Title: The European Fisheries Fund and Axis 4: A Territorial Approach to Fisheries Support in the EU

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Abstract: The 4th Axis of the European Fisheries Funds presents a new approach in the way the European Union supports its fisheries sector. This Axis is devoted to the sustainable development of fisheries areas through a territorial approach. It dwells very much on the experience of the LEADER initiative which has successfully been used under the EARDF to support diversification of rural areas over the past 20 years. By shifting the focus of the support on the territory and the community away from the traditional sectoral approach, this method paves the way for the integration of the fisheries sector into the wider economic context and helps reducing the socio economic dependency of the area from a single activity. The specificity of the approach does not rely so much on the type of activities funded (even though they usually go beyond sectoral type of initiatives) but mostly by the way projects are developed. At the basis of the approach are local partnerships (Fisheries Local Action Groups or FLAGs) build by the communities themselves, which must be representative of the local social structure and that are in charge of developing a local development strategy. Call for tenders will then be opened by the local partnerships in order to select projects that fit within their strategy. Key to the success of this initiative is the bottom up approach where initiatives for the overall strategy and projects lie with the local actors. The first FLAGs have started their activities mid 2009 and due to the bottom up principle present a wide variety of organizational structures, strategies and projects. The first results of this initiative will be presented and the opportunities it represents in the context of the reform of the CFP will be discussed.