



# ACHIEVING SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION: CIBBRINA'S PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICES

## Our core principles at a glance

- Use an inclusive process
- Create a safe space
- Give equal credence
- Co-design (bycatch) solutions as early as possible
- Build trust, respect, and shared understanding
- Be reliable, open, and honest
- Target needs
- Determine who should be involved and how
- Be transparent
- Identify, evaluate, and communicate the socio-economic and cultural impacts
- Be flexible
- Follow any prior consent processes



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## 1. Background to our guidelines

### Who and what are the guidelines for?

We've developed the guidelines – separated into our core principles and our best practice recommendations – to support the work of both partners in CIBBRiNA and wider communities seeking ways forward in engaging stakeholders in monitoring and mitigating the bycatch of Endangered, Threatened, and Protected (ETP) species. Our guidelines are also highly relevant to the broader world of fisheries management and sustainability.

Whatever your role or organisation, you can use the guidelines to explore fruitful ways to collaborate.

Be mindful that engagement always needs to be tailored to the specific issue and context, as well as the people involved and their institutional and personal relationships which will affect how they work with each other.

**“One of the most important things I’ve learned from working with fishermen is that trust and communication are essential. Make them feel part of the solution.”**

**Sara Palma Pedraza, Marine Institute**

## Why do the principles matter when it comes to bycatch?

Bycatch is a sensitive issue, for fishers, the public, managers, and policy makers alike. This also makes the climate for engagement sensitive, because those involved may fear confrontation, risks to their reputation, and loss of income or even their livelihood – all of which can affect personal as well as material wellbeing.



### What is bycatch?

“Bycatch” means the incidental capture during fishing of any animal which is not the target of the fishing activity. CIBBRiNA focuses on commercial fishing bycatch of Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP) species.

## How did we develop our guidelines?

The guidelines draw on published literature and personal testimonies of experienced practitioners, some of which are captured in a series of accompanying videos developed by our partners about what collaboration on bycatch mitigation means to them. Links to the videos are given in Section 3.

Our guidelines build on ICES and wider international initiatives for developing processes for including stakeholder expert knowledge and data in efforts to monitor and mitigate ETP species bycatch and address other fisheries management issues.

**Read our full report on the guidelines and find all literature sources used to develop them [here](#).**



## 2. Our core principles in more detail

1. **Use an inclusive process** to nurture constructive and responsive relationships that encourage positive outcomes for both stakeholders and conservation and enable risks to be identified and managed.
2. **Create a safe space** that fosters open dialogue, by helping individuals to feel comfortable and confident enough to speak freely, to be listened to and respected, and to know that their knowledge and views are valued.
3. **Give equal credence** to the diversity of knowledge ‘types’ and perspectives.
4. **Co-design (bycatch) solutions** as early as possible and maintain cooperative working throughout, with a long-term vision that fosters a joint sense of ownership of the outcomes.

“Maintaining the dialogue with skippers and repeating what we try to achieve has been my key lesson learned for the past year and a half. We have had seven dialogue sessions with a large group of skippers and we see more ideas and experiments being developed over the course of this period”

**Niels Hintzen, Pelagic Freezer Trawler Association**



5. **Build trust, respect, and shared understanding**, avoiding any sense of blame.
6. **Be reliable, open, and honest**, which is best achieved through face-to-face and other personal modes of communication.



7. **Target needs** based on careful identification, while being aware of policies and regulations that could change the needs, motivations, and trust among participants.
8. **Determine who should be involved and how**, without discrimination and based on the needs of the issue to be addressed and the different expectations and cultures of stakeholders.
9. **Be transparent** by encouraging and responding to feedback, documenting engagement activities, and freely sharing information relevant to the issue where this is possible and does not risk discrimination.



"In a project where fishers were at first hesitant and reluctant to participate on a voluntary basis in a Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) project, this changed when the Ministry offered compensation for additional installation costs of the REM system and when they were invited to apply for a [scientific] TAC... The acknowledgment for the fishers' effort from the Ministry made fishers participate."

**Marije Siemensma, as Project Coordinator for "Onbedoelde bijvangst in Beeld"**

10. **Identify, evaluate, and communicate the socio-economic and cultural impacts** of (bycatch) solutions on affected people and local organizations which represent them.
11. **Be flexible**, assessing the effectiveness of engagement efforts and adjusting strategies as needed in response to changes in needs or circumstances.
12. **Follow any prior consent processes** in projects that may affect the rights, interests, lands, resources, or territories of Indigenous Peoples.

