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EXTRA-SMEs Project

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the sixth edition of Newsletter series of the EXTRA-SMEs project that aims to achieve expansion of rural and coastal SMEs into wider markets for the promotion of their products, through simpler and improved administrative processes, and innovative technologies, in partners' territories.

In the following pages, you will find interesting material on the overall context and objectives of the project, as well as information on the latest developments and events, and on the upcoming ones. We shall keep you informed about our progress and key outcomes through the project website, thematic events, and newsletters.

The EXTRA-SMEs project team

Circular Economy approaches in Aquaculture in the West of Ireland



NEPTUNUS (EAPA_576/2018) is an INTERREG Atlantic Area project co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). It is a 3-year programme which will promote the sustainable development of the seafood sector in the Atlantic area by supplying a consistent methodology for products eco-labelling and defining eco-innovation strategies for production and consumption under a circular economy approach. There are 11 research partners involved in the project (France, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and the UK) and over 20 associate partners including Irish companies such as Irish Seaspray and Wild Atlantic Shellfish. NUI Galway and Athlone Institute of Technology are the Irish research partners responsible for data collection and generation from Irish case studies. NUI Galway is also leader of a work package focusing on valorisation of seafood waste streams and their prospective contributions to the circular economy. The project is coordinated by University of Cantabria.

The project involves a wide range of stakeholders from producers to policy makers and consumers and has two objectives, which it will achieve through the application of a life cycle thinking approach.

1. Introducing green economy strategies and incorporating competitive products into green markets promoting eco-labelling under a NEXUS approach



2. Developing strategies and policies based on circular economy and cradle-to-cradle principles that deliver new products and working systems to the seafood sector.



The project has taken a new approach by applying these methodologies and actions on a larger transnational scale than has been pursued previously. It introduces the NEXUS variable into the decision-making process – investigating the relationship between water, energy, and food. It also applies a cohesive clustering model that unites stakeholders throughout the Atlantic Area and addresses common gaps and barriers in using a shared resource.

Some of the key outcomes from the project will be the development of a robust life cycle database for seafood supply chains in the Atlantic Area and strategies on the NEXUS footprint for these products. The development of life cycle datasets is of particular use to the Irish sector as there is a lack of data on Irish seafood. The project will also deliver methodologies and strategies on seafood waste and how it can contribute to the circular economy of seafood. Strategies relating to some of the main challenges facing fisheries will be developed with particular focus **on policy aspects associated with climate change and marine debris**.

We are currently looking to speak and collaborate with cooperatives and seafood and aquaculture companies to develop life cycle datasets through a questionnaire process. This questionnaire would require an afternoon (1 - 1.5 hours) of your time to complete and with the information given with a life cycle assessment and/or a carbon footprint can be produced. The data would contribute, in an anonymised fashion, to development of overall datasets that enable key sustainability metrics of the sectors to be measured. This, in turn, can enable companies to focus efforts on key areas that will increase their sustainability.

If you would like to contribute to the development of seafood datasets for the Atlantic Area or would like to learn more about the project, please contact Ronan Cooney (NUI Galway) or Sinead Mellett (AIT).

NUI Galway Team: Ronan Cooney, Dr. Eoghan Clifford

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email: rcooney@nuigalway.ie

AIT Team: Dr. Sinead Mellett, Prof. Neil Rowan.

Contact: AIT

email: smellett@ait.ie

Further information on the project may be found on the project website or Twitter.

Website - <https://neptunus-project.eu/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/NeptunusProject>

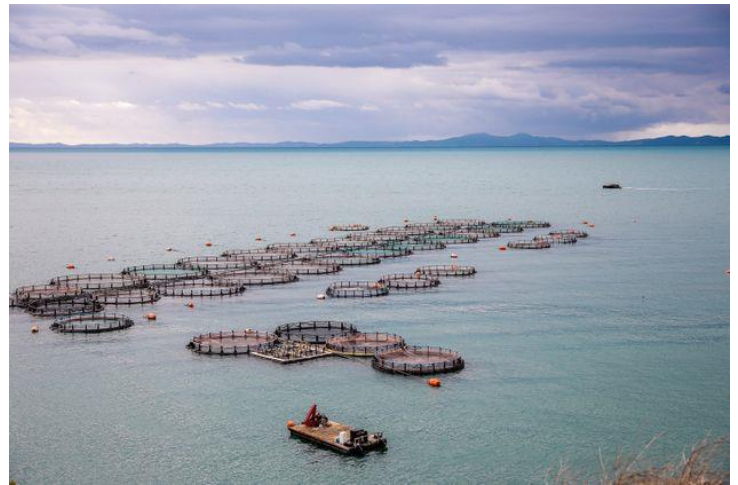
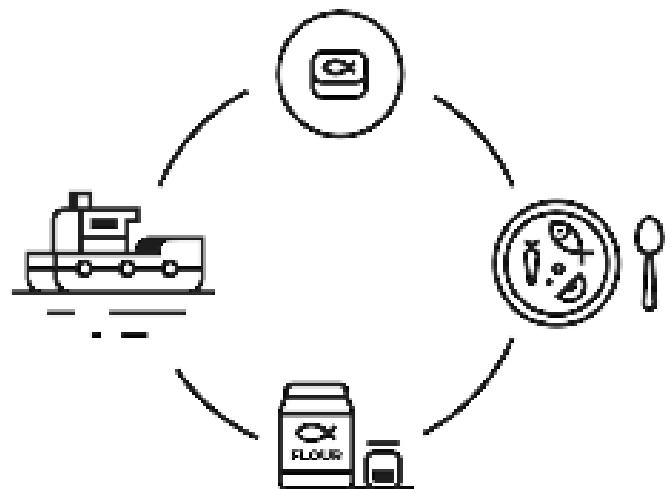


