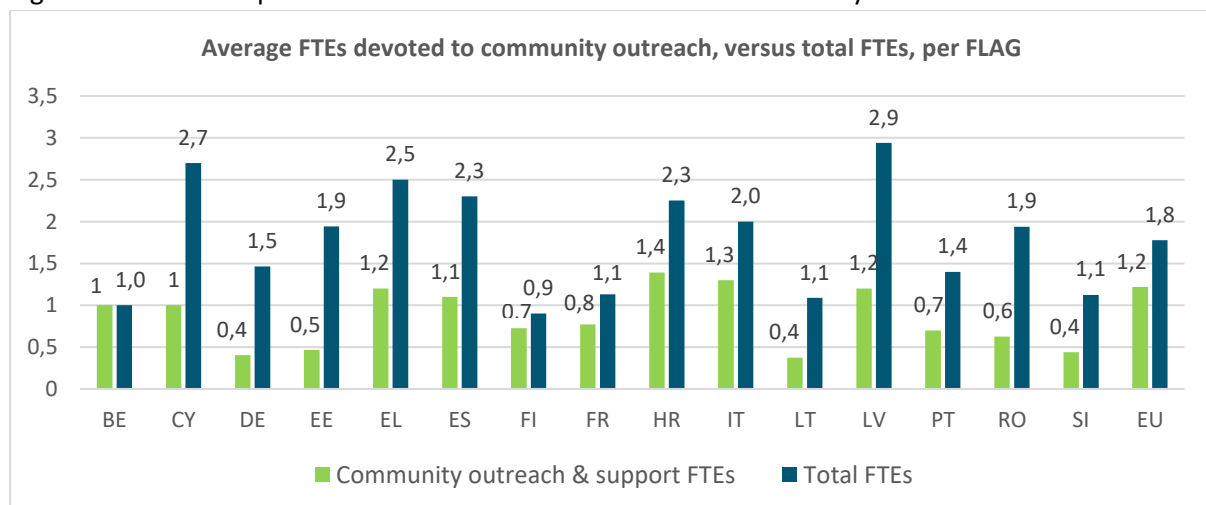
Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

In conclusion, it can be said that in Spain, the **FLAG staff are highly regarded by the local stakeholders** surveyed, both for their availability and, particularly, for their competence. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that adequate resourcing is essential to maintaining a strong and satisfactory relationship between FLAG staff and the local community. It is also worth noting that these resources vary significantly across the different Spanish FLAGs.

#### Community outreach activities in Spain

According to Spanish FLAG Managers who responded to FAMENET’s survey of EMFAF LAGs, almost half of their staff’s time is spent on community outreach. On average, 1.1 FTEs are dedicated to these outreach activities in Spain, which is just below the EU average of 1.2 FTEs. However, as a percentage of their employees time, the Spanish FLAGs lag behind the EU average where FLAGs dedicate 67% of their time to outreach activities, compared to just 48% in Spain.

Figure 11: FLAGs in Spain dedicate 48% of their staff time to community outreach

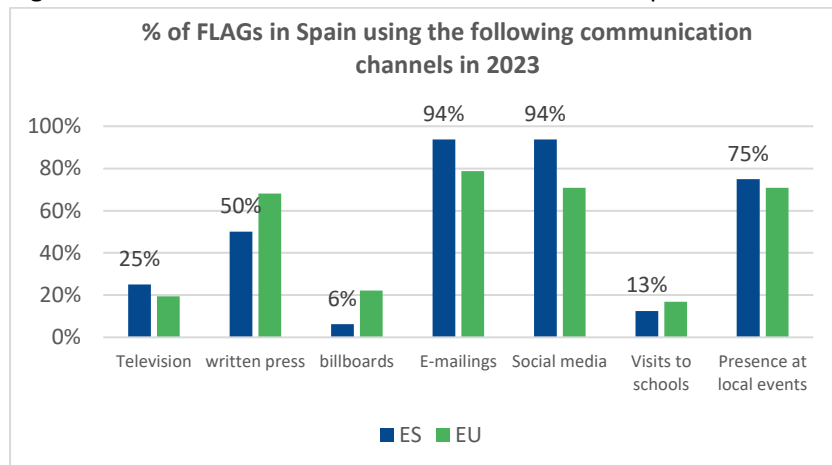


Source: FAMENET survey of EMFAF FLAGs, 2024

### Activities in 2023

FAMENET surveyed the FLAGs to gain insight into the types of communication and outreach activities undertaken in 2023. The figure below compares the main communication activities used by Spanish FLAGs in 2023 with those employed by FLAGs across the EU.

Figure 12: Favoured communication channels of the Spanish FLAGs



Source: FAMENET survey of EMFAF FLAGs, 2024

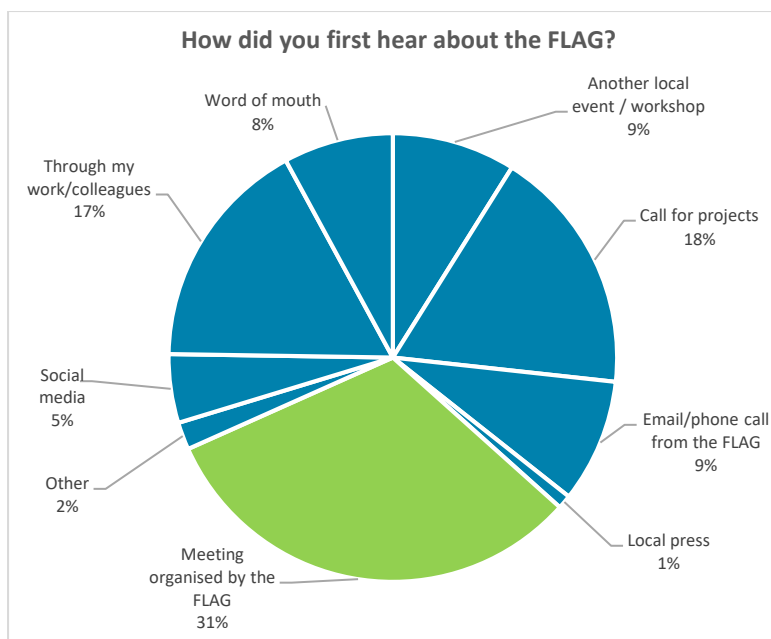
**Social media, emails, attendance at local events and information published in the written press were the most commonly used communication channels by Spanish FLAGs in 2023.** Of the 16 FLAGs surveyed, one had also shared information on billboards, four had done so on television, and two had conducted visits to schools in 2023. It is important to note that most of the FLAGs surveyed in Spain were either just launching their EMFAF activities or not yet fully operational for the majority of 2023. Therefore, these figures illustrate activity for 2023 but should not be considered representative of the entire programming period moving forward.

The 16 FLAGs responding to the EMFAF survey indicated that, on average, they sent out approximately 131 email communications to stakeholders in 2023, published around 77 social media posts, five articles in the written press and attended about 12 local events each.

In addition to these communication channels, the **Spanish FLAGs organised an average of six information sessions each in 2023, mobilising a total of around 3 250 local stakeholders** to participate in these events (approximately 232 people per FLAG area). Furthermore, the responding FLAGs held around 562 bilateral meetings with local stakeholders and discussed an average of 34 project ideas per FLAG with such stakeholders in 2023.

When FAMENET asked the local stakeholders themselves how they first heard about the FLAG, 31% indicated that they had first heard about the FLAG thanks to a meeting the FLAG had organised. A further 18% indicated that they had found out about the FLAG after seeing a FLAG's call for projects and the 17% through their work or by talking with colleagues. Emails and phone calls from the FLAG, the word of mouth and other local events or activities figured lower in terms of first point of contact with the FLAG. Local press and social media, together, only accounted for the first source of information for 6% of stakeholders responding to FAMENET's survey.

Figure 13: First contact with the FLAG, according to local stakeholders in Spain



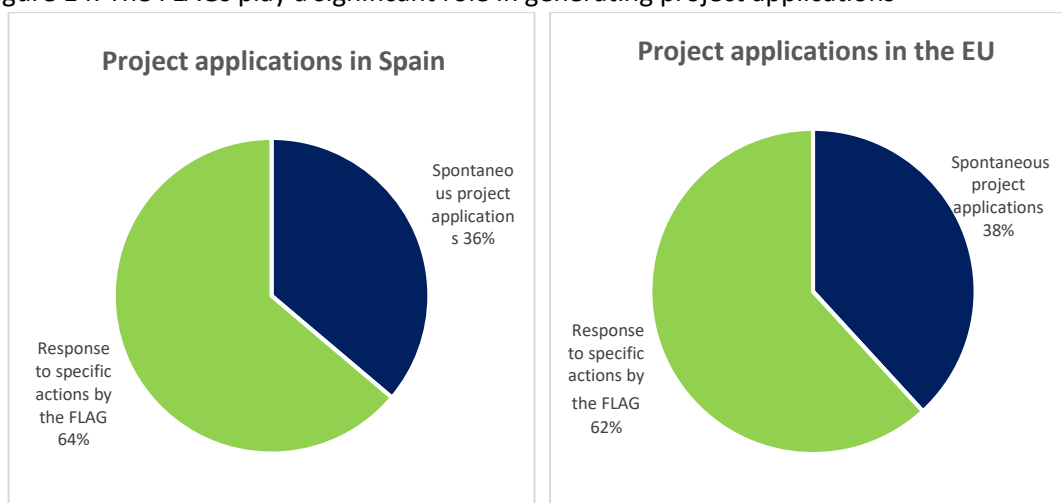
Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

The information above demonstrates how certain FLAG resources are being used to reach out to local stakeholders and mobilise them to actively participate in local development processes. Although it was only the first year of operations for EMFAF FLAGs in Spain, a series of outreach activities took place, and more than 3 000 local stakeholders were mobilised by the 16 FLAGs that responded to the survey.

Furthermore, the local stakeholders surveyed found the FLAG staff to be both accessible and competent in assisting fisheries and aquaculture communities in accessing EU funds to address their specific needs.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that, in response to our survey of EMFF FLAGs and their achievements, Spanish FLAGs estimated that **64% of the projects they funded in the 2014-2020 period were a direct result of specific actions by the FLAG**, as opposed to candidates merely responding to calls for projects. This, in itself, is a testament to the value of having a local team on the ground that provides outreach and tailored support to local stakeholders.

Figure 14: The FLAGs play a significant role in generating project applications



Source: FAMENET survey of EMFAF FLAGs, 2024



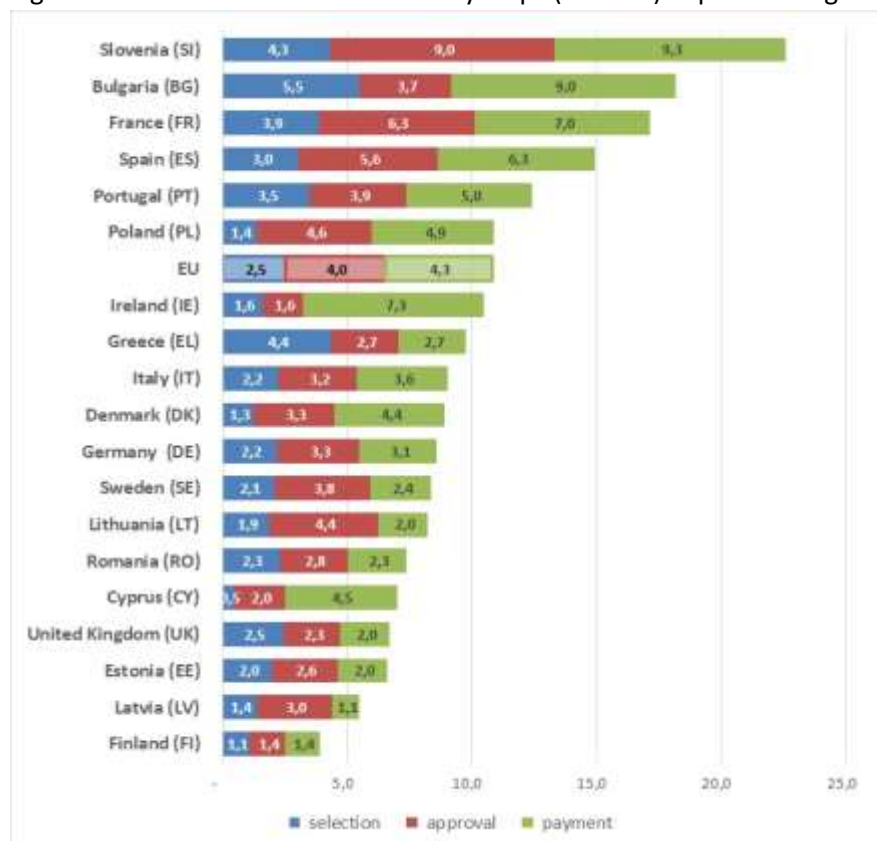
### 3.3 Delivery systems

By “delivery system” we refer to the steps involved in a project promoter applying to the FLAG for funding, the process to select and formally approve a project, and the process of applying for and receiving the grant.

An efficient delivery system is important to ensuring easy, transparent and timely access to public funding. It also frees up time for the FLAG staff to concentrate on valuable tasks such as ensuring the most strategic use of funds to address local needs and the mobilisation of new and harder-to-reach stakeholders.

A survey of EMFF FLAGs in 2019 revealed that, in terms of speed for selecting and approving project applications and making payments to the beneficiaries, Spain was among the slowest Member States in Europe, ahead only of Bulgaria, Slovenia and France (see Figure 15). The delays are largely due to the approval process conducted by the regional IB and the grant payment, which each take, on average, around six months. In Spain, however, given that the procedures are set at the level of the region, the delivery system varies significantly from one region to another. In Asturias, FLAGs indicated that project approval by the Region took approximately 2 months, while in Andalusia, FLAGs indicated that regional approval of selected projects took around 8.4 months<sup>10</sup>.

Figure 2: Timeline for different delivery steps (months) - Spain amongst the slowest in the EU



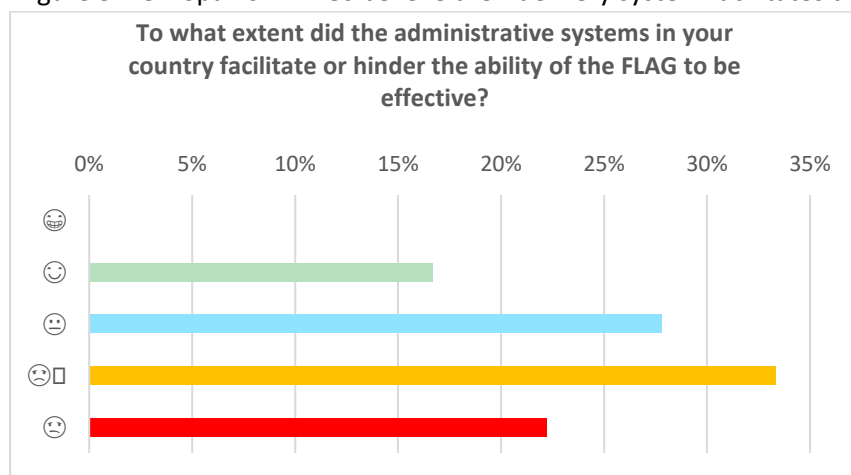
Source: FARNET delivery survey, 2019

<sup>10</sup> Survey report on CLLD delivery, FARNET 2019.

