

2026

Lost Fishing Gear:

Retrieval, recycling, and preventive actions for abandoned recreational fishing gear in the central Baltic Sea

Guidelines for communication and consultation processes in ALDFG prevention education and training

Interreg



Co-funded by
the European Union

Central Baltic Programme

Re:Fish

Lost fishing gear is found in all seas, lakes, and waterways where recreational fishing takes place. It causes unnecessary suffering for fish, birds, and marine mammals. In the EU project Re:Fish, we are working towards a cleaner and healthier Baltic Sea.

Project period: 2023–2026

Funded by Interreg, Central Baltic Programme

Project partners: Keep Sweden Tidy (SE, lead partner), Keep the Archipelago Tidy (FI), University of Tartu (EE), Finland Environmental Institute (FI)

Read more at centralbaltic.eu/project/refish/



Project information

Funded by the EU's Interreg Central Baltic Programme under its "Improved Coastal and Marine Environment" priority, the Re:Fish project "Retrieval, recycling, and preventive actions for abandoned recreational fishing gear in the central Baltic Sea" (project period from March 2023 to February 2026) was coordinated by the Keep Sweden Tidy Foundation in cooperation with partners from Finland, Keep the Archipelago Tidy Association and the Finnish Environment Institute, and from Estonia, the University of Tartu.

The Re:Fish project addressed the problem of ghost fishing and plastic pollution caused by lost recreational fishing gear in Sweden, Finland, and Estonia. Through activities such as gear retrieval operations, end-of-life gear collections, citizen-based science initiatives, educational training and awareness campaigns, the project engaged anglers and fishers using passive gears, manufacturers, NGOs, research institutions, and authorities to prevent gear loss and advance practical measures for gear recovery and material recycling.

More information, project materials, and results can be found on the [project webpage](#).

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1 Introduction

Fishing-related litter has been identified as a key environmental threat across the globe. In that means commercial fishing has been more in the spotlight, and the effect of recreational fishing activities has gained less attention. However, recreational fishing is a widespread leisure activity with significant ecological and economic implications in rivers, lakes, and coastal regions worldwide. **Over the years the number of recreational fishing has increased, resulting also in an increase in lost fishing gear** (e.g., nets, hooks, lures, weights, floats, ropes, fishing rods, fishing line, etc., but also plastic boxes for bait, storing the fish etc.) **and other activity related litter items** (e.g., food and drinking consumption related items such as plastic bottles and bags, cutlery, candy papers, plastic packaging, metal cans etc.; smoking related litter such as cigarette butts, e-cigars etc.; clothing related litter items such as shoes, hats, gloves etc.; etc.).

Lost fishing gear can continue to trap marine life, damage habitats, and contribute to marine pollution for years. This derelict gear poses a serious threat to both fish populations and the broader marine ecosystem by inadvertently catching non-target species and destroying sensitive habitats (Macfadyen et al., 2009). Additionally, lost fishing gear contributes to the growing issue of marine litter, which threatens marine biodiversity and wildlife both by direct and indirect pathways (Wilcox et al., 2016). Even a simple small metal hook used in fishing can cause severe pain and cause death of different life-forms across the food chain (Hong et al., 2024). **Preventing gear loss in recreational fishing is crucial to minimizing environmental impacts.** By encouraging responsible fishing practices and the use of biodegradable gear, we can reduce these impacts and promote healthier marine environments. This can be done via public awareness raising, and there are various options and methods available for reaching people.

Awareness-raising is a process that seeks to inform and educate people about a topic or issue with the intention of influencing their attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs to achieve a defined purpose or goal (Sayers, 2006). Awareness-raising efforts may include the following activities: issuing press releases, briefings and commentaries; disseminating reports, studies and publications; making written or oral submissions to parliamentary committees and inquiries; working with the media; holding public meetings and events; convening conferences and workshops; and creating and contributing to educational materials (UNDP, 2008). This information may be disseminated through a range of different means or tools such as radio, television, video, film, the internet, social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, etc.), mobile phones, newspapers (both on paper and online), newsletters, leaflets, poster campaigns and the arts. A variety of visual tools such as stickers, logos, t-shirts, armbands, bracelets and banners also may be used (UNDP, 2008).

Effective communication and consultation are key components in delivering successful ALDFG (Abandoned, Lost or Otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear) prevention education and training. Reaching the right audience with the right messages requires a strategic, locally adapted approach. This document summarizes the main experiences of communication and consultation processes based ALDFG prevention education and training gained within Interreg Central Baltic Re:Fish project and based on those experiences provides the guidelines for best practices to enhance sustainable recreational fishing activities. The project Re: Fish was carried out in the Central Baltic Sea region by Sweden, Finland and Estonia in period from March 2023 to February 2026.

