

Post-Doctoral Fellowship: Proposal Outline

Topic	Fisheries Community Profiles in Ireland: Mapping social, cultural, and economic dimensions of coastal fisheries communities.
Research Theme(s)	Social Sustainability and Policy Integration in Irish Fisheries
Background and Rationale (including Strategic Priority)	<p>Fisheries communities in Ireland are integral to the cultural and economic fabric of coastal regions. These communities are typically centred around fishing harbours and are sustained through shared heritage, strong intergenerational ties, and fishing-related livelihoods. However, despite policy efforts to support sustainable fisheries, there remains a critical gap in the systematic collection and application of community-level social data.</p> <p>This project addresses the needs arising from the European Commission’s increasing focus on the human dimension of fisheries management, as seen in initiatives by the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) and ICES Working Group on Social Indicators. Under STECF, the concept of Fisheries Community Profiles (FCPs) has been piloted in the Netherlands (e.g. Urk and Arnemuiden case studies), demonstrating the value of structured local social data collection and analysis for assessing community vulnerability, governance capacity, and sectoral transition.</p> <p>STECF’s 2024 report (EWG 24-05) notes that FCPs can support better-informed decision-making by providing localised insight into how social, economic, and cultural characteristics influence fishing community resilience, adaptability, and responses to regulatory or environmental pressures. FCPs help policymakers to identify emerging issues, and to anticipate and mitigate unintended social and economic impacts of management, including spatial measures such as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) or Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) developments. They also offer a pathway to better assess the implications of climate transition, loss of access (due to e.g. policy changes such as Brexit and/or increasing marine uses), or fleet restructuring at the local scale.</p> <p>The STECF guidance highlights key benefits of FCPs, including the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground-truth socio-economic models with lived experience • Support transparent, inclusive policy development and decision-making • Identify changes within communities over time and space, and understand the impacts • Enable comparisons between communities over time and space • Identify communities most at risk of social or economic decline • Highlight underrepresented voices and intergenerational dynamics

	<p>FCPs also align with Article 17 of the Common Fisheries Policy, which calls for the allocation of fishing opportunities based on transparent and objective criteria, including those of a social nature. The need for robust and replicable community-level data is particularly relevant for Ireland, where the inshore sector comprises the majority of the fleet but is often underrepresented in policy analysis largely due to a lack of data.</p> <p>Aligned with the Marine Institute's strategic goals of "Meeting Climate, Biodiversity and Seafood Security Challenges" and "Delivering Impact Through Research," this proposal supports the integration of socio-cultural evidence into national and EU-level marine policy. It complements Ireland's obligations under the CFP, the EU Green Deal, Ireland's Seafood Development Programme, and the National Marine Planning Framework, and the Programme for Government – Shaping Our Future.</p> <p>This research addresses pressing questions related to spatial competition (ORE, MPAs), generational transition in fisheries, social resilience, and the future sustainability of Ireland's inshore fleet and coastal communities.</p>
<p>Scope of Research (Scientific/ Technical Challenge)</p>	<p>The overarching aim of this fellowship is to pilot and refine a framework for Fisheries Community Profiles (FCPs) tailored to the Irish context, informed by STECF methodology and international best practice. The fellowship should address key research objectives as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop FCPs for Irish fishing communities, selected based on representativeness, contrast, and policy relevance. • Compile community-specific datasets integrating demographic, economic, cultural, and institutional indicators. • Map community involvement across both the seafood value chain, including fishing, processing, trade, and governance; and other industrial activities in the broader ocean and general economy. • Assess local perceptions of risks and opportunities related to policy and regulatory changes, spatial competition, and climate resilience. • Evaluate the feasibility and data requirements for regular FCP updates, aligning with national and EU data collection standards. • Methodological innovation will include the integration of quantitative datasets (e.g. CSO, DCF, MI fleet, and landings data) with qualitative insights (e.g. stakeholder interviews, surveys, institutional mapping), ensuring a holistic view of community dynamics • Assessment of utility, potential application and uptake of outputs, identifying relevant pathways and appropriate formats for communicating outcomes