A similar picture is reflected in the answers of our 2024 survey to EMFF FLAGs. FLAGs were asked to what extent they felt that the delivery system facilitated or hindered their ability to be effective. Ten out of 18 FLAGs (56%) reported that the delivery system hindered their ability to be effective, with four of these indicating that it *seriously* hindered their work- three of which are located in the region of Valencia.

None of the 18 Spanish FLAGs that responded gave the delivery system the highest rating, and only three indicated that it facilitated their work to some extent (both FLAGs present in the region of Cantabria and one in Catalonia). Five FLAGs (28%) stated that the delivery system neither hindered nor facilitated their work.

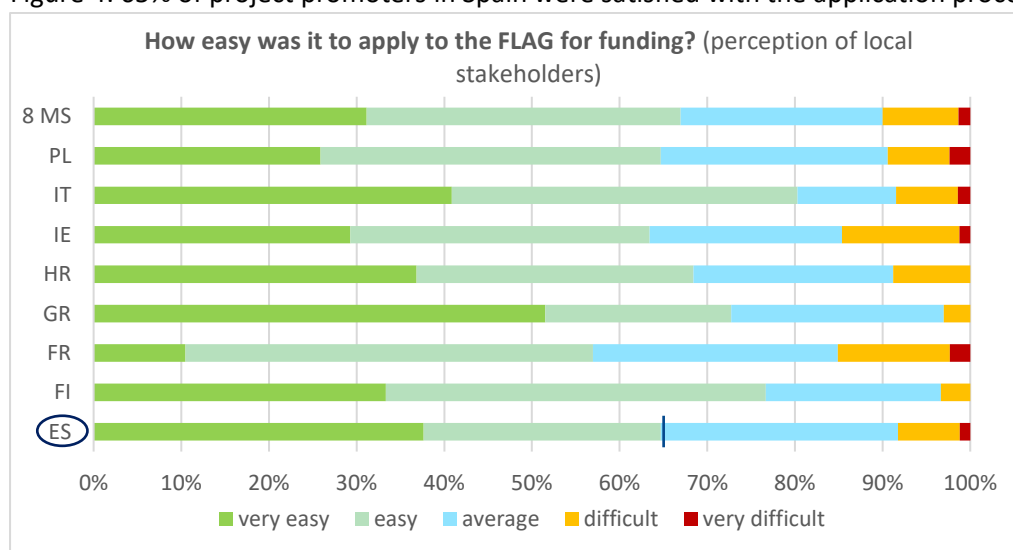
Figure 3: Few Spanish FLAGs believe their delivery system facilitates their work



Source: FAMENET survey of EMFF FLAGs, 2024

The FAMENET survey to local stakeholders provided an opportunity to compare the opinion of FLAG staff with the experience of beneficiaries who had applied for FLAG funding. Local stakeholders who had submitted a project were asked how easy they found the application process and how satisfied they were with the speed of receiving their grant.

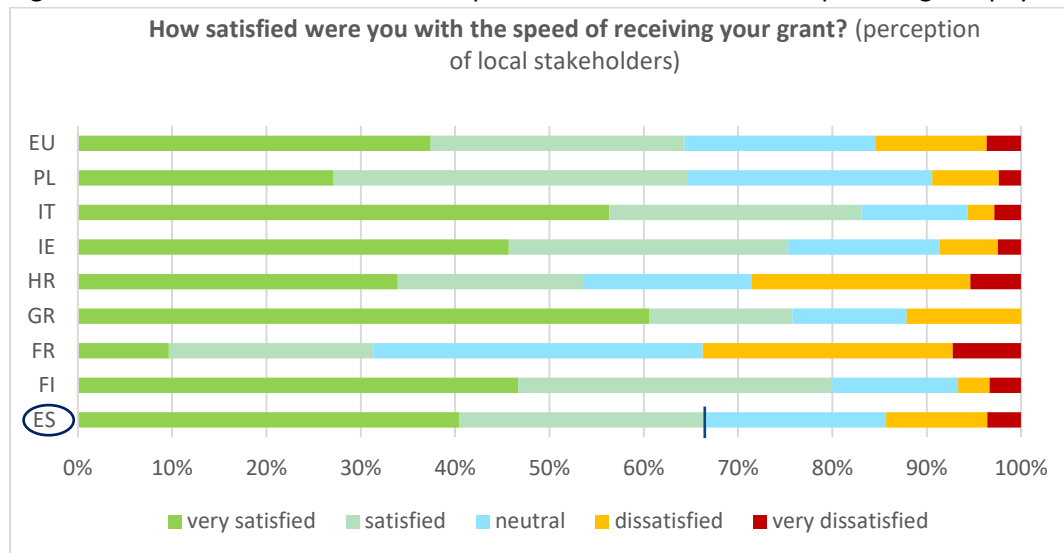
Figure 4: 65% of project promoters in Spain were satisfied with the application process



Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

Figure 17 shows that almost 65% of project promoters found it easy to apply to the FLAG for funding, with 37.6% indicating that it was very easy. On average, 66% of EU local stakeholders who responded to the survey indicated that the application process was easy. Only 8% indicated that the application processes were difficult. So, despite the challenges experienced by FLAG staff, it appears that a good proportion of beneficiaries surveyed were reasonably satisfied with the process. This is likely to be largely thanks to support from the FLAG staff, as we shall see in Chapter 4.

Figure 5: 66% of local stakeholders in Spain were satisfied with the speed of grant payments



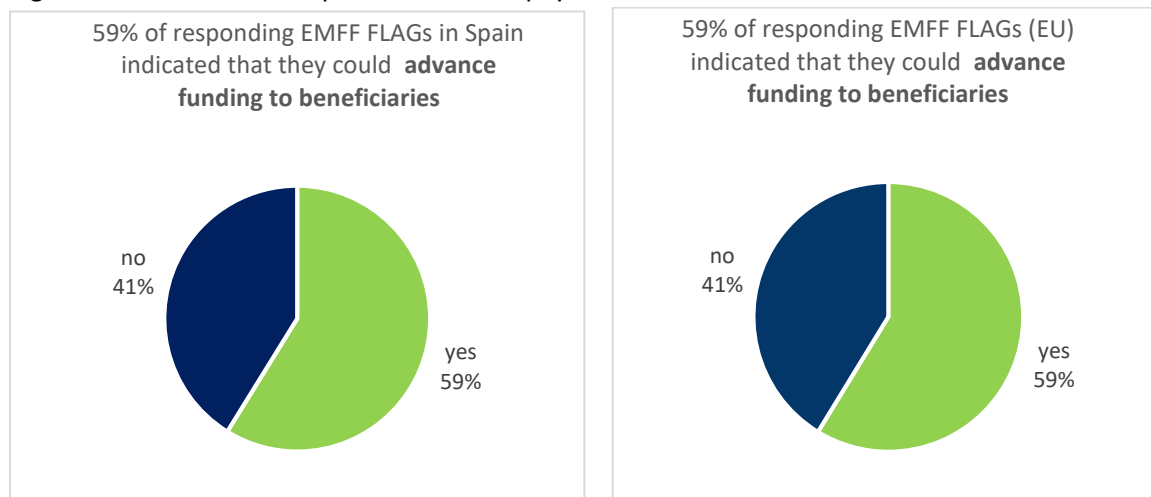
Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

In terms of the speed of receiving grants, the perception of project promoters in Spain was again in line with the average of the eight Member States surveyed. 66.6% of beneficiaries were satisfied with the time it took to receive their grant, compared to an EU average of almost 65% with 40% of project promoters surveyed in Spain indicating that they were very satisfied. 14% of stakeholders surveyed expressed dissatisfaction, including 3.5% who were “very dissatisfied”. As such, almost twice as many project promoters were dissatisfied with the speed of receiving their grant, compared to the application process.

The time it takes for grants to be delivered is important because it affects the type of project promoters able to apply for funding. When beneficiaries are expected to implement their entire project and then wait for a significant amount of time before receiving the agreed grant, it can be difficult to provide funding to small-scale, private beneficiaries or associations that lack high liquidity or easy access to bank loans.

Some Member States’ procedures allow for advance funding to be provided to CLLD beneficiaries. In Spain, 59% of responding FLAGs indicated that this was an option - again in line with the European average.

Figure 6: A number of MS provide advance payments to CLLD beneficiaries



Source: FAMENET survey of EMFF FLAGs, 2024

The Spanish FLAGs surveyed identified a number of improvements they would like to see in their delivery systems. The most common recommendations included:

- **Simplifying administrative procedures** by reducing the bureaucracy and requirements for documents in the initial stages of the application process, as well as moving toward a system of simplified cost options (SCOs) for the various eligible costs.
- **Harmonising the different delivery systems** across the Spanish regions to facilitate cooperation and knowledge exchange.
- **Improving communication between the FLAGs and the IBs.**
- Ensuring proper **staff resources within the IB** to speed up the project approval process.

### 3.4 Conclusions on the effectiveness of FLAGs in Spain

To conclude Chapter 3, our research shows that FLAGs in Spain represent a diverse range of public and private interest groups. On average, the decision-making boards of FLAGs comprise 5.4 different interest groups, compared to the EU average of six. Fisheries and the public sector are the two most represented interest groups on FLAG decision-making bodies, and Spain demonstrates higher representation of women's associations and female board members than FLAGs in other MS.

Youth involvement is somewhat lacking in their direct contribution to the local development strategies and within the decision-making bodies of FLAGs. However, as we will explore in the next chapter, FLAGs have managed to engage a high number of under 40s in project implementation.

Local stakeholders have been mobilised to contribute to the FLAG strategy with, on average, 118 individuals from 10 different interest groups participating. In general, local stakeholders agreed that the FLAG strategy adequately focused on addressing the main needs of the local area.

The FLAGs in Spain, despite having on average, well-resourced in terms of budget, are somewhat below the European average in terms of staffing levels, with an average of 2.3 FTEs employed in each FLAG. It should be noted that there are huge budgetary differences among the Spanish FLAGs in different regions. FLAG staff were perceived as both competent and accessible and around half of their time was dedicated to outreach activities.

Outreach activities were actively implemented in 2023 using a variety of communication tools, including in particular emails, social media posts and a presence at local events to communicate about the FLAG, its strategy and the funding opportunities it brings. FLAGs also organised their own events, which were attended by an average of 232 people per FLAG area in 2023 alone.

Such activities appear to have been effective at generating projects, with an estimated 75% of project applications in 2023 resulting from specific activities undertaken by the FLAGs (42% from staff activity and 33% from the efforts of FLAG members), compared to just 25% of applications being presented “spontaneously” in response to a call for projects. This demonstrates the strong role that the Spanish FLAGs are playing in mobilising local stakeholders to participate in local development processes in fisheries communities.

In terms of the ease for local stakeholders of applying for and receiving funding from the FLAG, around 65% of beneficiaries surveyed were satisfied with the process. This leaves room for improvement and according to FLAGs, the delivery system in place in different Spanish regions is far from facilitating their work. 56% of FLAGs surveyed indicated that the delivery system hindered their ability to be effective, indicating that local stakeholders were satisfied with the application process largely due to the support they received from the FLAG to navigate the requirements for applying for funding. Many FLAGs surveyed highlighted the importance of simplifying administrative processes, ensuring effective communication between FLAGs and IBs and establishing rules to facilitate cooperation.

Overall, these factors lead us to conclude that FLAGs in Spain are active and effective in mobilising local stakeholders to participate in local development processes. Despite weaknesses within certain regional delivery systems, the Spanish FLAGs are playing an effective role at involving different interest groups in the FLAG strategies and partnerships and at supporting local stakeholders to apply for funding.

## 4. FLAGs empowering local stakeholders to drive change

This section aims to answer the evaluation question:

⇒ *To what extent have the FLAGs empowered members of the local community to undertake actions to improve life their area?*

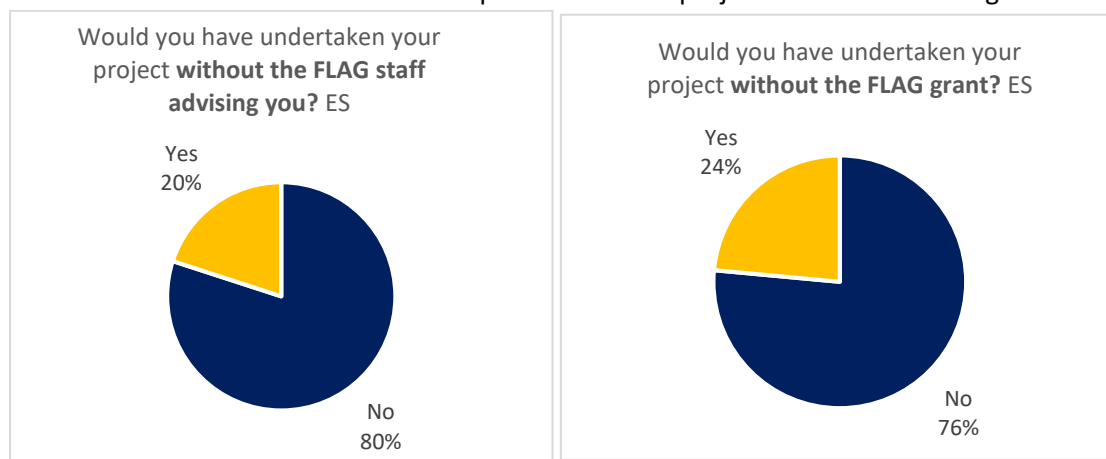
In particular, we will look at the extent to which local stakeholders have obtained support to undertake projects of their choice, including people from under-represented groups; whether knowledge and skills have been developed locally; and the FLAG’s role in strengthening collaboration, social capital and local governance.

### 4.1 Supporting action on the ground

In the 2014-2020 period, 41 Spanish FLAGs were active in supporting local action to address the challenges identified in their local development strategies. Collectively, they funded 2 727 local projects (just below Poland in terms of the number of operations) with a total public budget of EUR 125 million<sup>11</sup>- an **average of 67 local projects per FLAG**, totalling EUR 3 million. This compares to an average of 44 projects supported per FLAG across the EU, for an average of EUR 1.9 million per FLAG area.