Image: HuffPost Greece



Marine Plastic Waste in Greenland

Free Online Seminar



On 25 March 2021, Blue Circular economy partners in Greenland hosted a free online seminar about marine plastics in Greenland and recycling opportunities for discarded fishing gear. The seminar was extremely well attended, with participants from across the [Northern Periphery and Arctic](#) (NPA) region and further afield.

Topics included the Greenlandic launch of the [Birds & Debris](#) website which aims to highlight and understand the global impact of plastic pollution with the help of researchers and the public. Cases of entangled birds or nest incorporation of debris can be reported via the website, and a guide for how to upload cases can be found in Greenlandic at [birdsanddebris.com/gl/](#)

The seminar featured presentations from [Qeqqata municipality](#) in western Greenland, [Wageningen Economic Research](#), [Technical University of Denmark \(ARTEK\)](#), [University of the Highlands and Islands \(ERI\)](#), and [University for the Creative Arts \(CfSD\)](#)

The first presentation came from [Dr. Neil James](#) of the [Environmental Research Institute](#) at the UHI's [North Highland College](#). Neil gave an update on the amazing work being done by citizen scientists and researchers via the [Birds & Debris](#) project, as well as the launch of its new [Greenlandic Users Guide](#). Don't forget to also check out the project on Twitter [here](#).

A poster for an online seminar. At the top are logos for Blue Circular Economy, Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme, and the European Union. The title is 'Online Seminar Marine Plastic Waste in Greenland'. It includes an information icon, a calendar icon, and a clock icon. The date is 25 March 2021, with start and end times for West Greenland. A list of speakers and topics is provided, including 'Welcome', 'Birds and debris', 'Waste clean-up in Amerloq Fjord', 'Beach litter in West Greenland', 'Break', 'Possible Applications for Waste Fishing Nets', and 'Products from Waste Fishing Gear'. Registration information and a deadline are also included. Social media icons are at the bottom.

Next, attendees heard from Christina Natalie Kompf of Greenland's [Qeqqata Kommunia](#) who spoke about a waste clean-up project in Amerloq Fjord. You can read a little more about this project [here](#).

Marine litter was also the topic of a presentation by [Wouter Jan Strietman of Wageningen Economic Research](#) who provided details about a source analysis of the waste found on Greenland's beaches, much of which is derived from waste fishing gear including smaller waste cuttings.



After a short break, [Ida Bertelsen of Technical University of Denmark \(DTU\)](#) gave attendees some insight into the possible uses for waste fishing nets in the production of adobe bricks, which could provide a sustainable local building material for use in Greenland.

Finally, we heard from [Professor Martin Charter of the Centre for Sustainable Design](#) at England's [UCA](#). Martin spoke about products made from waste fishing gear as well as other elements of the Blue Circular Economy project including the idea of BCE 'labs' which could serve as centres for design, R&D, production, and other activities aimed at turning discarded fishing nets, ropes, and components into new products.

Good Practice - Blue Career Centre Romania

The above good practice was also uploaded to the EXTRA SMEs Project website by Bucharest-Ilfov Regional Development Agency, Romania, following the approval of the SME Competitiveness Thematic Expert Rene Tonnisson.

In the context of the Interreg Europe programme, a good practice is defined as an initiative (e.g. methodologies, projects, processes, techniques) undertaken in one of the programme's thematic priorities which has already proved successful, and which has the potential to be transferred to a different geographic area.

