



## Effectively protecting 30% of the EU's sea area by 2030: recreational anglers are part of the solution

*The EU Biodiversity Strategy contains ambitious targets for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs): legally protecting a minimum of 30% of the EU's sea area by 2030, of which at least a third must be strictly protected (ie. 10% of EU's seas). This webinar discussed the role that recreational fishing can play in achieving these objectives. It came at an important time to inform the work of the European Parliament's report on the Biodiversity Strategy and the European Commission's draft technical note on criteria and guidance for protected areas designations.*

On 20 April, **MEP Isabel Carvalhais (Portugal, S&D Group)** and **MEP Søren Gade (Denmark, Renew Europe Group)** co-chaired the European Parliament Forum on Recreational Fisheries and Aquatic Environment webinar addressing the role of recreational anglers and the recreational fisheries sector in reaching the objective of protecting 30% of sea area by 2030.

In his keynote speech delivered by video message, the **Portuguese Minister of the Sea, Ricardo Serrão Santos** underlined that *“recreational fishermen are a powerful group of stakeholders to support and contribute to conservation objectives, and for a sustainable economic development, including by raising awareness about nature and oceans. Many recreational anglers are involved in the conservation of aquatic species and habitats they depend upon.”* He added that *“responsible angling practices and the engagement of society in conservation initiatives benefit local communities by attracting economic activity, generating positive spill-overs throughout many sectors.”*

Taking up some of the points raised in the Minister's keynote speech, **Oliver Portrat**, CEO of the European Fishing Tackle Trade Association (**EFTTA**) and **David Vertegaal**, Marine Public Affairs Officer representing the European Anglers Alliance (**EAA**), recalled the role that the recreational fisheries sector can play as a vector of acceptance by local communities and a source of economic benefits. They also called for an ecology optimised approach of recreational fishing activities in MPAs: *“Do not forget that recreational fishing, and in particular recreational angling, is a very selective fishing activity. It would be ineffective to put all kinds of fishing gears, all kinds of ‘extractive’ activities on the same level and simply ban angling from these areas.”* Anglers can and want to play a role in the protection of MPAs and are more than happy to be managed and controlled, through bag limits, closed fishing seasons and strict minimum sizes to contribute to the recovery of important ocean habitats and species.

MEPs **Isabel Carvalhais**, **Søren Gade** and the **Chair of the RecFishing Forum, Niclas Herbst**, called for the full inclusion of recreational anglers in the design and management of marine protected areas. *“As anglers are often the only eyes and ears in the MPAs, they can help identify potential conservation issues. They are not the problem, they are part of the solution”* said **Søren Gade**. **Isabel Carvalhais** concluded that *“the protection of biodiversity is more than just a desirable goal, it is an urgent necessity. Actions must be as much daring as feasible. All sectors must be involved, including recreational fisheries.”*



### Note to the editor:

#### About the event:

You can read more about the event on [this page](#). The agenda of the event can be downloaded [here](#). The panellists' presentations and the report of the event will be published on that page.

#### About the Forum:

The Forum on Recreational Fisheries and Aquatic Environment (RecFishing Forum) was created in 2014, at the beginning of the previous European Parliament legislature. **By providing a cross-party discussion platform**, the Forum has been an essential tool for the **Members of the European Parliament to establish a direct connection with the recreational fishing community, its network of scientists, in-house experts and other representatives of the sector** in order to gather knowledge, information and data on the topics that were discussed in the European Parliament.

More information about the Forum [here](#).

#### About EAA and EFTTA:

The **Secretariat of the Forum is provided by two associations working together**: the [European Anglers Alliance](#) (EAA) and the [European Fishing Tackle Trade Association](#) (EFTTA). The EAA and the EFTTA work at the EU level and beyond to improve the aquatic environment, to achieve sustainable management of the fish stocks and to protect and promote recreational angling (rod and line fishing) in Europe. They also advocate for recreational fisheries to be managed in a fair and equitable way with respect to the other fisheries sectors.

The **European Anglers Alliance (EAA)** is a pan-European organisation for recreational angling, which defends European recreational anglers' interests at the European level and beyond. EAA was launched in Brussels in 1994. There are about 3 million affiliated members to EAA's 17 member organisations and affiliates from 15 European countries.

The **European Fishing Tackle Trade Association** was established in London in 1981 with a clear purpose: to support the European sportfishing tackle sector – the manufacturers and wholesalers, the importers and exporters. Every year, EFTTA organises EFTTEX, the leading European Fishing Tackle Trade Exhibition.