

# POLICY BRIEF 9

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**EXTRA-SMEs**  
Interreg Europe



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## Scaling-up infrastructure through innovation investment

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# THE EXTRA-SMES PROJECT

The EXTRA-SMES is an Interreg Europe project that aims to foster the competitiveness, extraversion, and internationalisation of rural and coastal SMEs participating in aquaculture value chains.

To that end, the project assists 8 relevant public authorities and businesses in the aquaculture value chain from 7 countries to join forces and exchange experiences on how aquaculture SMEs could:

- Simplify administrative procedures.
- Expand their access to new markets.
- Innovate by producing value-added products and solutions.
- Up-skill their personnel.
- Resolve conflicts of interest together with stakeholders.





# **POLICY BRIEF OVERVIEW**

This policy brief reports the results of EXTRA-SMEs regional stakeholders meeting (project activity 2.1). These meetings, conducted between project partners and regional stakeholders, were focused on issues such as the prospects for the development of aquaculture and the main problems of the sector.

In particular, attendees discussed the environmental threats that exist for aquaculture, which have a negative impact both on the infrastructures (e.g. fish farms) as well as the activity of aquaculture itself (e.g. fish growth). These treats are related to specific bird species harming the aquaculture in fish farms and causing damages to the operation of aquaculture product systems.

During the meetings, stakeholders discussed innovations and initiatives from producers' organizations towards promoting products at foreign markets. Attendees agreed that it is crucial to manage aquaculture, based on the scientific data produced by studies analyzing the situation, and strengthen innovations on protecting the aquaculture environment.

# FOSTERING INNOVATION

Fish farms and aquaculture, in general, are experiencing environmental dangers in the form of specific bird species, which cause harm by damaging infrastructure and attacking fish.

Due to that, inevitable loss and damages are caused to the sea environment and jeopardize the economic well-being of aquaculture SMEs. Sales are impacted, making a necessity the exploitation of emerging market channels and the further promotion of domestic products.

SMEs in aquaculture have the responsibility to maintain the environment of their activity, and the operations, to ensure the health and safety of their staff, products, and infrastructure. To that end, innovative models of sustainable infrastructure can secure the aquaculture ecosystem and make it resistant to exogenous, environmental threats.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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At the end of the meetings, the main issues discussed on environmental threats to aquaculture were collected. Attendees concluded with recommendations that could strengthen the aquaculture sector in the partner regions and provide a boost in their environmental and economic future.

It was agreed that the **key point** for empowering the sector is the **scale-up of aquaculture infrastructure**, by using up-to-date technologies aiming at higher resilience and protective efficiency as well as safer operations, to ensure high product quality with lower costs.

In particular, the following suggestions were made:

- Aquaculture SMEs should **reduce unit costs** by employing more resilient technologies during scale-up operations.
- Fish farms could be used as **artificial ecosystems**, to enhance the sustenance capacity of the fish population.
- **Green aquaculture** infrastructure methods could provide an alternative path to preventing bird species from causing harm.
- Regional authorities are strongly encouraged to draw up **compensation schemes** for fish farms that suffer environmental threats and loss of fish population.
- Further **research** is needed on the suitability of facilities and equipment to maintain overall good fish population health.

## PROJECT PARTNERS



**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  
Development Agency  
(LT)**

## About Us

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

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