In its 2024 survey to local stakeholders, FAMENET gathered information on the extent to which the FLAGs were instrumental in making these projects happen or whether the projects would have proceeded without FLAG support. Beneficiaries were asked whether they would have undertaken their project *without* the FLAG’s guidance and whether they would have undertaken their project *without* the FLAG grant. In both cases, project promoters in Spain indicated that without the FLAG’s support, they would not have undertaken their project.

Figure 7: 80% of beneficiaries would not have implemented their project without FLAG advice and 76% of beneficiaries would not have implemented their project without the FLAG grant.<sup>12</sup>



Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

These figures demonstrate the important role that Spanish FLAGs play in supporting local stakeholders to undertake initiatives. Of the 2 727 local projects implemented in fishing and aquaculture

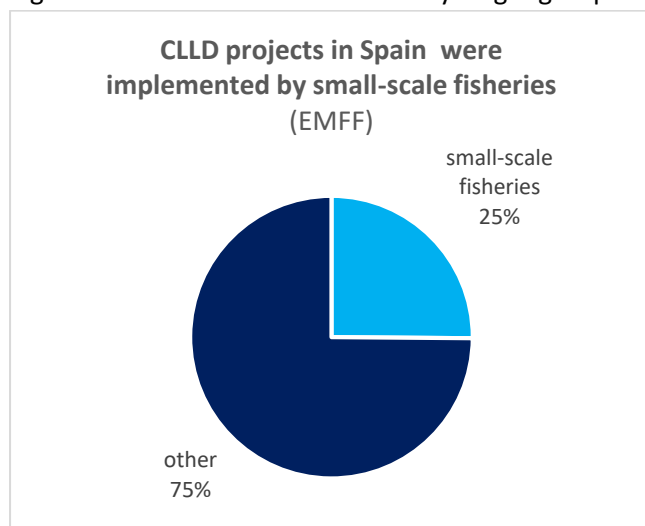
<sup>11</sup> Figure reported in Infosys by Spain’s EMFF Managing Authority

<sup>12</sup> Only 54% of the respondents replied to this question.

communities in Spain, extrapolating the survey data from stakeholders to the national level suggests that **over 2000 projects would not have occurred without the FLAG support.**

Moreover, 25% of FLAG-supported projects in Spain were implemented by small-scale fishers or small-scale fishers’ organisations, a notoriously difficult target group to involve in local development processes. On average, FLAGs in Spain supported 15 small-scale fishers (or their organisations) to implement a project with EMFF funding.

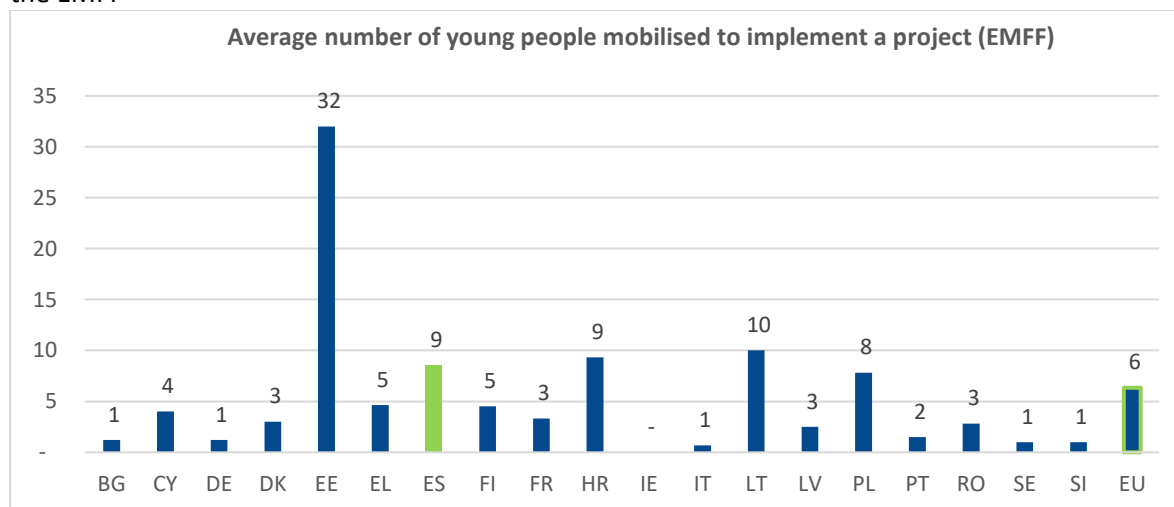
Figure 8: Small-scale fishers are a key target group of Spanish FLAGs



Source: FAMENET EMFF FLAG survey, 2024

Young people are another group that can be difficult to involve. In Spain, **nine projects per FLAG were implemented by beneficiaries who were 40 years old or younger.** This is just 13.5% of projects supported but in absolute terms, given the high number of projects supported by Spanish FLAGs, an extrapolation would mean 369 projects implemented by young people. It is also above the average for Europe and Spain’s neighbouring countries.

Figure 22: Spanish FLAGs each supported on average 9 young people to implement a project under the EMFF



Source: FAMENET EMFF FLAG survey, 2024

## 4.2 Developing knowledge and skills

Local knowledge and skills are essential for ensuring that communities can manage their resources effectively and sustainably while remaining competitive in an increasingly globalised world. FLAGs can act as catalysts for spreading knowledge and organising targeted training initiatives that support the growth of a sustainable blue economy.

The FAMENET survey asked local stakeholders whether they had learned anything new as a result of the FLAG’s activities. 91% of respondents confirmed that they had. These included respondents reporting that they had gained a **stronger awareness** of certain topics or sectors thanks to the FLAG (55% of respondents); local stakeholders indicating that they had acquired **specific knowledge** due to the FLAG (54%), and respondents who indicated that they had developed **new skills** (29%).

Figure 239: 91% of local stakeholders surveyed in Spain had learnt something new thanks to the FLAG

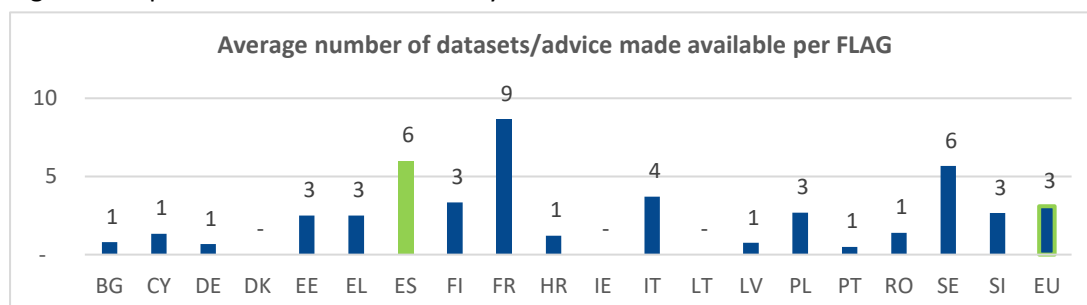


Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

Actions that enhance the knowledge and skills of local stakeholders can include educational activities for schools, awareness-raising campaigns for the general public, thematic workshops and tailored training courses focused on specific marine professions. The FLAGs in Spain are particularly active in **mobilising young people for professional training and for educational and awareness raising** activities related to fisheries and other marine topics.

The Spanish FLAGs surveyed indicated that, under the EMFF, they had made an average of six datasets available each - **twice the EU average**. If this figure were extrapolated to all 41 Spanish FLAGs operational under the EMFF, it would amount to **246 datasets made available**, representing a valuable resource for fisheries communities across Spain.

Figure 10: Spanish FLAGs are second only to France in the number of datasets made available



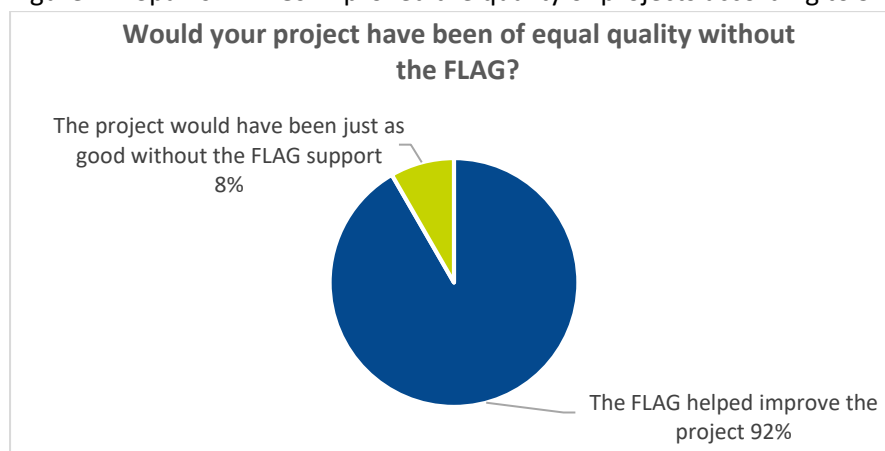
Source: FAMENET EMFF FLAG survey, 2024

FLAGs are also active in supporting local stakeholders in the development of local projects and in applying for EU funding. These activities also require specific skills and expertise. When asked whether



their projects would have been of equal quality without FLAG support, 92% of local stakeholders surveyed in Spain said that the FLAG helped them improve their project<sup>13</sup>.

Figure 24: Spanish FLAGs improved the quality of projects according to 92% of beneficiaries surveyed



Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

FLAGs responding to the FAMENET survey on EMFF results for CLLD also indicated the number of cooperation projects they supported during the 2014-2020 period. In Spain, FLAGs supported an average of four cooperation projects each. **These projects enable local stakeholders to learn from other areas and gain inspiration for adapting and improving local practices.** Examples of cooperation projects in Spain include joint efforts to support the digitalisation of the fisheries sector in shared marine spaces, as well as initiatives with local fishers and their families to launch entrepreneurial projects aimed to diversifying incomes through new opportunities related to marine and pesca-tourism.

FLAGs in Spain estimated that already in 2023, as the EMFAF period was just getting launched, an average of 14 people per FLAG area had been supported in exchanging experiences with stakeholders from other areas, facilitating the transfer of new knowledge to their respective areas. This number is expected to increase from 2024 onwards as the programme reaches full operational capacity.

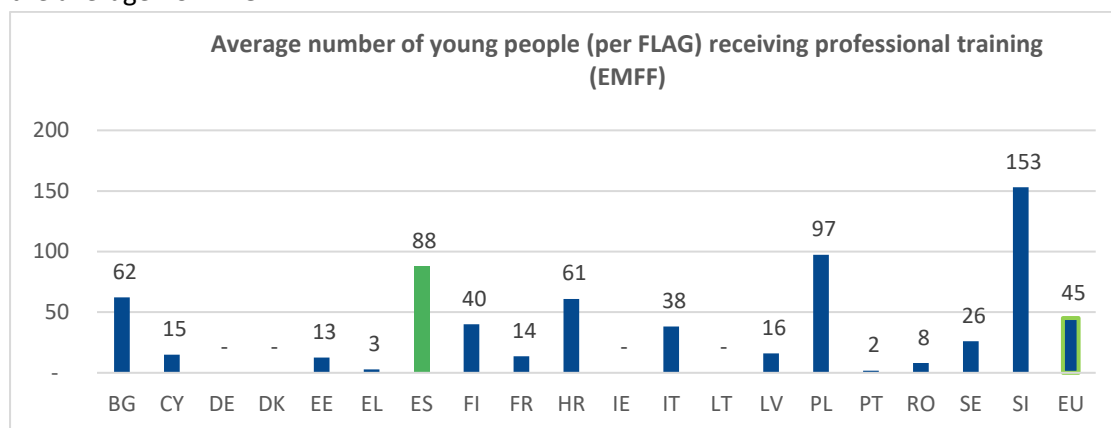
#### *Boosting knowledge and skills among the young*

While a relatively small percentage of FLAG-funded projects in Spain were implemented by young people, FLAGs in Spain were very active in funding initiatives designed to develop the knowledge and skills of their younger population.

Spanish FLAGs surveyed estimated that around **88 young people per FLAG received professional training through FLAG-funded initiatives.** This is almost twice the EU average of 45 young people trained in other FLAG areas and an extrapolation of these results to all 41 FLAGs active during the EMFF period would point to around 3 600 young people trained with FLAG support, quite a significant number of young people that have obtained improved skills for a marine-related career. Examples of professional training courses supported by the Spanish FLAGs include training for people with disabilities in the manufacturing of shellfish gear from waste collected on the beach or training on how to develop marine tourism in a protected area.

<sup>13</sup> Only 46% of the stakeholders answered this question

Figure 25: Spanish FLAGs support the professional training of nearly twice as many young people as the average EU FLAG



Source: FAMENET EMFF FLAG survey, 2024

On top of supporting professional training, Spanish FLAGs were also active in funding educational and awareness raising activities for young people. Spanish FLAGs estimated that around **600 young people per FLAG benefited from FLAG-supported educational or awareness-raising activities** during the EMFF period (compared to the EU average of around 400 young people). An extrapolation of these figures to all Spanish FLAGs would imply 24 600 young people benefiting from increased awareness or knowledge of the marine and fisheries sector, indicating that engaging young people and developing their knowledge is an important focus of the FLAGs' efforts in Spain.

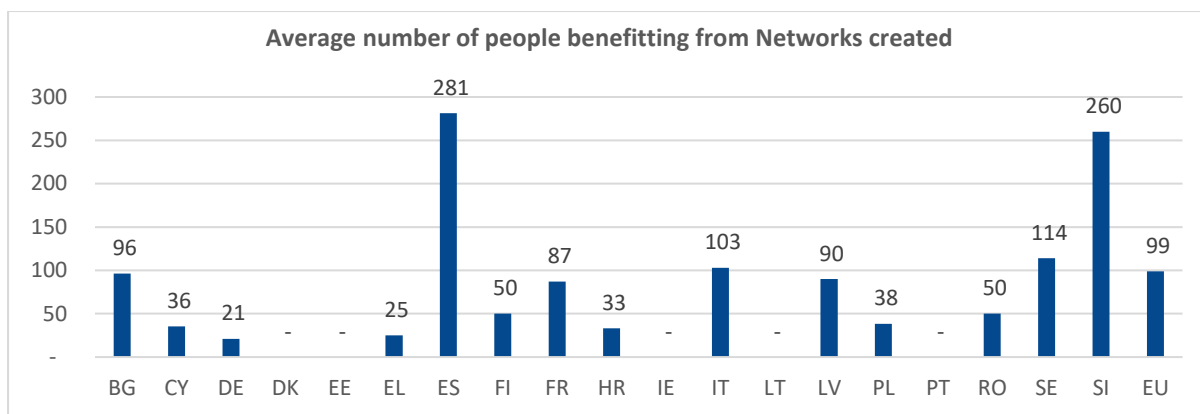
### 4.3 Strengthening social capital

The capacity of CLLD to strengthen social capital is often cited as a key added value of this bottom-up approach to development. By social capital we refer to the networks of relationships among people that enable society to function effectively. Typical elements of social capital include **norms, trust and networks that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit**. Increased social capital can improve people's access to resources, support or information through their connections with others. This section examines the extent to which FLAGs in Spain have contributed to the development of networks and connections within their communities, as well as their role in fostering trust among local stakeholders.