<p>Expected Impact(s)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of a replicable and validated methodology for Irish Fisheries Community Profiles. • Contribution to the EU-wide development of social indicators under the CFP, including Article 17 considerations. • Improved knowledge on current and emerging social and economic trends and issues affecting Irish fishing communities • Support for evidence-based marine spatial planning, particularly in relation to ORE and MPAs. • Enhanced national capacity to evaluate socio-economic vulnerability and resilience at the community level. • Enhanced national capacity to evaluate socio-economic impacts and potential trade-offs enabling more robust decision-making • Strengthened stakeholder engagement and empowerment through participatory fieldwork and validation workshops. • Academic impact through peer-reviewed publications and policy briefs. • The fellow will engage with relevant national and international networks, and explore opportunities for collaboration and securing further research funding. • This fellowship will help to build national expertise and capacity in this research area. • The fellow will produce accessible summary briefs for stakeholders, and publish their research findings as widely as possible through peer-reviewed papers, conference presentations, articles, etc.
<p>Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the methodology employed a range of detailed and validated Fisheries Community Profiles (locations in contrasting socio-economic and geographic settings) for Irish fish communities. • FCP toolkit and guidelines for national replication. • Community-level data visualisations and dashboards. • Peer-reviewed journal articles and conference presentations. • Policy briefs tailored for Irish and EU fisheries governance bodies. • Input to BIM and Marine Institute social data strategy and potential ICES/STECF working group contributions.
<p>Specific Collaboration</p>	<p>Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) Economic and Strategic Services Unit and Seafood Industry stakeholders, and members of the Marine Institute Socio-Economics Team.</p>
<p>Location of Fellow</p>	<p>BIM Office (Dun Laoghaire or other suitable location), with periodic travel to coastal communities and to the Marine Institute, Galway.</p> <p>Contacts: Emmet Jackson, Bord Iascaigh Mhara Jenny O’Leary, Marine Institute</p>

<p>Duration and Funding Available</p>	<p>4 years</p> <p>€100,000 per annum (i.e. total €400,000 maximum for duration of four years)</p> <p>This fellowship is jointly funded by the Marine Institute (50%) and Bord Iascaigh Mhara (50%).</p>
<p>References</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM). (2022) Irish Seafood Development Programme 2021–2027. Dublin: BIM. Available at: https://bim.ie [Accessed 21 May 2025]. • Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM). (2025) The Economic Impact of the Seafood Sector. Dublin. BIM Available at: https://bim.ie/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Main-Ports-BIM-the-economic-impact-of-the-seafood-sector-at-Irelands-main-ports.pdf. • European Commission. (2024) Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Social Data in EU Fisheries (EWG 24-05). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu [Accessed 21 May 2025]. • Government of Ireland. (2021) National Marine Planning Framework. Dublin. • ICES WGSOCIAL. (2023) Report of the Working Group on Social Indicators (WGSOCIAL). International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. ICES Scientific Reports. Available at: https://ices.dk [Accessed 21 May 2025]. • Marine Institute (2024) Ireland’s Ocean Economy Report and associated ocean and coastal economy data. Available on https://www.marine.ie/site-area/data-services/irelands-ocean-economy. • Marine Institute. (2023) Strategic Plan 2023–2027: Ocean Knowledge that Informs and Inspires. Galway: Marine Institute. Available at: https://marine.ie [Accessed 21 May 2025]. • Pulskens, A. and van Hoof, L. (2024) Fisheries Community Profile Urk: A First Exercise. Wageningen Marine Research Report C089/24. DOI: 10.18174/680697 [Accessed 21 May 2025]. • Van Hoof, L. and Pulskens, A. (2024) Evaluation of the Workability of the Fisheries Community Profile Format and Data Collection. Wageningen Marine Research Report C093/24. DOI: 10.18174/683424 [Accessed 21 May 2025]. • Verschuur, M., van Hoof, L., and Pulskens, A. (2023) ‘Social Data in EU Fisheries: Toward a Community-Based Approach’, Marine Policy, [preprint or in press if not yet published]. [Accessed 21 May 2025]. • European Commission. (2022) EU Mission: Restore Our Ocean and Waters by 2030 – Implementation Plan. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation [Accessed 21 May 2025].