



For immediate release

RecFishing Forum launched in the European Parliament to strengthen the voice of 25 million EU anglers in Brussels

On the 25th of March, the **Forum on Recreational Fisheries and Aquatic Environment** was launched in the European Parliament. The launch event, entitled “**Why do we need to talk about Recreational Fisheries in the European Parliament? Economics, Environment and Rural Development**”, was the first occasion for the several Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) present to exchange opinions with the representatives of the European Anglers Alliance (**EAA**) and the European Fishing Tackle Trade Association (**EFTTA**).

The event was chaired by the President of the Forum, **MEP Norica Nicolai** (Romania, ALDE). After the welcoming remarks, she gave the floor to **Mike Heylin OBE**, Board Member of **EAA** and **Jean-Claude Bel**, CEO of **EFTTA** who expressed the main purposes of the establishment of this informal Forum. In particular, Mr. Heylin underlined: “*25 million people regularly fish across the EU, the biggest EU constituency. They must be better taken into consideration by their EU representatives*”.

Mr. Bel showed some important figures about the **economic and social importance of angling** (fishing with hooks and lines) **in the EU**. He highlighted that 1 kg of fish caught by a recreational fisherman brings 200-300 EUR to the economy and that the economic ripple effect sees more than 39 billion EUR annually and 800,000 jobs. Mr. Bel then explained how the development of these low-environmental impact activities can be an important tool for rural development: “*Angling tourism brought 280 million EUR into the Irish economy in 2012, more than golf*”.

In her presentation, **Anna Gueorguieva**, senior economist at the **World Bank**, presented the integrated sustainable development strategy currently being designed with support by the World Bank in the Danube delta region, in which recreational fisheries are expected to be a sustainable driving force to enhance fisheries management and reinforce tourism and rural development.

Mark Owen, Head of Freshwater Affairs in EAA’s member organisation **Angling Trust**, gave a presentation on the role of anglers as “*guardians and protectors of the aquatic environment*”. He also pointed out the social role of fishing organisations through projects devolved for instance to youth and people with physical, social or mental handicaps.

MEP Norica Nicolai concluded the lively debate with the audience by insisting on the economic potential of recreational fisheries: “*Our passion can also be a key for job creation and economic development*”, she declared.

The next event of the Forum entitled “The European sea bass recreational fisheries and its long term management” is scheduled on the 14th April. It will be chaired by **MEP Alain Cadec**, President of the European Parliament Committee on Fisheries.



Credits for the pictures: RecFishing Forum

For more information on the Forum, please visit its website [here](#).

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