Regional training platform for dialogue between business stakeholders, training institutions, research organizations, in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

The Blue Career Centre Romania was established within the MENTOR project – a partnership comprised of 7 partners from 4 countries, that aimed to support businesses in finding the right staff with proper qualifications and to provide prospects for young jobseekers in key Blue sectors: maritime transport (shipping, ports, ship-repairs and shipbuilding), cruise and nautical tourism, aquaculture and offshore oil and gas.

The project was developed in the context in which there was a frequent mismatch between training/academic qualifications and practical experience needed by the fisheries and aquaculture industries. Therefore, it can be considered a common effort to close the skills gap, tackle unemployment and make “blue careers” more attractive to the young people.

These objectives were achieved through the establishment of a Blue Career Centre Secretariat in Cyprus and representatives in Greece, Bulgaria and Romania, development of re-training schemes for blue professionals in the maritime sector, aquaculture and offshore oil and gas, development of e-learning courses, mentoring and career guidance to students, organizing Blue Career Fairs, balancing the demand and supply of maritime, aquaculture, cruise tourism and offshore oil professionals.

The main beneficiaries of the MENTOR project were: employees in the maritime and aquaculture sectors, people that wanted to work in the mentioned sectors, and students.

Main outputs:

- 1 Blue Career Centre Secretariat in Cyprus and 3 Centres in Greece, Bulgaria and Romania
- 4 re-training seminars
- 5 e-learning courses
- Visits in 200 schools
- 8 Blue Career Fairs
- 1 Matching database for maritime and aquaculture professionals

These results sought to impact national policies regarding life-long training of the professionals, young job seekers in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, improving public perception and appeal of maritime carriers.

SME'S Competitiveness Expert's opinion

“While MENTOR was a short term EASME funded project we find it an interesting experience to learn from. The project concept was well-defined and well targeted to address the needs of careers to “Blue sectors”. According to Eurostat, 41% of the EU population lives in coastal regions where blue sector jobs could be developed. Thus, the potential for this good practice as a relevant and applicable learning opportunity for other regions is high. The project also lays out a clear logic for bringing blue sector jobs to the mainstream through outreach activities to students, e-courses, and a matching database for maritime and aquaculture professionals. As 90% of businesses operating in this sector are SMEs (according to the EXTRA-SMEs project), these activities help fill an important gap between finding qualified employees and SMEs in coastal areas and/or SMEs connected with the “blue sector” industry.”

Rene Tonnisson

EXTRA SMEs transnational meeting and webinar (Finland, Poland, Ireland)

As part of the exchange of experience process of the Interreg Europe project Extra-SMEs, a webinar was organised virtually on the 6th of May by Lapland University of Applied Sciences (Finland), Northern Chamber of Commerce in Szczecin (Poland) and Western Development Commission (Ireland). The webinar took place virtually and related to aquaculture issues concerning the three countries.

23 participants from Finland, Ireland and Poland were present. They represented a wide spectrum of areas of activity as Universities, Aquatic companies, Professional Associations and Development organizations. Speakers presented in detail issues of the industry in their

regions with regards to production, business challenges, future perspectives, and possibilities.

Following the presentations, discussions and exchange of ideas took part between all the invited participants about the current aquaculture issues and the new era which is approaching fast with issues such as circular and green economy and sustainability issues.



6.5.2021 AT 14.15 – 16.25 EET EXTRA – SME'S WEBINAR

14.15 – 14.20	Opening Project Manager Petri Muje, Lapland University of Applied Sciences
14.20 – 14.50	Aquaculture in Finland – present situation and future research needs Principal specialist Petri Heinimaa Nature Resources Institute Finland.
14.50 – 15.15	Aquaculture and circular economy. Regional aspects. Ronan Cooney, Nuig and Neptunus -project
15.15 – 15.40	Aquaculture – future and research needs in Ireland Damien Toner, Development and Innovation executive, BIM
15.40 – 16.10	Aquaculture in Baltic Sea. Polish production, perspectives and possibilities. Professor Dariusz Kucharczyk, West Pomeranian University of Technology Szczecin
16.10 – 16.25	Discussion and event closure

Whats the present situation of Aquaculture in Finland?

Extra-SMEs and aquaculture in Ireland

Aquaculture in Baltic Sea: Polish production, perspectives and possibilities

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and

<http://www.interreg.europa.eu/extra-smes>



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About us

EXTRA-SMEs is co-funded by INTERREG Europe / European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)



The EXTRA-SMEs Partnership



Region of Peloponnese (EL)



Liguria Region (IT)



Northern Chamber of Commerce in
Szczecin (PL)



Bucharest-Ilfov Regional Development
Agency (RO)



Lapland University of Applied Sciences
(FI)



University of Patras (EL)



Western Development Commission (IE)



Liguria Cluster for Marine Technologies
(IT)



Public institution National Regions
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