#### *From networks and contacts to collaboration*

According to FLAGs in Spain that responded to the FAMENET survey on EMFF achievements, an average of **1.5 new networks were created in each FLAG area during the EMFF period, along with actions to strengthen an additional 8.5 existing networks**. While not all FLAGs could provide data on the number of people benefitting from these networks, ten FLAGs did report estimates. These estimates indicate that, on average, over 280 people per FLAG area benefitting from the networks that the Spanish FLAGs had help create or strengthen.

Figure 11: Spanish FLAGs lead on the average number of people benefitting from networks created.

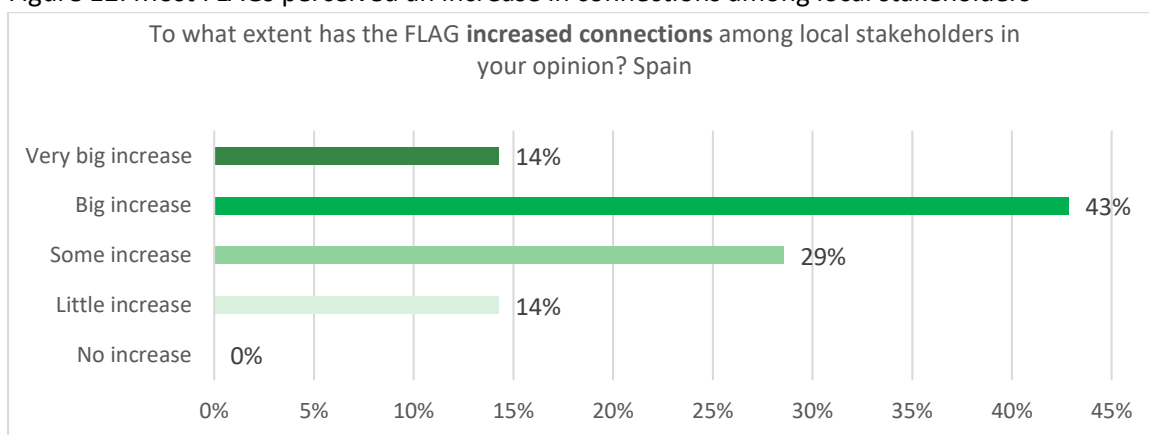


Source: FAMENET EMFF FLAG survey, 2024

In addition to creating and strengthening networks, Spanish FLAGs supported the organisation of numerous local events and community activities, bringing together local stakeholders to collaborate on shared objectives, such as promoting local products or raising awareness about marine professions. On average, Spanish FLAGs organised 30 such events during the EMFF period, with some FLAGs organising more than 100 local events.

When asked whether these efforts had increased local connections, 50% of FLAGs surveyed considered that their organisation had led to “big” or “very big” increase in connections locally. Just two FLAGs reported having seen “little increase” in local connections and no FLAGs indicated that they had not increased connections at all.

Figure 12: Most FLAGs perceived an increase in connections among local stakeholders



Source: FAMENET EMFAF FLAG survey, 2024

To corroborate the FLAGs’ perception of increased connections with on-the-ground experience, we also asked local stakeholders how many contacts they had made as a result of the FLAG. In Spain just over 120 local stakeholders answered this question. They indicated that **on average, they had each made 15 new contacts thanks to the FLAG**. Just five local stakeholders, or 4% of those surveyed, indicated they had not made any new contacts.

Figure 13: FLAGs helping local stakeholders connect with others

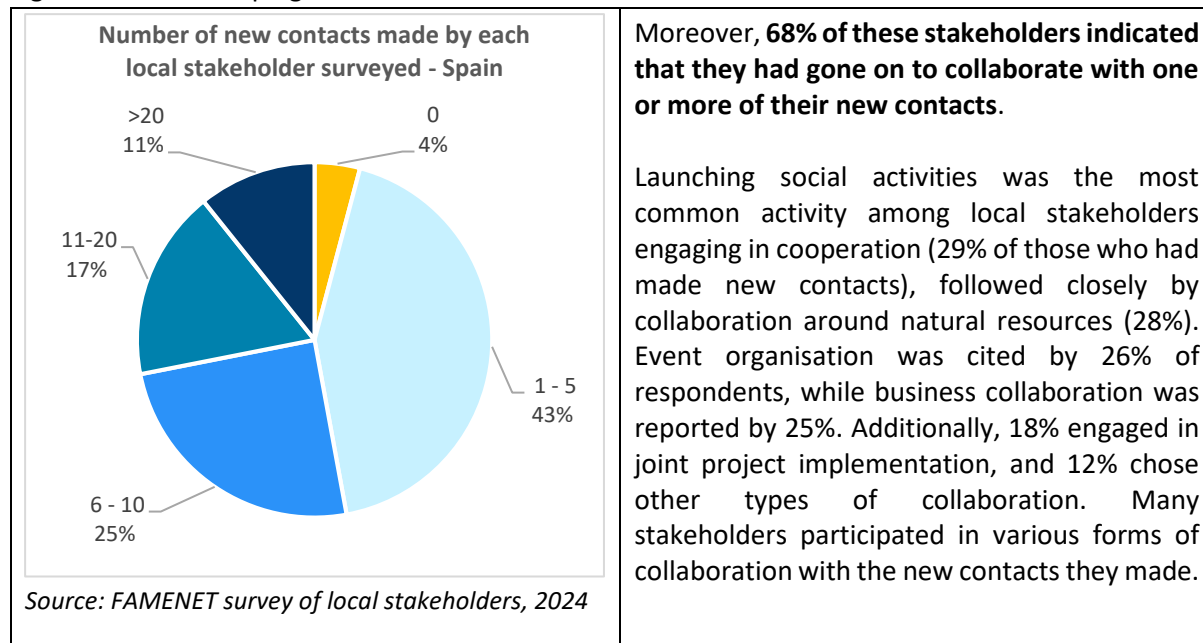


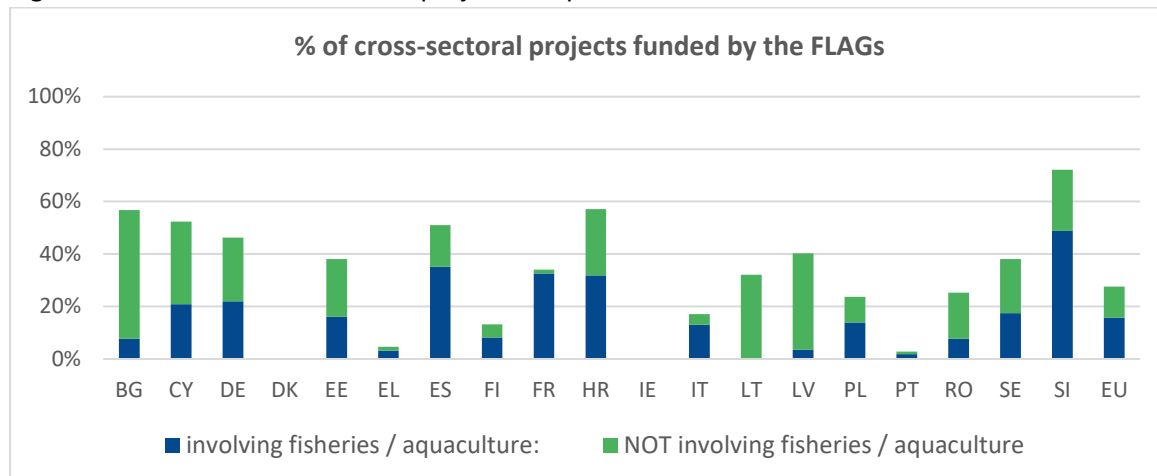
Figure 14: From connections to collaboration



Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

This indicates that **FLAGs in Spain are influential in developing not only connections but also cooperation at local level.** Moreover, when looking at the projects funded by Spanish FLAGs, the results of the EMFF FLAG survey reveals **that over 50% of these projects involve more than one sector**, with 71% of these cross-sectoral projects involving the fisheries/aquaculture sector. This amounts to 517 cross-sectoral projects funded by the 12 responding FLAGs, 300 of which involve collaboration with the fisheries or aquaculture sectors. In other words, Spanish FLAGs focused strongly on mobilising fisheries and aquaculture stakeholders and supporting them to implement projects in collaboration with other sectors. However, they also supported a number of projects between different blue economy partners outside of fisheries and aquaculture.

Figure 15: more than 50% of CLLD projects in Spain involve collaboration between different sectors

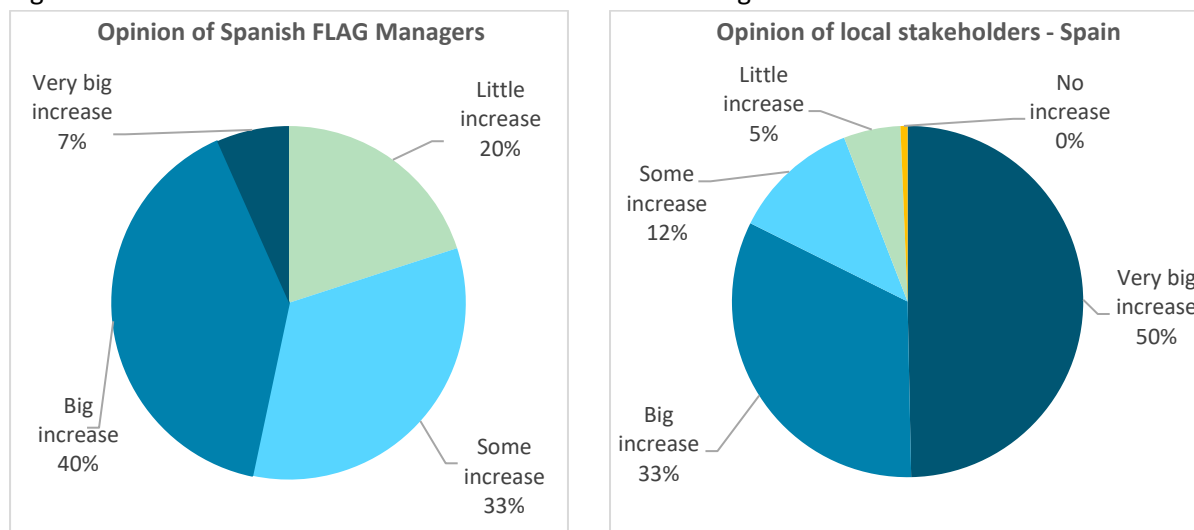


Source: FAMENET EMFF FLAG survey, 2024

### Building trust among local stakeholders

Finally, FAMENET also asked FLAG managers and local stakeholders whether they felt that the FLAG had increased trust locally. Trust is an important element of social capital and essential for effective collaboration. Both FLAG managers and local stakeholders agreed that FLAGs had contributed to increasing trust among local stakeholders, with **80% of FLAG Managers and 95% of local stakeholders indicating that trust among local stakeholders had increased as a result of the FLAG**. Interestingly, local stakeholders were more positive about this impact than the FLAG managers. Indeed 20% of FLAG managers felt that trust had not increased much while only 5% of local stakeholders believed this. In fact, 83% of local stakeholders that the FLAG had led to a “big” or “very big” increase in trust locally.

Figure 16: To what extent has the FLAG increased trust among local stakeholders?



Source: FAMENET EMFAF FLAG survey, 2024

Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

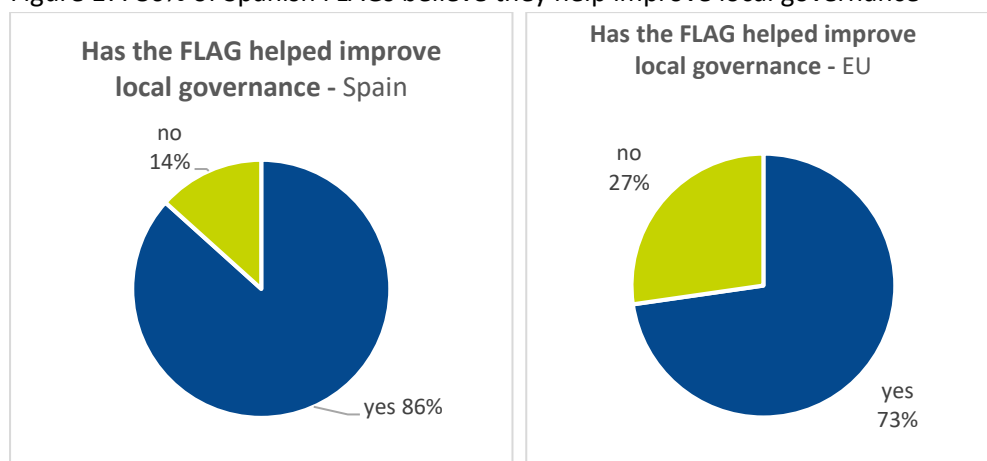
## 4.4 Contributing to improved governance

Increased connections, collaboration and trust create a strong foundation for improving local governance. By governance, we refer to the processes through which public, economic and civil society stakeholders articulate their interests and mediate their differences to manage public affairs collaboratively. This study focuses on role of FLAGs in enhancing the coordination of local activities and on whether local decision-making has become more participative.

FLAGS can have an impact in two ways: Firstly, a well-functioning FLAG that represents the relevant local interest groups from the blue economy can ensure that community members are actively involved in prioritising resources and for blue economy projects. The networks established among FLAG board members—and beyond—also play a role in ensuring that local stakeholders are better informed about decisions affecting them. Secondly, FLAGS can fund specific actions to improve local governance. In Spain, such actions have involved projects to bring together artisanal fishers and researchers to improve the area’s response to invasive species such as blue crab or supporting the creation of a management and traceability system for local cockles, with direct collaboration of local cockle pickers. On average Spanish FLAGS indicated that they had supported 4.3 local governance projects each during the EMFF period.

