



# Review of participatory fisheries management arrangements in the European Union



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## ABSTRACT

Promoting and attaining sustainable use of resources through community participation is a central tenet of the European Union's (EU) 2013 Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. A systematic review approach was used to identify participatory fisheries management arrangements within the EU. Following this, the participatory arrangements were categorized based on the nature of the decision-making arrangement, influence and empowerment of the fishing industry. The study identified 40 management arrangements distributed through 8 member states, with a variety of fisheries and institutional settings for participation in fisheries management in the EU. The majority of the partnerships identified are "Functional participation", i.e., the participatory arrangement is based in pre-determined goals encouraged by higher decision-making levels in order to increase efficiency of management decisions. Interactive partnership was the highest level of participation identified in the systematic review, and is usually more conducive with local arrangements in coastal and small-scale fisheries targeting low mobility species.

## 1. Introduction

Fisheries management in Europe is constrained by geo-political complexities [1]. The European waters are composed of distinctive regional seas, dispersed amongst a large number of coastal states. Fleets, gears and commercial fish species are region-specific and governance arrangements at national levels vary widely, ranging from centralized top-down to participatory arrangements. The persistent problems faced by EU fisheries (related to unclear conservation measures, failure to meet social and economic objectives, low flexibility for the implementation of top-down driven measures, lack of political will to ensure compliance with rules and regulations and poor control and enforcement systems in some Member States [2]) have resulted in substantial changes in the EU fisheries governance system with every large-scale reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) (1992, 2002, 2013). Despite being one of the most comprehensive regimes of international fisheries management, the CFP is still complex, expensive and lacks efficiency [3]. The most recent reform has been undertaken after a long and extensive debate taken to the public sphere. Specifically, and in what concerns stakeholder participation, the recently reformed CFP foresees developing stronger tools to empower the fishing industry, increase their decision-making capacity, improve

regionalization and incorporate a social dimension to fisheries management [4].

Promoting and attaining sustainable use of resources through community participation has become central to successful fisheries management in many parts of the world. Transparent, meaningful and legitimate involvement of stakeholders is currently perceived as a necessary component of marine fisheries governance. The advantages of such involvement are well described in literature in both developed and developing countries, in small-scale, large-scale and also in non-commercial fisheries [5–10]. The involvement of stakeholders is usually considered as a means to increase the efficiency of management tools (e.g., Marine Protected Areas (MPA), discard ban, quotas and access rights, input-output controls), guarantee buy-in of resource users to support fisheries management decisions and increase compliance with rules and regulations [5,11–14]. Another (and often overlapping) view, considers participation as a fundamental right of resource users in democratic societies, in order to initiate collective action and empowerment, and increase social cohesion, transparency and accountability [11,15,16]. Promoting the participation of fishing communities in the decision-making process as a condition for successful fisheries management and legitimate decision-making has also been criticized, notably because of the lack of quantitative and

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ground truth data to clearly evaluate the impact of these collaboration arrangements in management, biodiversity conservation, conflict mitigation, and community empowerment [14]. Furthermore, in order to evaluate the impact of a participatory arrangement, care must be taken when using and interpreting the term participation. According to the World Bank, participation is a process in which stakeholders influence and share control over management initiatives and decisions concerning the resources they exploit [17]. Therefore, participation involves a “redistribution of power” among stakeholders and the degree of this redistribution affects the initiative’s results and outreach [16].

Comparative work about different participatory arrangements has been published [8,18–21] and worldwide systematic reviews have been conducted [7,22]. But none has looked at European fisheries in detail, despite the increasing recognition of the importance of stakeholder participation and regionalization, moving away from micromanagement at EU level, and ensuring that rules are adapted to the specificities of each fishery and region [2,4]. In order to be effective, participatory arrangements in fisheries need to be adapted to the local context, and viewed in its proper local historical and institutional setting [1]. In the case of EU fisheries, this implies that participatory fisheries management and governance extends from the supranational, national, regional to the local levels, usually assuming different jurisdictional levels for decision-making, power delegation and sharing [23].

