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# **Science, Technology, and Society Initiative to Minimize Unwanted Catches in European Fisheries**

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Communication**

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<http://minouw-project.eu/>



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RESEARCH & INNOVATION

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## Introduction

MINOUW is a EU H2020 project working towards a gradual elimination of discards in European fisheries. A Consortium of 19 organisations including fisheries technologists, fisheries scientists, universities, a non-governmental organization and local fisheries managers.

The project's overall objective is to minimise unwanted catches by incentivising the adoption of fishing technologies and practices that reduce pre-harvest mortality and post-harvest discards, while avoiding damage to sensitive marine species and habitats.

The project is working hand-in-hand with the fishing industry in South European seas to find practical technological solutions or fishing practices that are effective and easy to implement, without inducing undue costs to industry. The results of the project are communicated to industry, fisheries managers and fisheries controllers, as well as to other scientists. Communication to interested parties of the general public is channelled by means of on-line and off-line media products.

This document is an overview of the project's main activities and results for media purposes. It is intended to make available the results of the MINOUW project and issues associated with discards to journalists in general terms. This background directs them to the website where they will find more detailed information, videos and have the opportunity to follow the blog and project updates at [www.minouw-project.eu](http://www.minouw-project.eu)

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## Have you ever wondered what happens with the unwanted fish that is thrown back into the sea?

The catching of unwanted species is a pervasive problem in fisheries worldwide. In most cases unwanted catches are returned dead to the sea as discards. This results in a waste of natural resources and a threat to the health and stability of marine ecosystems.

In European fisheries of the North East Atlantic and Mediterranean seas, discarding occurs mainly because the catch is of no commercial value, because quotas have been reached, and because the potentially commercial species are below minimum size or are of low commercial value.

Unwanted catches damage fish stocks, by killing adults and juvenile individuals before they reach reproductive age. This impacts on the entire chain, from habitat-forming invertebrate populations to seabirds.

From a socio-economic point of view, a fishery with unwanted catches is less efficient because time and labour are wasted sorting catches.

## The landing obligation

European fisheries are currently transitioning to reducing discards, and to bringing all catches to land as part of the implementation of the Landing Obligation, Art. 15 of the Common Fishery Policy.

At [this link](#), you can listen to Elisa Roller, Head of Unit “Common Fisheries Policy and Aquaculture” from the EC DG MARE, detailing the importance of the Landing Obligation.

According to the scientists involved in the MINOUW project, given the difficulty of completely avoiding unwanted catches in fishery, it is necessary to devise technical and technological solutions, along with economic and social incentives, to gradually eliminate discard practices.

By developing and improving these solutions, increasing the awareness of producers and consumers, and placing an economic premium on discard-free fishing, there is the possibility of considerably reducing unwanted catches and ensuring a more sustainable supply of fish resources in the future.

## The MINOUW project

The [MINOUW project](#) promotes a positive change in the sea by placing fishers at the core of actions to reduce unwanted catches and discarding practices, and by using multi-stakeholder engagement in the design and implementation of these actions.

The MINOUW project is made up of over [15 maritime science institutes and bodies](#) from across Europe, and brings together scientists, fishers, NGOs and policy makers.

The project’s overall objective is to achieve the gradual elimination of discards in European marine fisheries by minimising unwanted catches while avoiding damage to sensitive marine species and habitats.

## Supporting the Common Fisheries Policy

MINOUW will provide support to policy in the new orientation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP EU Reg. 1380/2013) regarding the gradual elimination of discards by investigating new technological solutions, as well as economic incentives, in the fish harvesting process. The project results will also contribute to implementing the European Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD; Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of Marine Environmental Policy). The MSFD is the European Directive aimed at achieving or maintaining Good Environmental Status in European seas.



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Fishermen, scientists, government representatives and WWF met in Blanes, Catalonia, to discuss the progress of the MINOUW project.

### How can we help reduce discards?

Solutions exist. MINOUW project partners are conducting a [case-by-case analysis](#) of the main types of European fisheries to ensure that these solutions are highly practical, which means they are technologically feasible, environmentally sustainable, and economically viable.

MINOUW is working to demonstrate these solutions by:

#### **Conducting research**

To understand the nature of discards and their impact in ecological, socioeconomic and technical terms, the project includes 17 case studies spread across 7 countries, featuring fisheries based on trawl gears, purse seines, dredges, traps, pots, set nets and longlines.