The impact of FLAG activities and projects funded appears to be felt on the ground. Both the FAMENET survey to FLAGS and the survey to local stakeholders sought to determine whether these groups felt that FLAGS had contributed to improvements in local governance. The findings were overwhelmingly positive: 86% of FLAG managers in Spain (compared with 73% of FLAGS surveyed EU-wide) and 96% of local stakeholders surveyed agreed that the FLAG had improved local governance.

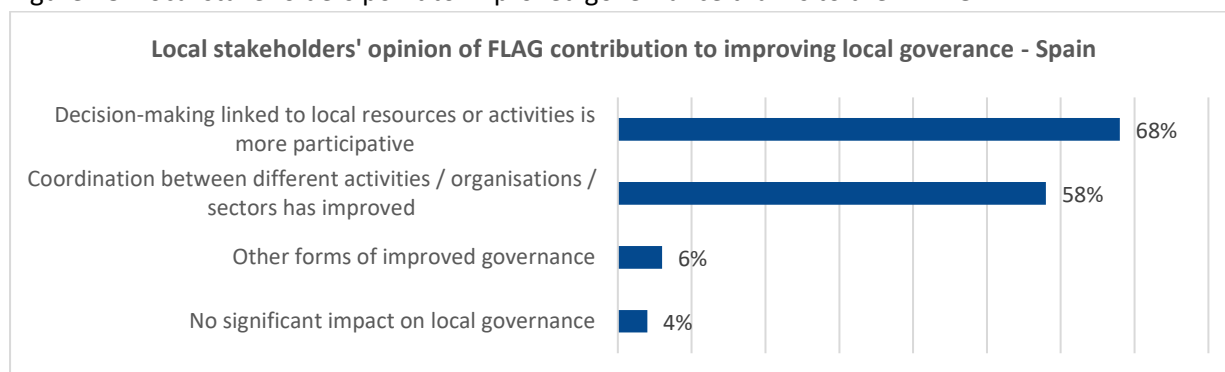
Figure 17: 86% of Spanish FLAGS believe they help improve local governance



Source: FAMENET EMFAF FLAG survey, 2024

More specifically, 68% of local stakeholders surveyed agreed that the FLAG had resulted in decision-making processes linked to local resources or activities becoming more participative. 58% believed that the FLAG had improved coordination between different activities and/or sectors. Just 4% of local stakeholders felt that the FLAG had no significant impact on local governance.

Figure 18: Local stakeholders point to improved governance thanks to their FLAG



Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

In our final synthesis report, we will further explore why FLAGs in some Member States appear to have a greater impact on local governance than others, and to what extent this is linked to the number of connections established, cross-sectoral projects supported, or other influencing factors.

#### 4.5 Conclusions on the role of Spanish FLAGs in empowering local stakeholders

When examining the extent to which Spanish FLAGs have empowered members of fisheries and coastal communities, the number of local projects funded in the FLAG areas is a key indicator: a total of 2 727 local projects were funded under CLLD in Spain, an average of 66.5 projects per FLAG area. This is significantly higher than the EU average of 44 projects per area, all the more remarkable given that the average number of human resources per FLAG is lower than the European average.

According to beneficiaries surveyed, **80% and 76% of these projects would not have been implemented without the FLAG guidance or funding, respectively.** This highlights the important role that FLAGs have played in enabling local stakeholders to implement projects they deemed beneficial.

The beneficiaries of these projects included individuals from groups that are typically challenging to engage in local development processes, notably small-scale fishers, who were involved in **25% of the projects.** Young people were also mobilized, though to a lesser extent, accounting for **14%** of the projects, despite facing a complex and lengthy delivery system. In addition to supporting young people to implement projects, FLAGs played a significant role in their professional training, thereby empowering to embark upon jobs or specific tasks within the blue economy. An estimated 24 600 young people were also actively engaged in educational activities and awareness-raising initiatives, benefiting from these opportunities facilitated by FLAGs.

The FLAGs in Spain appear to have played a positive role in transferring knowledge, with **91% of local stakeholders indicating that they had acquired new knowledge or skills** thanks to the FLAG. FLAGs have also demonstrated a strong role in making new datasets available and supporting project promoters - not only in accessing EU funds but also in implementing projects of higher quality than they would have achieved without the guidance and support of the FLAG.

Finally, the Spanish FLAGs have been successful in fostering connections between local stakeholders through networks, local events and cross-sectoral collaboration projects. As a result, there is a strong perception on the ground that both local governance and trust among local stakeholders have improved as a direct consequence of the FLAG's efforts.

We can therefore conclude that FLAGs have effectively empowered local stakeholders to undertake actions of their choosing - actions they were unlikely to have pursued otherwise. The provision of knowledge, information, contacts and direct support has all played a significant role in this process, leading to stronger connections and fostering productive collaboration within Spain's local fishing and aquaculture communities.

## 5. FLAGS bridging the gap between Europe and its citizens

This section aims to answer the evaluation question:

⇒ *To what extent have the FLAGS brought Europe closer to citizens?*

A “Europe closer to citizens” is one of five policy objectives of the European Union’s cohesion policy for the 2021-2027 period. It aims to foster “the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories.” Under the EMFAF, CLLD is programmed to contribute to this EU policy objective<sup>14</sup>.

Involving citizens more closely in the development of their areas - and ensuring this is in line with overarching European policy - can improve the impact of EU funding, as well as strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the European project. In this section, we will use the following criteria to assess whether FLAGS in France are bringing Europe closer to citizens:

- Increased awareness of the European project, thanks to the FLAG
- Increased perception of the EU’s usefulness, thanks to the FLAG
- Members of the local community have gained access to funding (including for the first time)
- Members of the local community have directly benefitted from projects supported by the EU

### 5.1 FLAGS as European ambassadors

The FLAGS play an important role in local areas, not only for their outreach and support activities, but also as ambassadors for the EU and its objective to enable local communities in fishing and aquaculture areas to “*better exploit and benefit from the opportunities offered by the sustainable blue economy, capitalising on and strengthening environmental, cultural, social and human resources.*”<sup>15</sup> FLAG strategies translate this EU objective into tangible action at local level that responds to specific needs and opportunities.

Information sessions organised by FLAGS to raise awareness at local level of the funding available and discuss concrete ideas to address specific challenges, contribute to engaging citizens from different stakeholder groups in the sustainable development of their areas, thus strengthening the European project.

In 2023, the first year of operation for EMFAF FLAGS in Spain, FLAGS surveyed mobilised an average of 232 people each to attend meetings they had organised. Depending on the FLAG, this number ranged from just 20 to 2 000 people (two FLAGS reported not having info at that time). Once the EMFAF programme reaches full capacity and all 44 FLAGS become operational, this could result in over **10 208 people participating annually in discussions about how EU funds can contribute to the sustainable and integrated development of Spain’s fisheries and aquaculture areas.**

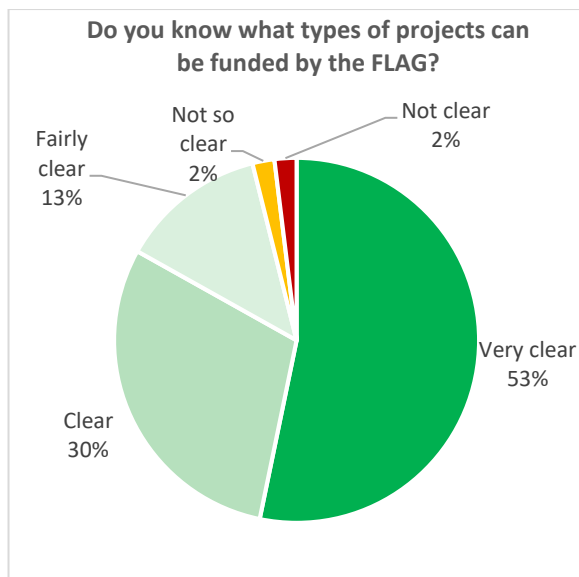
Figure 19: Local awareness of EU funding opportunities

---

<sup>14</sup> EMFAF Regulation 2021/1139, Annex 2

<sup>15</sup> EMFAF Regulation 2021/1139, Article 30 - Community-led local development





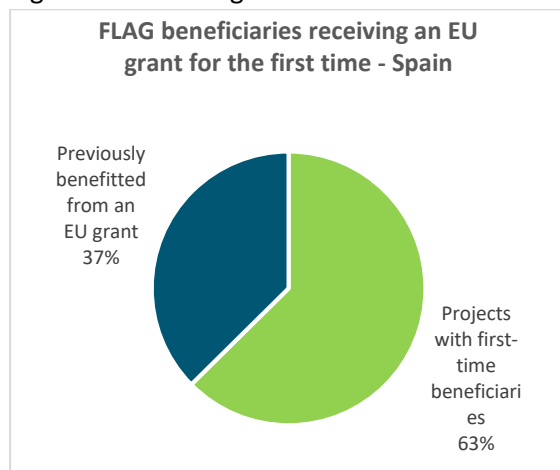
Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

When local stakeholders in Spain were surveyed to assess their understanding of the types of initiatives that could be funded under their FLAG’s local development strategy, 83% of respondents indicated that they had a clear or very clear idea. This suggests that FLAGs are effectively raising awareness locally about EU objectives and funding opportunities.

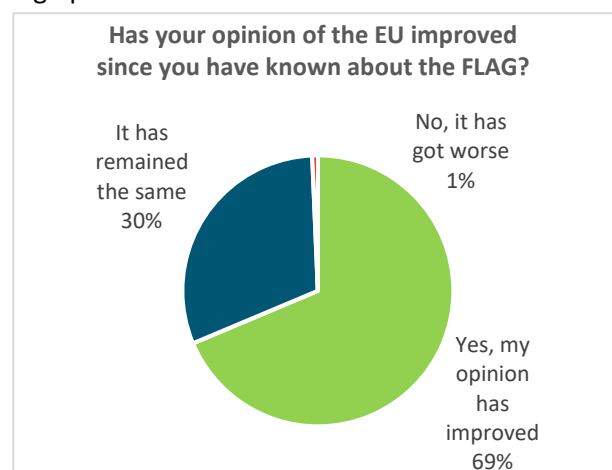
Moreover, Spanish FLAGs estimated that for 63% of local beneficiaries receiving a FLAG grant during the EMFF period, it was their first time receiving EU funding. This also demonstrates that FLAGs in Spain are helping to make Europe more accessible to stakeholders who do not traditionally engage with European funding schemes.

It seems that increased access to EU funds may also contribute to an improved opinion of the EU among local stakeholders. While 63% of beneficiaries were “new” to accessing EU funds, 69% of stakeholders surveyed reported having a more positive opinion of the EU. Meanwhile, 30% said their opinion remained the same, which is similar to the percentage of beneficiaries who had already received EU funding.

Figure 20: Reaching new stakeholders and boosting opinions of the EU



Source: FAMENET EMFF FLAG survey, 2024



Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

We will explore the potential link between attracting new beneficiaries of EU funds and an improved opinion of the EU in our synthesis review of eight MS case studies and the full set of data collected from FLAGs and local stakeholders.

Less than 1% of stakeholders surveyed in Spain said their opinion of the EU had worsened following their contact with the FLAG. In fact, just one out of 154 local stakeholders who answered the question indicated that their opinion of the EU had become more negative. This respondent felt that the project

selection was not transparent enough, only benefiting those closest to the FLAG.<sup>16</sup> While this is very low, it is important to consider such opinions in order to avoid other people coming to similar conclusions.

## 5.2 FLAGS bringing direct benefits to EU citizens

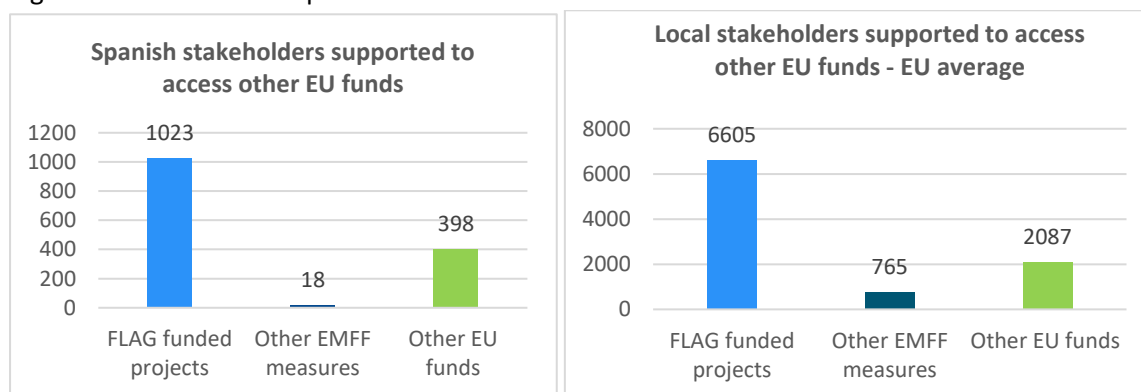
Information from Infosys indicates that around 2 727 local projects were funded by the Spanish FLAGS, and 1 718 unique project promoters mobilised (an average of almost 42 different project promoters per FLAG). In this context, we can identify 1 718 stakeholders who directly benefited in Spain from CLLD funding to carry out a project they considered important. These local stakeholders in Spanish fisheries and aquaculture communities received grants totalling EUR 125 million, contributing a further EUR 72 million themselves to the projects supported.

Beyond accessing funding, these local initiatives brought additional benefits to citizens in fisheries and aquaculture communities, such as skills and knowledge development, services provided, improved environmental practices, and more. FLAGS completing FAMENET’s EMFF survey<sup>17</sup> estimated that on average around 3 819 people in each area benefited from the projects they supported. While this information remains an estimate, if extrapolated to all 41 FLAGS of the EMFF period, this would imply 156 579 citizens benefitted from the EUR 125 million<sup>18</sup> invested in Spain under EMFF CLLD.

As we saw in Chapter 4, 80% of local stakeholders surveyed in Spain indicated that they would not have undertaken their project without the FLAG staff guidance and 76% without the FLAG grant (in other words, around 2 000 of the 2 727 projects are unlikely to have happened without FLAG support). This highlights a key benefit that CLLD has brought to fisheries and aquaculture communities – enhancing access to funding and stimulating local initiatives.

Finally, it is also worth noting that while FLAGS funded a total of 2 727 projects, some were active in redirecting local stakeholders to other sources of EU funding, further strengthening the connection between Europe and its citizens. Among the FLAGS responding to FAMENET’s EMFF survey, 1 023 local projects were funded. Additionally, they helped local stakeholders access EU funding for another 416 projects- 18 from other EMFF measures and 398 from other EU funds, such as LEADER.

Figure 21: FLAGS also helped stakeholders access other EU funds



<sup>16</sup> 16 local stakeholders from this FLAG answered the survey, eight said that their opinion of the EU had improved, six said that it had remained the same and one provided no info.