The present paper consists of an analysis of the Participatory Fisheries Management Arrangements (hereafter named PFMA) within the EU. Firstly, a systematic review was undertaken to select pertinent peer-reviewed articles, in order to list the cases of participatory arrangements in European fisheries and extract the relevant information to describe the fishery and the management arrangement. Then, each PFMA was analysed against a typology of participation, adapted from Arnstein [16] and Pretty [24] in order to identify the level of participation. Finally, a graphical approach was used to identify and describe the different groups of PFMAs, based in the relationships between the PFMAs and the categories used to describe each case (system, sector, resource or species of interest, scale of coverage and level of participation), in order to identify which fisheries profiles are more conducive with each level of the participation continuum.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Systematic review

The approach taken consisted of a rapid review carried out systematically. Rapid reviews, rather than full systematic reviews, are increasingly used due to time and financial limitations [25,26]. Rapid reviews are limited in scope to enable the work to be undertaken as robustly as a full systematic review but in a shorter period of time [26], and the approach is suitable for providing an extensive list of case studies [25]. In this case, the rapid systematic review was limited to peer-reviewed journals indexed to electronic search databases (Wiley Online Library, Science Direct, JSTOR, Web of Science and SCOPUS).

The selection and inclusion of the articles was restricted to a set of criteria, developed before the start of the review: 1) the study was published in a peer-reviewed journal before May 2016; 2) the subject of the study included a fishery in a EU-27 country or region; 3) the study describes a partnership between the fishing industry and the administration established for fisheries management purposes. Regarding this last criterion, it was decided that, for the scope of this study, the minimum level considered as participation was “Participation by consultation” (see Table 1 for the different levels of participation). The review question was intentionally left broad with the aim of identifying all articles describing or assessing a participation-based fisheries management system in a Member State, even if it was not the main purpose of the publication. Although the search terms were in English, due to all the databases searched being indexed and having

titles and abstracts available in English, no language restrictions were included in the search in order to collect all available data.

Titles and abstracts were scanned by L.L. The first screening consisted of a reference check to confirm that articles were published in peer-reviewed journals (criterion 1) and identify studies focused in EU fisheries (criterion 2). The articles fulfilling criteria 1 and 2 were read in full in order to identify all studies which described or assessed the participation of the fishing community/industry in the fisheries management system (criterion 3). The reference lists of the articles fulfilling the first two criteria were also screened and submitted to the same inclusion criteria. A 20% sample of the retrieved records was scanned by C.P. No major disagreements arose, and any discrepancies in the studies selected for inclusion were resolved by discussion between the authors.

Finally, the articles fulfilling the three criteria were examined in detail to identify the cases where the fishing industry participated in fisheries management in the EU. Information about each case was extracted from the selected articles to a database, following the guidelines developed by Petticrew and Roberts [27] to ensure neutrality and consistency. Data extracted consisted of:

- 1) data used to describe the fishery and the participatory arrangement: the fishing system (inland, coastal, offshore or mixed, i.e., with two or more systems), the fishing sector (small-scale, large-scale, recreational or mixed, i.e., includes two or more sectors exploiting the same resource), the scale of coverage of the PFMA (local, regional, national and international) and the main resource or species of interest (low mobility, high mobility, mammal and mixed);
- 2) data used to support the categorization of the level of participation of each PFMA: drivers and promoters of the participatory arrangement, fishing community and government control over management decisions, fishers representation, information flow and community participation in generating data for decision-making, existence of conflicts, legal nature or formalisation of the arrangement, management or institutional innovations, information on compliance with management measures and funding.

### 2.2. Levels of participation in fisheries management in the European Union

Each PFMA identified in the systematic review was classified using a typology of participation, adapted from Pretty [24] and using concepts from Arnstein's [16] “ladder of citizen participation” (see Table 1 for details about the levels of participation). The first two levels (“Passive participation” and “Participation by consultation”) consist of partnerships mainly based in the exchange of information between stakeholders. In “Passive participation” people are informed (through information sessions, leaflets, posters and other communication support tools) and decisions are explained to resource users but there is no re-distribution of management power, and hence this level has not been considered as a participatory arrangement for the purpose of this study. Still, it is described in the typology adapted (see Table 1) as, according to Arnstein [16], the administration informing the fishing industry and other stakeholders can be perceived as the first step towards legitimate participation. In the case of “Participation by consultation” fishers and their representatives are consulted about management decisions. However, despite the 2-way flow of information, accepting fisher's views, opinions or knowledge is not mandatory, and is highly dependent on the existing guidelines and perceptions of the government about participation and management. The fishing community can advise and give opinions but the partnership established does not assume sharing of management power.

The two following levels (“Functional participation” and “Interactive participation”) can be considered as management partnerships. “Functional participation” arrangements are usually set to deal

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