### 3. Best practices for engaging fishing industry members

#### Work with people/organizations that are positive and thrive on collaborative working

Positive people dynamics are a key ingredient for effective collaboration. The people and personalities involved in a project can make all the difference. Typical personal characteristics include those such as negotiators and committed can-do leaders. Respected ambassadors, in particular, are helpful to building the reputation of a project and/or initiative.

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“I think the project is really successful if measures have been taken... and embraced by all those different stakeholders.”

**Anne-Marie Svoboda,**  
CIBBRiNA Project  
Coordinator, LVVN

Click [here](#) to watch the full video by LVVN



## Unite around shared problems and goals that empower participants

A strong common purpose, formed around a joint knowledge base, leads to clearly defined actions to achieve success. However, a common purpose may not eliminate the conflicts and disagreements that can be necessary for identifying trade-offs and mitigating negative outcomes. Initiatives should come with processes that empower fishing industry stakeholders to innovate, and should value experiential knowledge, foster responsibility, and facilitate buy-in by all stakeholders.

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## Enter fishers' environments

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To gain a better understanding of fishers' perspectives and what life at sea is like for them, join a fishing trip. This firsthand experience will provide insights into what motivates fishers, their interests, the extensive knowledge they hold, and which solutions to bycatch may be more practical and affordable than others.



“Seek mechanisms for them to feel involved; otherwise, it won’t work. They need to feel involved and understood.”

**Alfredo Lopez, CEMMA**

Click [here](#) to watch the full video by CETMAR



## Know each other's motivations and reinforce them

Understanding each other's motivations to be involved, and working in ways that positively reinforce these motivations, is powerful in helping to sustain engagement without external incentives such as paying fishers. Participation becomes meaningful when people feel valued and heard.

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When it comes to bycatch, it's important to understand how fishers may value ETP species, because this affects their motivation to find solutions and which approaches could be productive. In some cases, incentives like financial support for using bycatch mitigation measures may help to enhance engagement and mitigate industry pushback. Be mindful also that without effective two-way communication, fishers can fear repercussions around bycatch so much that they withhold information which could be important in targeting bycatch management measures.



“ We’re the ones actually at sea. We have the knowledge and experience at sea that people in the office don’t have.”

**Patrick, Pelagic Freezer  
Trawler Skipper**

Click [here](#) to watch the full video by the PFA

## Clearly define roles, responsibilities, and ground rules to create a respectful working culture

Clearly defining each actor's roles and responsibilities helps to increase transparency and understanding of each other's positions and mitigate against power imbalances. Ground rules should be agreed which consider confidentiality issues and make clear the behaviours and actions that are encouraged or discouraged (see Table 3.2 in our full report for more specific guidance). People should feel free to openly discuss the ground rules, because everyone will benefit from having a shared understanding of what is expected of them and what is possible from one another.

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“The main objective when we go to a fishing survey, [that] we always have to keep in mind... is that we are guests on a fishing boat and we have to enter in a spirit of equal to equal.”

**Ricardo Sousa, SRMar Madeira**

Click [here](#) to watch the full video by SRMar Madeira



## Consider using professional neutral facilitators to develop constructive pathways

As neutral knowledge-brokers, professional facilitators can ease tensions and create a sense of equality during interactions. They can be essential in enabling effective engagement by helping to overcome seemingly insurmountable barriers to working with the fishing industry on ETP species bycatch, such as strong prejudices or a lack of openness amongst participants.

6

## Plan engagement actions in tandem with research actions

At-sea trials of gear modifications and innovations should always be planned after consulting relevant fishing industry members, because their knowledge will be critical to success. When research actions are twinned with engagement actions over a long time, inclusiveness, involvement and personal value becomes routine. This process can also increase compliance, whereas starting collaboration too late could lead to fishers feeling as if they have been landed with policies.

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“Their insights provide us with valuable observations that complement our studies. It is crucial to involve fishermen from the start, to listen to their ideas and concerns.”

**Sara Palma Pedraza, Marine Institute**

Click [here](#) to watch the full video by the Marine Institute



## Use established pathways and standards for best impact

International and regional organizations like ICES and OSPAR play an essential role in bridging different perspectives and providing methodological frameworks to generate knowledge and solutions in fisheries management. To maximise the impact of work to reduce ETP bycatch, data collection actions with fishing industry stakeholders should be organized so that they align with existing institutional pathways. Where needed, actors and collaborations should engage in supporting adaptation and evolution of institutional pathways to help ensure they are fit-for-purpose.