<sup>17</sup> 15 of 18 FLAGS provided an estimate of the “number of people benefiting”. The remaining 3 FLAGS said they did not have enough information to make such an estimate.

<sup>18</sup> EUR 106.3 million from the EMFF and EUR 18.7 million in Spanish co-financing

Source: FAMENET EMFF FLAG survey, 2024

### **5.3 Conclusions on FLAGs bringing Europe closer to citizens**

The information above demonstrates that CLLD in fisheries and aquaculture areas has fostered participation in local development processes that align within the broader EU framework of development priorities. While it is still too early in the EMFAF programme to have a complete picture of how many people will be involved in the current period, in the first year alone (2023), and even though the majority of the Spanish FLAGs had not yet reached full operational capacity, approximately 3 250 local stakeholders in 16 FLAG areas had attended a meeting organised by their FLAG, and 96% of local stakeholders surveyed had a clear understanding of what the FLAG could fund. With the selection of 44 FLAGs in Spain, the programme presents an opportunity in coastal communities to access EU funding and engage in development discussions.

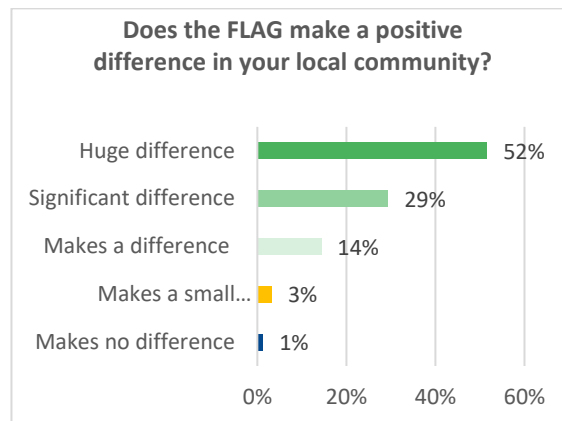
In the 2014-2020 period, over 2 700 local projects were funded and more than 1 700 different project promoters received funding for a project of their choice. In preparation for the EMFAF period, an estimated 1 648 people contributed to their FLAG's local development strategy in Spain.

According to the FLAGs surveyed, for around 550 project promoters it was the first time they had received EU funding. This first-hand involvement with an EU project seems to contribute to a more positive perception of the EU's usefulness. Approximately 66.5% of local stakeholders surveyed indicated that, thanks to the FLAG, their perception of the EU's usefulness had improved.

## 6 FLAGS helping to improve socio-economic and environmental dynamics in coastal communities

95% of Spanish local stakeholders surveyed in 2024 indicated that their FLAG made a positive difference in their local community, with 52% feeling that it made a big difference.

This final section assesses various socio-economic elements, addressing the evaluation question:



Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

⇒ *To what extent have FLAGS contributed to a positive change in socio-economic and environmental dynamics in their areas?*

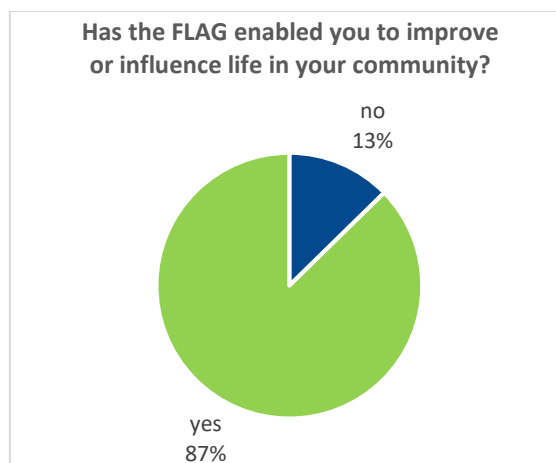
### 6.1 Strengthening socio-economic fabric

*Local stakeholders are active in driving change at local level*

As we saw in Chapter 3, FLAGS in Spain mobilised an average of 118 local stakeholders each to provide input to their local development strategy. On average 11 local stakeholders in each area sat on the decision-making board of the FLAG, playing an ongoing role in steering local development.

We also asked FLAGS how many project ideas had been proposed and discussed in 2023. The FLAGS that responded reported an average of **31 project ideas per area that had emerged and been discussed with potential beneficiaries in 2023**. In Galicia, two FLAGS had discussed 100 project ideas with potential project promoters (Arousa FLAG and Costa da Morte FLAG), and another one had discussed 80 project ideas (Pontevedra FLAG). Considering that Galicia was the first region to select and operationalise its FLAGS, and the only area working almost at full capacity during 2023, these data provide a realistic indication of the potential of the 44 Spanish FLAGS to encourage and support concrete action at the local level. While the EMFAF programme is still in a relatively early phase, local stakeholders are already becoming active in proposing action that can bring improvements to the area.

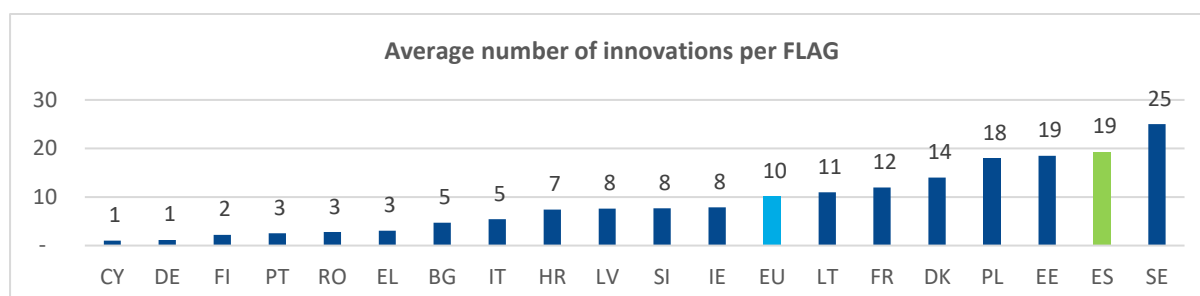
From the EMFF period (2014-2020), 87% of local stakeholders surveyed by FAMENET in Spain indicated that the FLAG had enabled them to improve or influence life in their community. This suggests that the perception among the stakeholders mobilised by the FLAG is that it plays a significant role in encouraging local stakeholders to propose and implement changes in their areas.



Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

New services and activities are one indicator of the improvements that local stakeholders may implement. **In Spain, according to the FLAGs surveyed, they contributed to the creation or improvement of 263 new activities or services during the EMFF period** - an average of 16 per FLAG. Examples of new activities introduced in FLAG areas include new tourism products, new outlets for fish, or new public spaces for the community, such as museums or retirement homes.

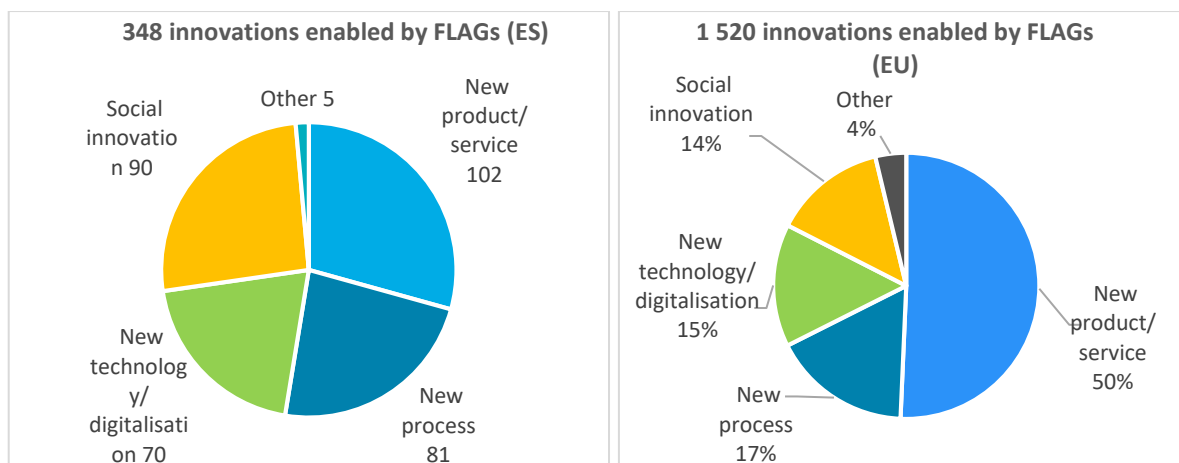
Spanish FLAGs also report impressive results in fostering local innovation in fishing and aquaculture communities. The responding FLAGs reported 348 innovations, averaging 19 innovations per FLAG. This places Spain as the second MS in Europe in terms of bringing innovation to coastal communities- an impressive figure, especially considering that education and research make up only 4% of board members. This suggests that, even though they are not directly involved in the FLAG decision-making bodies, FLAGs manage to engage these sectors in the implementation of projects in their areas.



Source: FAMENET survey of EMFF FLAGs, 2024

In terms of the types of innovations supported by Spanish FLAGs, new products and new processes make up the majority. Examples of **new products** supported by Spanish FLAGs include the development of a high-quality, sustainable agricultural fertiliser made from seaweed and the manufacture of shellfish gathering gear from marine litter.

While 50% of innovations across Europe come from new products and services, the innovations supported by Spanish FLAGs are more diversified, with efforts spread evenly across different innovation categories. Not only does Spain report the most innovations in absolute numbers, but it also leads in the number of innovations in nearly every category. **New processes** fostered in Spanish coastal communities account for 23% of the innovations supported and include the piloting of more sustainable fishing gear, the adaptation of nets for fishing newly introduced invasive species, and the introduction of new electrically powered vessels.



Source: FAMENET EMFF FLAG survey, 2024

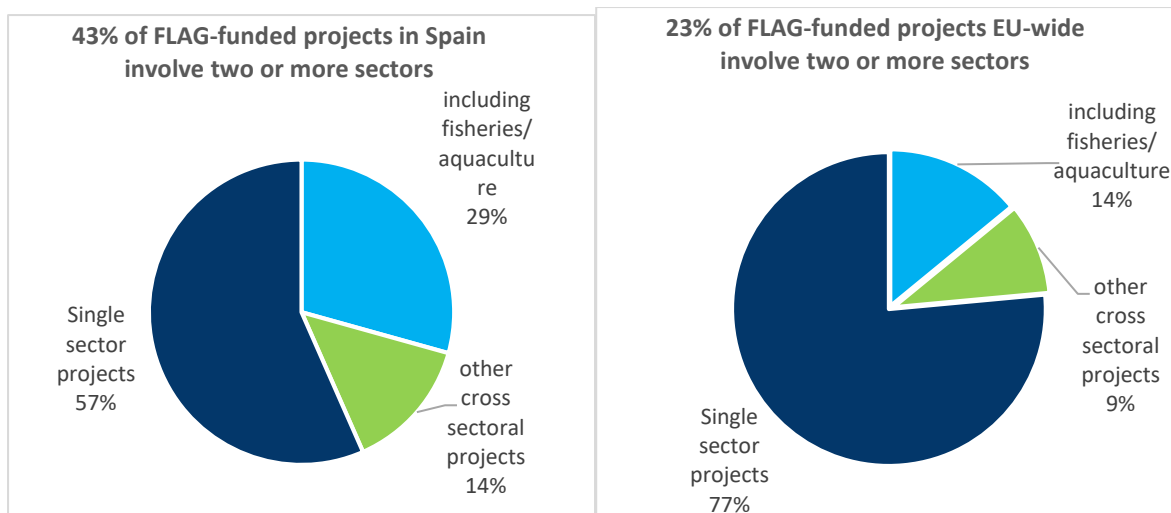
**Social innovations** are also abundant, including the creation of the first sailing school for people with disabilities, involving local fishers in environmental protection activities such as surveillance enforcement and halting poaching in a Marine Protected Area, and designing a protocol for removing traps used in illegal fishing. Additionally, FLAGs have also proven to be a key stakeholder to implement measures to keep fishing active and safe during the Covid-19 crisis, acquiring and distributing personal protective equipment to nearly 3 000 workers in the sector (including fishers, auction staff and marketers).

Finally, **new technology** accounts for just 20% of the innovations reported. However, several interesting projects in Spain are helping to change mindsets and behaviour in fisheries and aquaculture communities. These range from digital apps that allow small-scale fishers to report their catch via mobile phones, to using digital platforms to improve working conditions for shellfish gatherers by automating information and planning systems related to the sea and stock conditions.

#### *Fostering local collaboration - with fisheries and aquaculture at its heart*

Improved collaboration is driving much of the innovation taking place in fisheries and aquaculture areas. It is also helping to strengthen the socio-economic fabric in these communities, increasing the visibility of the primary sector (fisheries and aquaculture) and its integration into local development processes.

The 18 Spanish FLAGs surveyed on achievements under the EMFF funded **444 cross-sectoral projects, the highest figure reported among the other MS**- 43% of FLAG-funded projects reported by FLAGs in FAMENET Survey, while, at the EU level, approximately 1/4 of CLLD projects involve collaboration between sectors.

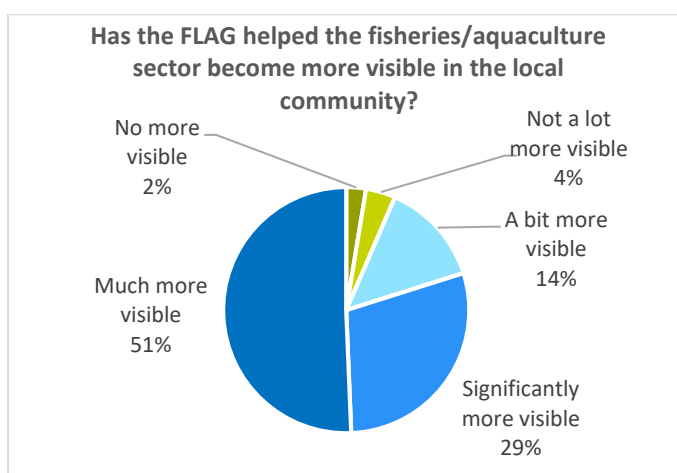


Source: FAMENET EMFF FLAG survey, 2024

60% of cross-sectoral projects supported by FLAGs around Europe involved fisheries and/or aquaculture. In Spain, this percentage rises to **67%**.

Local events aimed to raise public awareness of the fisheries and aquaculture activities and products of the area also sought to strengthen the sector’s position within the local community and the economy. On average, during the 2014-2020 period, Spanish FLAGs supported the organisation of 30 local events each. They also reported that 308 entities linked to local fisheries benefited from promotion and information activities, an average of 19 entities in each FLAG area responding to the question.