#### **Sharing knowledge**

Key to the project is the exchange of skills, information, knowledge and practices. From research and data to new technologies or innovations, we are building a broader understanding of the problem and potential solutions among stakeholders at all levels.

#### **Finding solutions**

Identifying, developing and testing innovative technological and social solutions to avoid unwanted catches; is also important to assess their suitability and practicality, their effect on the level of discards, and the impact of any reduction on the local marine ecosystem.

#### **Recommending policies**

As well as a review of the European policy framework, and raising awareness of its main aspects in the fishing industry, the MINOUW project will provide policy recommendations aiming to incentivise selective fishing and the best use of unwanted catches brought to land.

## Equal partners, working together

To be successful, it is vital to place fishers at the centre of the design and implementation of actions to promote change. From fieldwork to knowledge exchanges and high level events, scientists, fishers, technologists, fish producers and NGOs all participate on an equal footing. Everybody works collaboratively to provide the scientific and technical basis to achieve the project goals.

You can find examples of our approach and work [here](#).

## Results

Here below you can find a brief summary of some of the results obtained so far (September 2017) in the case studies of the Minouw project.

- Research carried out to date has produced convincing results in important fishing activities such as trawling, set nets, pots and longlines.
- In the trawl fishery, the use of lights to make the net more selective, and the use of grids and mesh panels (such as the T90) have been tested. When appropriately positioned these modifications to the fishing gear have reduced the capture of species of little or no commercial interest, as well as the undersize fraction of regulated species.
- Important results have been also recorded in trammel nets fisheries, by placing larger mesh-net panels in the lower part of the trammel net to prevent access to crabs and other unwanted invertebrate species. This additional piece of net is called selvedge or guarding net.
- Appropriately selected lights (based on the visual characteristics of important commercial fish species) have been used with good results to bait pots to catch cod.
- Although further experiments are needed, it seems that the use of circular hooks may reduce the capture of swordfish juveniles in longlining.

These are just some of the results produced by the project. More details can be found on the [MINOUW website](#).



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Fishermen's exchange on the use of trammel nets, Viareggio, Tuscany, Italy.

## Ensuring the future of fish and fishers

The fishing sector is enormously important for the Mediterranean, employing over 250,000 people (55% are artisanal fishers) directly, in addition to the employment provided by fish markets, production, distribution and other sectors associated with Mediterranean fisheries.

With more than 93% of assessed fish stocks in the European Mediterranean threatened by overfishing, resources and fishers face an uncertain future. It is of the utmost importance that concrete solutions that can be applied immediately are found.

Fishers are aware of the risks, and are interested in and committed to finding solutions to the problems associated with discards.

See below for fishers' experiments with a set of selected techniques and their comments.

### **The 'selvedge' or guarding net: a tried and trusted technique to reduce discards**

*"We've been using this type of fishery for almost 20 years, with great results... we have reduced discards by 50%"*

Alfo, Italy

<http://minouw-project.eu/the-selvedge-or-guarding-net-a-tried-and-trusted-technique-to-reduce-discards/>

### **Sorting grids – can a Norwegian success be replicated in the Mediterranean?**

*"We have to work together, all of us, for a good future for fisheries"*

Frank, Norway

<http://minouw-project.eu/sorting-grids-can-norwegian-success-be-replicated-in-the-mediterranean/>

### **The slipping method – can net modification improve by-catch survival rates?**

*"Sardines are able to escape without the stress of having to jump the floating line, or having the net weight over them. They escape alive and healthy."*

Paulo, Portugal

<http://minouw-project.eu/the-slipping-method-can-a-net-modification-improve-by-catch-survival-rates/>

### **Can modified dredging gear reduce discards in clam fisheries?**

*"This dredge brought several benefits... fuel expenses decreased, the clams caught are of better quality and we spend less time towing and less time sorting the catches."*

Humberto, Portugal

<http://minouw-project.eu/can-modified-dredging-gear-reduce-discards-in-clam-fisheries/>

To learn more and follow the progress of the MINOUW project:

[minouw-project.eu/blog/](http://minouw-project.eu/blog/)

Twitter: @MINOUW2015

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Fish auction, Blanes, Catalonia.

### The MINOUW Consortium



### Beneficiaries:



### Linked parties:

