

Using fish to show over fishing

Raising awareness on overfishing through aquaria and zoos in Europe

1. Introduction

Overfishing is the main threat to fish stocks and diversity around the world. The western world plays an important role in this. First, their fishing fleets are amongst the biggest and most modern fleets in the world. Not only do they overfish the high seas, they are also allowed to fish – thanks to international agreements – in continental waters off the shores of lesser developed nations. Second, they are the key markets for fish, thereby encouraging unsustainable fishing around the world.

Consumer and electorate awareness of the impacts of overfishing is key to any solution to this problem given the reluctance of politicians – despite strong scientific evidence – to limit fish catches at or below sustainable levels. This proposal describes the first phase for a three-year European campaign to increase consumer and electoral awareness on overfishing, in order to create political will to effectively address the problem.

2. Launching a pan-European campaign on fisheries

The goal is the launch of a pan-European campaign on fisheries to raise awareness of citizens on the impact of European fisheries on fish stocks and diversity in Europe and beyond. The campaign will raise awareness to encourage people to take action on this awareness by changing their consumption patterns (i.e. to eat only fish from sustainable fisheries) or their political engagement (i.e. by influencing parliaments or taking conservation action). The exact campaign intervention will be based on more detailed research into people's perceptions and behaviours.

Key to these interventions is to work with European aquaria and zoos. These conservation-oriented organisations possess an important power to raise awareness since they combine habitat and species presentation, with knowledge in education, and they reach millions of visitors each year. However, to maximize impact, the educational and awareness-raising materials that are developed with them can be used through other channels as well.

The campaign is therefore set to educate audiences across Europe at aquaria and zoos. This entails the development of educational materials in collaboration with them, with a clear focus on possible action to change fisheries practices. Around these educational activities will be several public relations events, aimed at attracting public interest in the educational activities at aquaria and zoos.

Needless to say, fisheries have been a topic in European science, politics and civic debates for a long time. Many organisations have activities in this field. This creates an excellent opportunity for a campaign to harness these different organizations and collaborate on these educational activities.

3. The first phase: developing a campaign plan

This concept proposes a first phase to develop a concise three-year campaign plan that is agreed by a limited number of key partners. More extensive partnership building and contacts with aquaria and zoo will be undertaken in the second phase.

The first phase will deliver:

- a. *Defining the content*

- A preliminary overview of awareness raising activities ongoing and materials used in Europe
- A review of research on the knowledge of European citizens on fisheries issues
- b. *Establishing the core partnership*
 - A proposed set of partners and agreement with a core set of partners
 - An engagement strategy with potential partners
- c. *Developing the campaign plan*
 - A set of key messages the campaign is to convey to its target audience
 - A rough action plan for the campaign
 - A budget and time plan

The three-year campaign would be coordinated by IUCN and implemented in partnership with IUCN member organizations and partners. The focus of IUCN would further be on the provision of scientific knowledge as the foundation for the various communication products, and the link to European policy.

4. Partners

The campaign will be a partnership between a range of organisations across Europe. One specific group of partners will be aquaria and zoos, for instance through the European Union of Aquarium Curators (EUAC), the European Association of Zoos and Aquarias (EAZA and WAZA—The World Association of Zoos and Aquaria). They attract millions of people every year; have an interest in biodiversity conservation; and great expertise in linking direct observation to education.

Other partners will include conservation organisations, like WWF and Greenpeace and national-level organizations. Internally, IUCN will set up a mechanism of collaboration and coordination between its Species Survival Commission, Species and Marine Programmes, CEC, the Communications Unit, and its offices in Brussel, Warsaw, and Malaga.

Other contributors may include the Lighthouse Foundation, the Oak Foundation, and Television Trust for the Environment.