The collaboration fostered by Spanish FLAGs, along with targeted activities to promote and mobilise the fisheries and aquaculture sectors has, according to local stakeholders, resulted in greater visibility for the sector. In fact, 94% of local stakeholders surveyed believed that fisheries and aquaculture had become more visible in the local community, with 80% describing it as “much more visible” or “significantly more visible”.



Source: FAMENET survey of local stakeholders, 2024

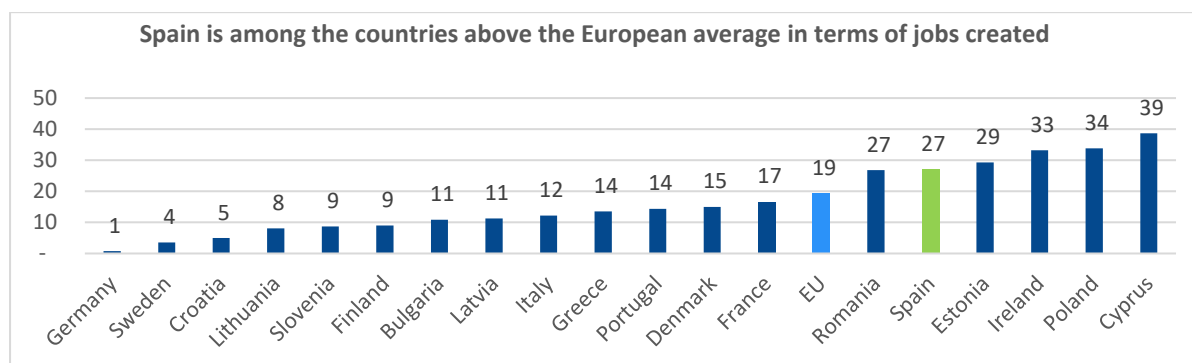
## 6.2 Boosting local economies

Regarding the economic benefits that EMFF CLLD has brought to Spanish fishing and aquaculture communities, information was collected on a several indicators: jobs and businesses created; strengthened local supply chains; and businesses increasing their revenue or diversifying their sources of income. In terms of private investment, the projects supported by the Spanish FLAGs have mobilised EUR 72.8 million, alongside EUR 125 million of public funding. In other words, around 37% of the total cost of projects was supported by the private sector – compared to the EU average of 30%

### *New jobs and businesses in fisheries areas*

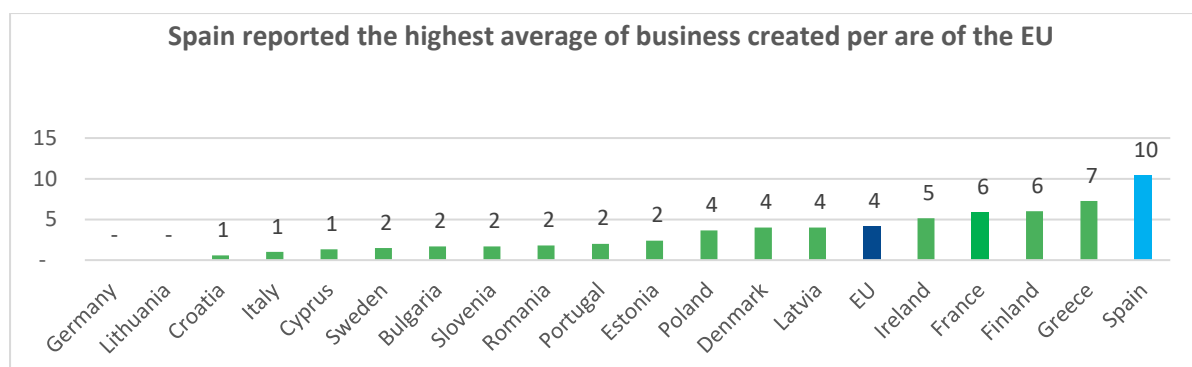
Jobs created was one of three common result indicators for EMFF CLLD, and 13 out of the 18 Spanish FLAGs responding to FAMENET’s survey reported that they had helped create new jobs. Three FLAGs reported no jobs created, and two did not provide information. Together, they supported the **creation of 435 new jobs**.

Among the FLAGs that supported the creation of new jobs, the numbers varied significantly from one FLAG to another – ranging from 109 jobs in Eastern Cantabria (ES217) to just four jobs reported by two FLAGs in the Valencian Community and the Canary Islands. Regardless, the data indicates that Spanish **FLAGs are again above the EU average of 27 new jobs created per FLAG**.



Source: FAMENET EMFF FLAG survey, 2024

In terms of business creation, responding FLAGs reported the creation of **166 new businesses**, averaging 10.4 new businesses per FLAG. Twelve out of the 18 FLAGs provided information on businesses created. Seven of these FLAGs reported creating between 1-7 businesses each, while five FLAGs created between 16 to 44 businesses.

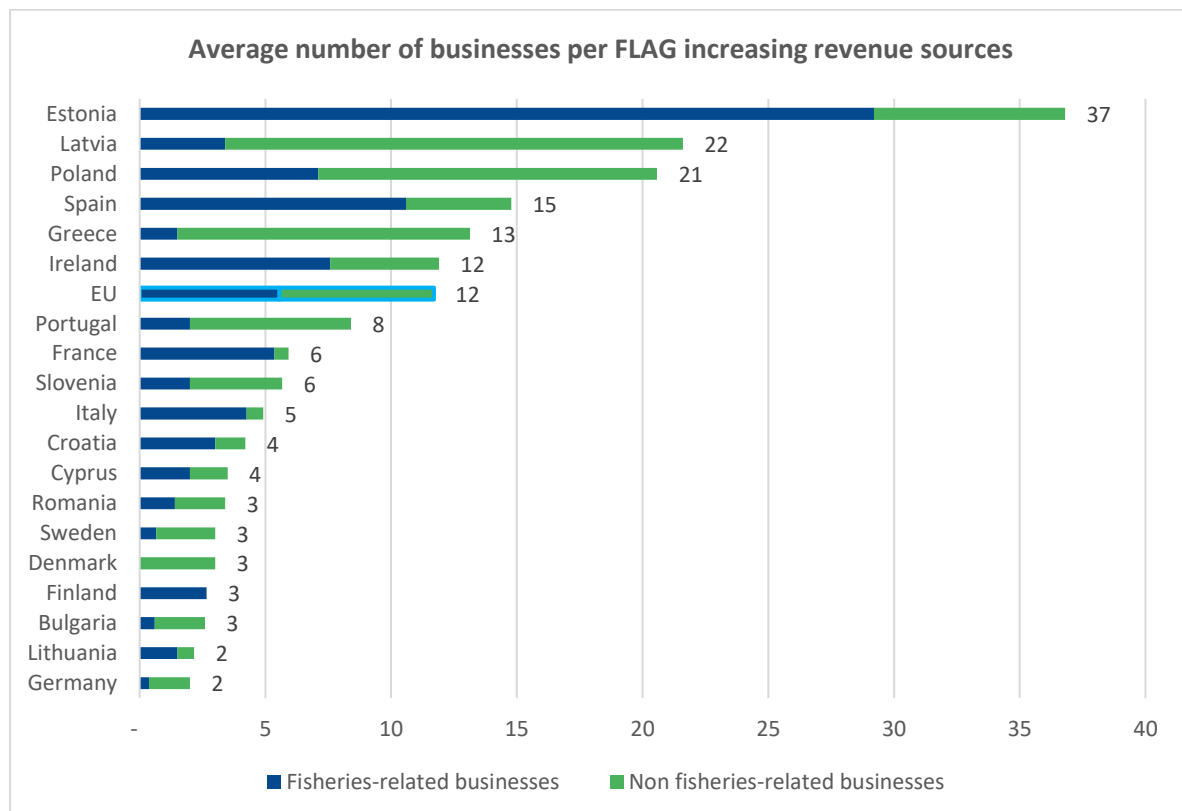


Source: FAMENET EMFF FLAG survey, 2024



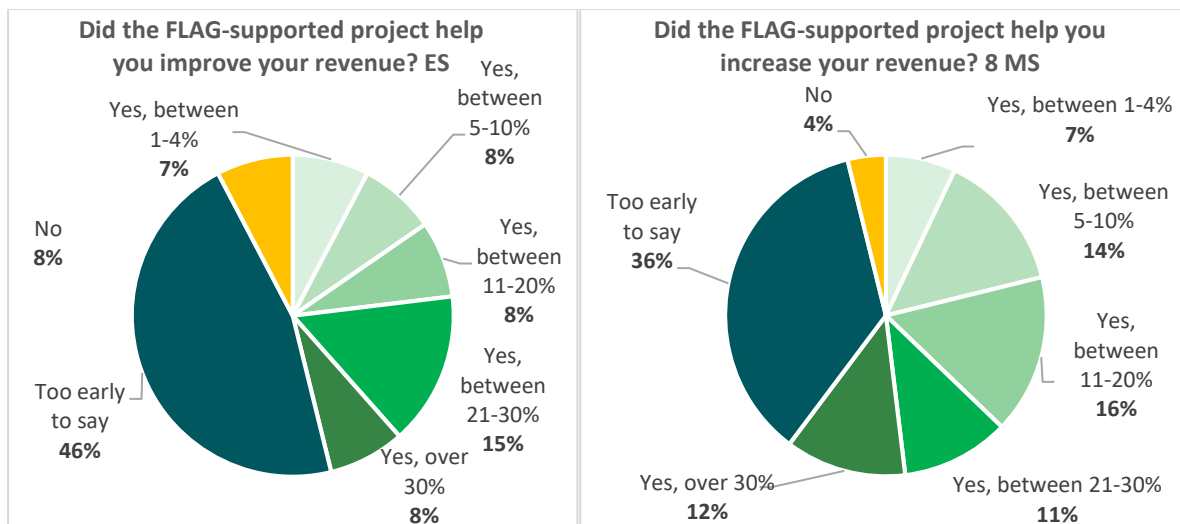
### Strengthening local businesses

Spanish FLAGs also achieved significant success in helping local businesses diversify their revenue sources. Examples include fishers diversifying into maritime surveillance of protected areas, manufacturing handicraft products from fishing gears, and engaging in complementary activities such as fisheries-related tourism. A total of **247 businesses diversified their income streams**, enhancing their resilience to potential shocks. This amounts to an average of 14 businesses per FLAG area. Notably, **76% of businesses supported by Spanish FLAGs to diversify their revenue sources were fisheries or aquaculture-related**, as shown in the figure below, underscoring the strong focus of Spanish FLAGs on supporting these primary sectors.



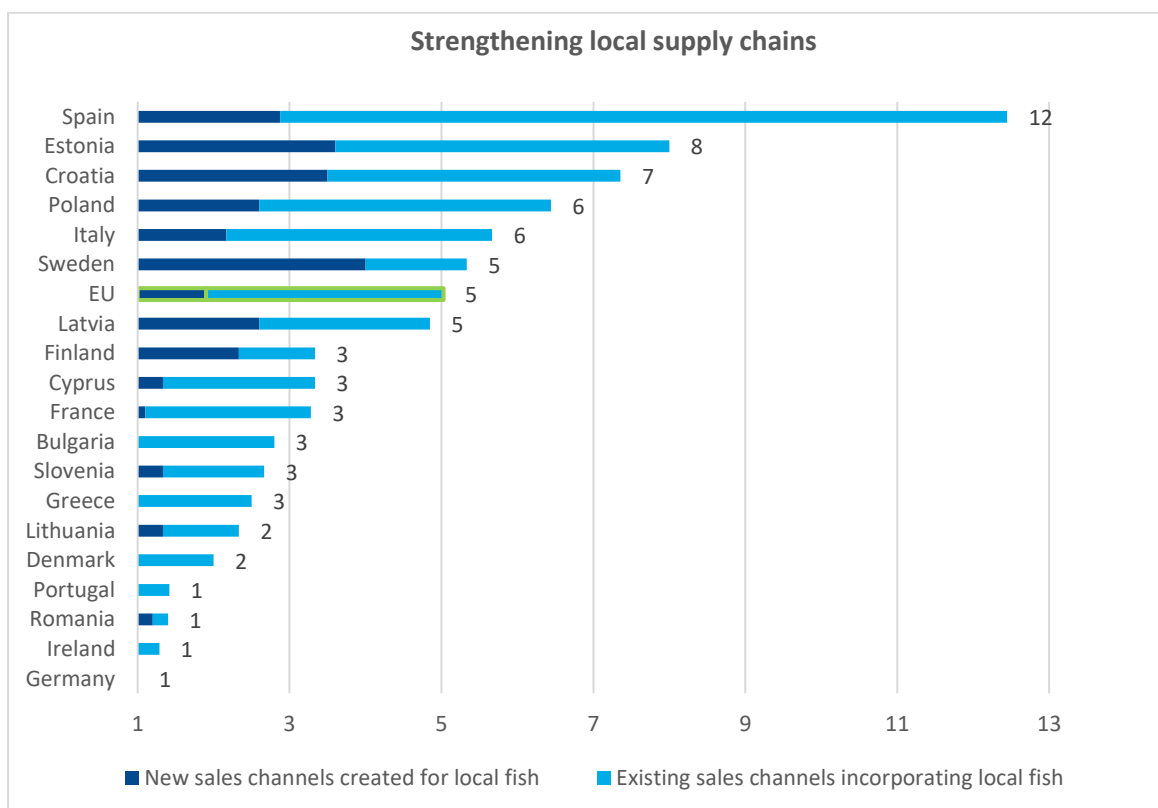
Source: FAMENET survey of EMFF FLAGs, 2024

When it comes to supporting businesses in increasing their revenue, the results of projects supported by Spanish FLAGs were more limited compared to other EU countries. Only 46% of Spanish project promoters implementing a “productive investment” with FLAG support reported that the project led to an increase in revenue, compared to 60% of beneficiaries across the EU. An equally large proportion of beneficiaries reported that it was still too early to assess the impact, while 8% of beneficiaries clearly stated that the project did not increase their revenue, compared to just 4% at the EU level.



### Promoting short supply chains for local fish

Twelve out of the 18 responding FLAGs indicated that they had supported projects to strengthen short supply chains for local fish or seafood products. Together, Spanish FLAGs reported the creation of 46 new outlets for local fish, averaging around 3 new sales channels per area. They also reported that 134 existing sales channels had started offering local fish or significantly increased their offerings, thanks to FLAG-funded projects. Examples include local fish restaurants and processing plants that have opened a retail section to the public.

