

European Union

AKTEA Meets Again

The Northern Ireland Women in Fisheries (NIWIF) network hosted the AKTEA network members in Annalong during 27-29 April 2007
By Katia Frangoudes, Facilitator of AKTEA, the European Network of Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture

Eighty women from eight European countries—United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece—met in Annalong, Northern Ireland, from 27 to 29 April 2007 for the Second Conference and Second General Body Meeting of AKTEA: European Network of Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture, with the aim of shaping the future actions of the organization. Women representing 15 organizations and speaking eight different European languages converged in Annalong, to act not only for the maintenance of fisheries and aquaculture on the coast but also for the recognition of their significant contributions in these industries.

On the first day, participants visited the three main fishing harbours of Northern Ireland—Kilkeel, Ardglass and Portavogie—where they learnt about the local fisheries, the shell fishing and the processing industry. The main species for local fisheries here are nephrops, cod and crabs, which have a high commercial value. Both artisanal and industrial forms of processing are practised, and visits to both types of industries were organized.

The second day was spent in presentations and discussions, covering a wide range of issues. From the socioeconomic condition of fishing villages to restrictive legislation, the issues facing fisheries in Northern Ireland were discussed. Cornelia Quist, a member of the Netherlands-based VinVis network, talked about the growth and activities of women's organizations in Europe that are struggling for the recognition of women's contribution in fisheries and aquaculture. Ann Bell, the secretary of the Regional Advisory Council (RAC) of the North Sea, spoke about the role of the RAC, with a focus on why

women's organizations in fisheries should be active participants in such bodies.

In another presentation, Marie H el ene Aubert, Member of the European Parliament, addressed the issues of women being the invisible workforce within the industry. She also explained the importance of lobbying at the European and national levels. An outline of the European Fisheries Funds (EFF) 2007-2013, which provides financial aid to fisheries and aquaculture industries and includes women-specific aspects, was also presented.

On the final day, the issue of globalization came up for discussion. Barbara Neis of the Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada, talked about globalization in the context of gender, fisheries and socioecological health. Brian O'Riordan of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers presented a film and led a discussion on the impact of globalization on fishing communities. The participants were then invited to share experiences from their communities related to globalization.

Reflecting on the conference, participants felt that the lack of simultaneous translation facilities was an obstacle to good communication. They expressed the need for better information exchange. An AKTEA website, a newsletter and training on various aspects such as leadership-building, lobbying and resource management, were identified as important needs.

Everyone acknowledged the important role of the annual AKTEA meeting in maintaining the dynamic nature of the network. The kindness and hospitality of the Irish hosts was also warmly acknowledged.

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