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## Believe in and be mindful of the intangible outcomes

‘Believe in’ and adopt a spirit of collaboration. Industry-science research initiatives need dedicated time to fully engage with the fishing industry to collect policy-relevant data, while further developing open collaborative partnerships. Some outcomes of successful engagement can be intangible and harder to measure but may eventually have important impact (for example, influencing the choices that people make in the future). Recognising these outcomes provides positive reinforcement for collaborative work. However, efforts should also be made to describe intangible outcomes in reports or other outputs providing evidence and results.

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## Create meaningful feedback systems

When fishers can see and understand how their knowledge has been acknowledged and data is applied in bycatch research, their involvement becomes meaningful to them. It is imperative that research partners share their findings from science-industry research collaborations back with the fishing industry in transparent and compelling ways. This kind of feedback helps strengthen collaboration toward solutions.

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“If you are working with a fisher, it is nice for them to be among the first to get the results – but you must explain the results clearly.”

**José A. Fernández  
Bouzas, Atlantic Islands  
National Park**

Click [here](#) to watch the full video by CETMAR



## Success breeds success

Fishers share a common language and understanding of what it takes to work in practice. This means that peer-to-peer exchange among the fishing industry on solutions to mitigate bycatch can provide powerful arenas for creation and adoption of such solutions. Change often starts with ambassadors who can demonstrate that a measure is practical and affordable.

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## Make knowledge count, share the kudos, build capacity, and evolve

Jointly creating knowledge with the fishing industry and other stakeholders is essential for developing effective solutions tailored to local specificities. Capacity-building and training on finding bycatch solutions are examples of strong engagement. This extends to giving fishers a central role in collecting data on ETP bycatch and other aspects such as catch composition, with fishery organizations well-placed to coordinate fisher data collection programmes. Fishers and/or their representatives can also be invited to meetings on other relevant fisheries management topics. Building a positive narrative of the fishing industry's role in sustainability ultimately encourages pride and cooperation.

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“The cameras are there to document my fishing effort. I want to show that there are Danish fishers who can make a living by fishing in a sustainable way.”

**Niels Frederiksen, gillnet fisher**

Click [here](#) to watch the full video by DTU Aqua



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## 4. Best practices for engaging policymakers

While it is essential to foster collaboration with fishers, to ensure that knowledge and other outputs from such collaborations will have lasting impact, engagement with policy makers is also critical. The following guidelines for engaging policy makers on bycatch and other fisheries management issues are based on the expert input of two of CIBBRiNA's eNGO partners (WWF and SAR), as well as policy officers from among CIBBRiNA's partners and Stakeholder Advisory Board.

### 1. Present information in accessible language and formats and provide supporting scientific evidence

Policy-makers are busy and bombarded with information from various sources. Communicating information in the right way will increase the chances of getting their attention. When information is particularly complex, a “storytelling” approach – with specific examples – can work better than a dense and data-heavy report. This is because narratives are more likely to resonate with decision-makers and leave a lasting impression.

Communications to policy-makers should always be comprehensive, clear, and actionable, with scientific evidence to back messages up. The formats which WWF and SAR use to achieve this include policy briefs, short reports, and factsheets which can be based on or include infographics.



- “Storytelling” approach: **Bycatch stories** (WWF)
- Policy brief: **Shark fisheries: A policy blindspot** (WWF)
- Short report: **Sharks and rays: Guardians of the ocean in crisis** (WWF)
- Factsheet (text-based): **Fact-sheet: Bycatch** (WWF)
- Factsheet (infographic-based): **A tool to save dolphins: Remote Electronic Monitoring** (SAR)
- Factsheet (text- and infographic-based): **Saving mako sharks: How to help the fastest sharks escape extinction** (WWF)



## 2. Highlight the full range of benefits of taking action

In the case of bycatch, it is important to highlight the ecological, economic, and social benefits of action, and to link these to policy-makers' priorities and agendas. Case studies of successful bycatch reduction initiatives can be powerful in communicating potential positive outcomes.

### EXAMPLE

**Protecting turtles through gear modifications and switches to alternative gear** (WWF)

## 3. Target policy-makers effectively, and at international, regional, and national policy levels

Take time to identify the policy-maker(s) most relevant to your recommendations for action, to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of your work. Note also that different recommended actions need to be implemented at different levels (local, national, and European). This makes it strategically important to understand governance frameworks and target policymakers across the different levels.