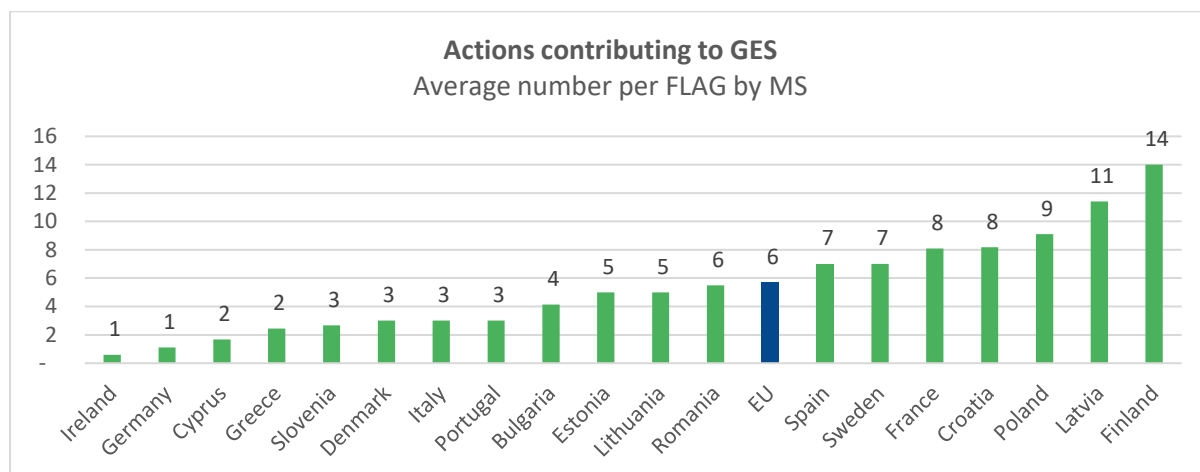


Source: FAMENET survey of EMFF FLAGs, 2024

### 6.3 Contributing to environmental protection and conservation of natural resources

#### Actions for good environmental status

Thirteen of the 18 FLAGs responding to the FAMENET survey provided information on environmental actions, reporting a total of **98 initiatives that contributed to good environmental status (GES)**. Only one FLAG had not supported any actions in its area, while four did not provided any information about it. The majority of FLAGs had supported between 1-22 such actions. On average, Spanish FLAGs funded around 7 projects each that contributed to GES, placing Spain above the EU average in terms of its focus on environmental focus. Extrapolated to all 41 FLAGs of the EMFF period, this would suggest around 287 projects in Spain contributing to GES.

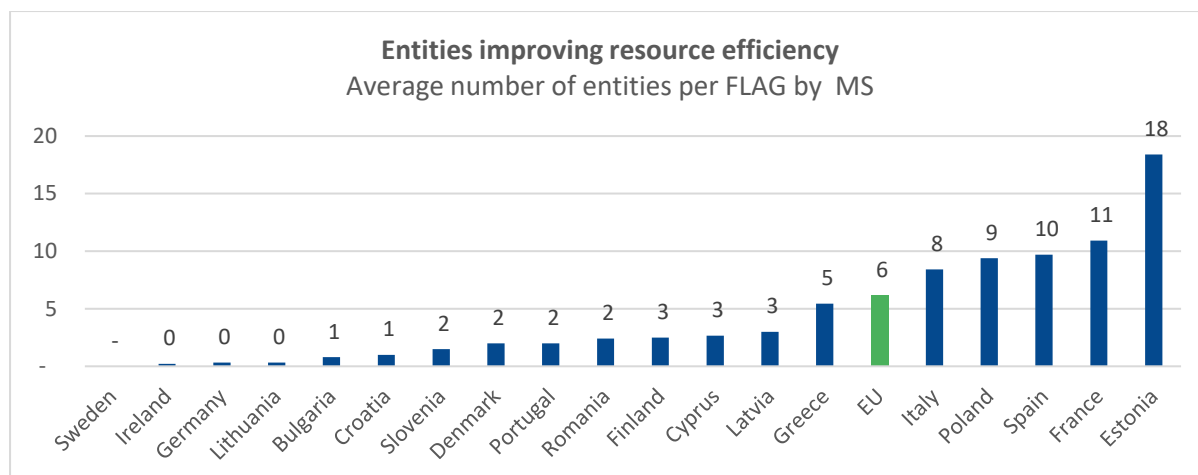


Source: FAMENET survey of EMFF FLAGs, 2024

A survey of FLAGs conducted in 2020 revealed similar figures and gathered more specific information on the types of projects funded that contributed to the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems. In Spain, the results indicated around 32 projects aimed to improve fisheries stock management, 11 focused on protecting ecosystems, 80 promoting eco-tourism, 20 targeting energy savings, 6 addressing water quality, and another 16 focused on tackling marine litter. Other projects included efforts to reduce the impact of fishing on marine ecosystems, such as the development and piloting of more selective gear. Projects involving Marine Protected Areas and the active participation of fishers in such initiatives were also reported, reinforcing surveillance of these areas during the summer, defining new fisheries reserves, and establishing cooperation between the fishing and research sectors to ensure responsible management and minimize the impact of fishing on the marine environment.

#### Transitioning towards a low carbon & more resource efficient economy

Projects supporting the transition towards a low carbon economy and reducing pressure on our finite natural resources are relatively recent among FLAGs. However, Spain is among the top three countries in this area. Spanish FLAGs reported an average of 10 entities per area, totalling **155 entities, that had improved resource efficiency.**



Source: FAMENET survey of EMFF FLAGs, 2024

Projects known to FAMENET include the modernisation of vessels and other investments aimed to improve the energy efficiency of fisheries, aquaculture, and processing. Other projects include the installation of photovoltaic panels to power fisheries associations facilities, and the re-use and recycling of equipment used in fisheries and aquaculture.

#### 6.4 Conclusions of FLAG contribution to improving socio-economic and environmental dynamics in coastal communities

Information in this chapter highlights various areas where CLLD has helped improve socio-economic and environmental dynamics in fisheries and aquaculture areas. While the improvements primarily focus on stakeholders and issues related to fisheries and aquaculture, 95% of stakeholders surveyed by FAMENET indicated that their FLAG had made a positive difference in their local community.

FLAGs have been successful in fostering collaborative action between the fisheries/aquaculture sectors and other interest groups, leading to numerous innovations. These include new products based on local fisheries resources, as well as new partnerships and ways of working. More environmentally sustainable fishing gear and vessels have been designed and piloted, enabling FLAGs to be drivers of innovation in their local areas, gradually introducing technology and devices with a view to large-scale replication.

Local events, cross-sector collaboration, and awareness-raising campaigns have all contributed to a perception among local stakeholders that, thanks to the FLAGs, the fisheries and aquaculture sectors are now more visible and integrated into the local community. This integration of the primary sector into broader territorial development enhances its resilience to potential shocks. At the same time, an average of 7 actions were funded in each FLAG area, helping to raise awareness, shift mentalities, and implement concrete measures to protect and restore the natural resources in Spain’s fishing and aquaculture areas.

## 7 Conclusions

### *CLLD set-up in Spain*

In Spain, CLLD under the EMFF/EMFAF involves substantial funding (EUR 106.3 million from the EMFF, totalling EUR 125 million with Spanish co-financing).. The average budget for a Spanish FLAG (41 in total during the last period) under the EMFF was EUR 3 million in total public funding, which is above the EU average of EUR 1.9 million. With an average of 2.3 FTEs employed per FLAG, **Spain is however below the EU average** of 2.8 FTEs. The **large number of cross-sectoral projects, cooperation within different local sectors achieved and the high number of innovations** show that Spanish FLAGs are well integrated within the territorial landscape. However, the FLAGs surveyed show a **limited diversity of groups of interest** represented on their **decision-making bodies**. On average, the new EMFAF FLAGs in Spain have mobilised 11 people from 5.4 different interest groups to play an active role (slightly below the EU average of 6 interest groups). Nevertheless, Spanish FLAGs have been successful in ensuring that no single interest group holds the majority in decision-making related to their activities.

The **fishing sector is represented on the decision-making body of 88% of FLAGs** surveyed in Spain, while the aquaculture sector is represented on 44% of FLAG boards. The presence of non-profit organisations is also notable, as is the involvement of women's organisations, which are represented in 25% of the surveyed FLAGs- compared to the EU average of 13%. The public sector also plays an important role in Spanish FLAGs.

**Spanish FLAGs' staff are highly valued by local stakeholders** surveyed, who perceive them as competent and accessible. Moreover, 80% of beneficiaries surveyed indicated that they would not have undertaken their project without the advice of the FLAG. During the EMFF period, the 41 Spanish FLAGs funded 2 727 local projects<sup>19</sup>, **averaging 66.5 projects per FLAG area**- well above the EU average of 44 projects per FLAG. Small-scale fisheries were a key target group, with 25% of the projects being implemented by small-scale fishers or they organisations.

However, the administrative systems for CLLD in Spain are perceived as slow, with **only 16% of FLAGs surveyed feeling that the delivery system facilitated their work**. Despite this, the experience and professionalism of the Spanish FLAGs have ensured that this issue has not been passed on to stakeholders, with only 8% indicating that the application processes were difficult. FLAGs funding is seen as valuable by those who receive it: **76% of beneficiaries surveyed stated they would not have undertaken their project without the FLAG grant**.

### *CLLD achievements in Spain*

The projects supported by the Spanish FLAGs, along with their community outreach and support efforts, have led to a series of achievements in fishing and aquaculture communities. These include both softer outcomes, such as knowledge development and increased social capital, as well as more tangible "harder" results, such as the creation of new jobs and businesses, and improved resource efficiency within certain organisations linked to fisheries and aquaculture.

This report demonstrates that FLAGs are an **effective tool for fostering connections between local stakeholders and different interest groups**. On average, FLAGs in Spain supported the creation of one

---

<sup>19</sup> Figure reported in Infosys by Spain's EMFF Managing Authority

new network in each area and strengthened nine existing networks. Local stakeholders reported making an average of 15 new contacts, thanks to the FLAG, with 68% of them going on to collaborate with one or more of these contacts. Collaboration has been particularly encouraged among fisheries and aquaculture stakeholders, helping to integrate these sectors into broader territorial development work and decisions that impact them.

Such efforts to mobilise stakeholders and encourage networking and cooperation on the ground lead to tangible benefits in coastal communities, including the already mentioned **cross-sectoral collaboration, innovation and improved governance**. On average, FLAGs in Spain each supported 25 projects involving partners from different sectors and 19 innovations in the local context (including new products, new processes, social innovations and new technologies). A significant 96% of local stakeholders surveyed agreed that the FLAG had improved local governance, primarily by turning decision-making related to local resources into a more participatory process and improving coordination between different activities and/or sectors.

Studies and experimental actions have generated new knowledge on natural resources in Spain's coastal areas, **contributing to better environmental practices in managing water pollution, fisheries resources and waste from the fisheries and aquaculture sectors**. Projects piloting renewable energy within fisheries and aquaculture are also supporting efforts to transition towards a low carbon economy, while raising awareness among coastal communities about the need for and possibilities of doing so. Awareness-raising and educational activities have been organised for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, as well as for the general public and young people. On average, Spanish FLAGs mobilised 597 young people for awareness-raising and educational activities.

Finally, FLAGs have played a key role in **strengthening local economic activities linked to fisheries and aquaculture**, creating a total of 971 new jobs and 368 new businesses in coastal communities. Fisheries and aquaculture companies have also been supported in diversifying their revenue sources. For example, through complementary activities or expanded product ranges. Additionally, local fish and seafood products have gained new sales opportunities in coastal areas, driven by increased public awareness of the sector and its offerings. It is estimated that over 308 local entities in 18 FLAG areas were estimated to have benefitted from such promotion.

#### *CLLD making the EU accessible to citizens*

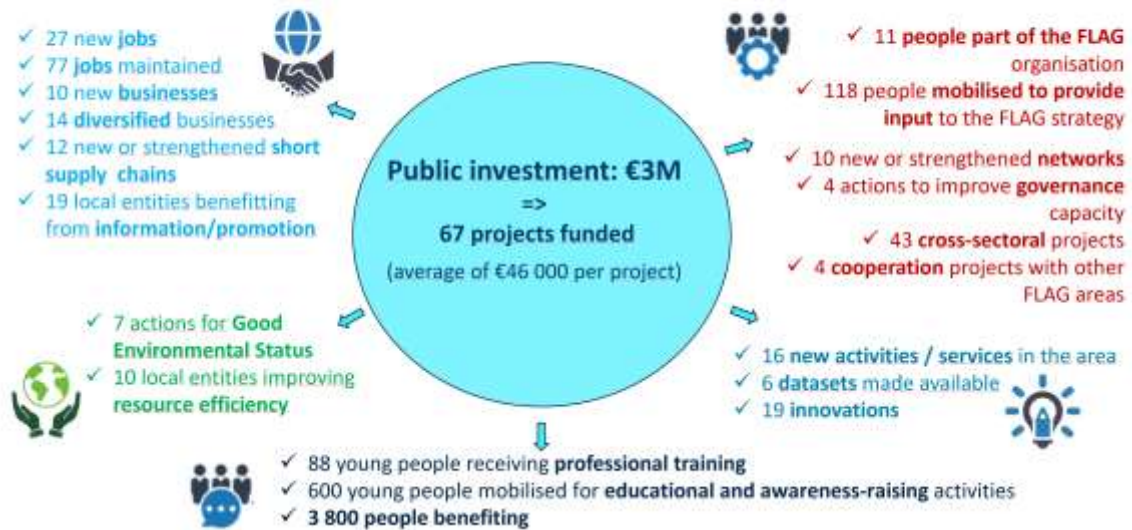
Beyond the tangible achievements mentioned above, FLAGs in Spain have also played a crucial role in making EU funding more accessible to citizens in fishing and aquaculture areas. On average, more than 31 people per FLAG area were estimated to have contributed to the strategies of those FLAGs surveyed. Extrapolated to all 44 EMFAF FLAGs, this would imply near 1 400 people from coastal communities mobilised to provide input on how EU funds should be spent.

1 718 different beneficiaries received EU funding from their FLAGs to implement projects of importance to them, with beneficiaries providing an additional EUR 72 million in funding to make their projects happen. Approximately 63% of these FLAG beneficiaries were first-time recipients of EU grants, according to FLAGs surveyed. According to EMFF FLAGs surveyed, an estimated 3 819 people per FLAG area benefited from the projects they supported. If this trend continues into the EMFAF period across all 44 FLAGs, over 168 000 people could benefit from CLLD initiatives in coastal areas. The development of knowledge, information, contacts and direct financial support to projects all seem

to play a critical role in fostering productive collaboration within Spain's fishing and aquaculture communities.

41 FLAGs (EMFF), 44 FLAGs (EMFAF)

## Achievements of the "average" Spanish FLAG (EMFF, 2014-2020)



Source: FAMENET EMFF survey, 2024