- **SAR series on individual Member State approaches to fishing opportunity allocation** which could be scaled up, to achieve bycatch mitigation and other sustainability priorities
- **How the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles (MEDASSET) engages with policy-makers at global, regional, and national levels**

#### **4. Partner with other organizations (locally and/or beyond) to amplify campaigns and media outreach**

Partnering up can be a powerful way to highlight the need for reform, increase public awareness, and put environmental issues on the political agenda. Similarly, using existing for a and channels can save resources and enhance messaging.

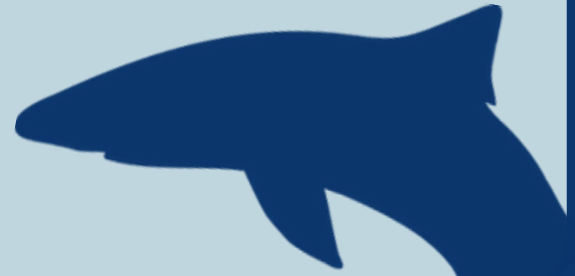
#### EXAMPLES

- SAR has several member organisations across Europe which are working at the local level with citizens and other stakeholders including politicians, civil servants, and fishers. In one specific case, SAR partnered with its French member organisation to run an **art exhibition** aimed at fishers and other coastal community members, to raise awareness in a positive way, avoid conflict and search for collective solution design.
- WWF partners up with **seafood companies** to help them adopt bycatch mitigation measures.





SAR called for supporters to sign a **petition** started in late 2021 – with over half a million signatures collected to date – calling for action by the EU and Member States on common dolphin bycatch. Petitions and other citizen mobilisations show the fishing industry and policy-makers that other stakeholders want a solution to be found, thus incentivising them to engage in addressing the issue.



## 5. Build policy-makers' capacity to improve their understanding and engagement

Offering training and resources to enhance policymakers' understanding of bycatch and potential solutions can improve their ability to make effective decisions as well as their engagement with the issue.

### EXAMPLE

SAR produced a **leaflet** summarising key fisheries management issues, aimed at newly elected Members of the European Parliament who may feel overwhelmed with information at the start of their term.

## 6. Time lobbying to take advantage of key moments

Policy-makers often have a small window of opportunity to use evidence and influence policy. This means it is important to proactively build and maintain contacts with them, to be ready for when the right moment comes along. Capacity-building is one way to do this; another is to cultivate relationships with key decision-makers through sharing research, case studies, and policy positions at events, working groups, and meetings.

## EXAMPLE

WWF's participation in **Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) meetings**

### 7. Facilitate and encourage cooperation between government agencies and other stakeholders

As well as policymakers, efforts should be made to form connections with other key stakeholders who are ready to collaborate. NGOs in particular can be conveners, bringing together diverse stakeholders such as fishers, government agencies, and scientists with event formats such as conferences, working groups, and advisory panels. Organising encounters between decision-makers and affected parties gives everyone a chance to better understand each other's realities, discuss mitigation measures and how to provide incentives and support for their uptake, facilitate sharing of data and knowledge on bycatch, promote policy alignment across different jurisdictions, and ultimately build trust. Such encounters also encourage policymakers to consider holistic strategies that address multiple species and avoid unintended consequences of single-species management.

## EXAMPLE

SAR's '**Rethink Fisheries! For thriving seas and communities**' event held in front of the European Parliament with fishers, environmentalists, and MEPs



## About CIBBRiNA

The Coordinated Development and Implementation of Best Practice in Bycatch Reduction in the North Atlantic, Baltic and Mediterranean Regions (CIBBRiNA) project aims to minimise the bycatch of Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP) species in the North-East Atlantic, Baltic, and Mediterranean regions, working collaboratively as fishers, authorities, scientists, and other relevant stakeholders to achieve this.

### Our mission statement

Working collaboratively as fishers, authorities, scientists, and other relevant stakeholders to minimise bycatch of Endangered, Threatened and Protected species in the North-East Atlantic, Baltic, and Mediterranean seas.



We are using cross-border and cross-sectoral collaboration involving stakeholders from 13 European countries to establish mitigation, monitoring, and assessment programmes in a selected group of fisheries with a risk of bycatch.

Within a proactively fostered working environment characterised by mutual trust, safety, and cooperation, the consortium will build on a review of current approaches and learning from the case study fisheries to deliver an innovative toolbox designed to be integrated into policy and best practice in European fisheries management.

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**Read our report, including all references and supplementary resources underpinning our guidelines, [here](#).**

With thanks to all CIBBRiNA partners who helped produce this guidance by reviewing literature and/or providing perspectives on successful collaboration towards achieving our project's objectives, as well as everyone who shared their views and experiences in the accompanying videos.

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