This document has two major sub-subgroups:

1. **Guidelines for sustainable recreational fishing** where a detailed list of recommendations related to pre-fishing, during fishing and post-fishing activities are given.
2. **Guidelines for raising awareness** where the general recommendations are given based on the experiences gained and communication and consultation processes carried out within Re:Fish project followed by short overviews of the different events held and media coverages.

2. Guidelines for sustainable recreational fishing

The guidelines indicate the topics and activities that recreational fishers need to consider and follow to prevent the loss of the gear and to be sustainable and environmentally friendly fishers. The guidelines are combined by following best practices of recreational fishing in Estonia, Finland and Sweden and in that means the guidelines also reflect the status quo in recreational fishing in the central Baltic Sea region. However, the recommendations are general and ubiquitous; country-specific limitations or solutions are indicated separately. The preventive and environmental awareness measures before fishing, during fishing and after fishing indicated below cover the topics that need to be addressed during the trainings and seminars for younger generations and newcomers in the field of recreational fishery.

2.1. Procedures before fishing

Choose the right gear

- Choose rods, reels and line strength that are appropriate for the size and fighting power of the fish you are targeting.
- Select the gear that suits the conditions, such as snag-resistant tackle in rocky and weedy areas.
- Invest in durable hooks, swivels, and leaders to prevent equipment failure during the fight with fish.

Preparation and maintenance

- Check the lifetime of equipment.
- Inspect fishing gear before using it to be sure it's not broken or excessively damaged.
- Use proper setup and knot-tying techniques to ensure gear stays intact during fishing. Always double-check knots and connections before fishing.

Environmental awareness

- Understand the fishing environment (e.g., mapping potential obstacles).
- Such obstacles can be, for example: underwater wrecks, large underwater rocks, underwater trees and branches, areas with dense underwater vegetation.
- Use technology (e.g., sonar or GPS) to avoid areas with high risks of gear loss.
- Use lead-free weights to reduce your impact on the environment.
- Check fishing rules and protected areas to ensure you're fishing legally and responsibly. This includes obtaining a fishing license and following the size limits, catch quotas, endangered species, seasonal restrictions, and spawning seasons.
- Bring a garbage bag on your fishing trip so you can take your litter home with you.

2.2. Procedures during fishing

Proper anchoring and drifting techniques

- Before anchoring or drifting, study the water depth, current direction, and bottom structure to avoid high-risk areas.
- Anchor up-current of your target area - this allows your bait or lures to drift naturally into the desired zone.
- Use a quick-release anchor system, which allows you to detach easily without risking your fishing gear or boat in case your anchor gets stuck.
- Monitor your drift constantly and keep an eye on your speed and direction to ensure you are not heading into rocky or weedy areas.
- Avoid areas where valuable benthic communities could be damaged by anchoring (e.g., seagrass beds).

Active line management

- Always maintain tension on the line to prevent it from drifting into snags and obstacles when fish bites.
- Use the appropriate amount of weight to keep the bait in place when fishing with the bottom fishing line.
- Check your line regularly.
- Use a rod holder or keep the rod in hand to react immediately if the line starts to drift or gets caught.

Consider the fishing environment

- Avoid high-risk areas with dense vegetation, rocky bottoms, or underwater debris and underwater trees and branches, where gear is more likely to get snagged or lost.
- Choose open water spots, when possible, with minimum underwater obstacles.

Environmental awareness regarding fisheries related litter

- Take all your litter with you - never leave behind any packaging, fishing line, bait containers, food wrappers, drinking bottles, cigarettes etc.
- Secure loose items that can easily be carried away by water and wind, such as plastic bags, etc. Make sure they are properly stored or weighed down.
- Lead by example – If you see litter left by others, bring it to their attention or pick it up yourself. Your actions help protect the environment and set a positive example for fellow anglers.

Actions in case of gear loss

Tools and techniques for retrieval

- Use a telescopic retrieval pole with a hook to reach and grab gear stuck near shore or in shallow water.
- Use a strong rope with a hook that can be thrown and used to pull up lost nets, rods, or lures from underwater obstacles.
- Use a retrieval magnet to recover metal items like lures, etc.
- If retrieval tools are not available, mark the spot with something visible for later retrieval.
- In deeper or more complex environments, the retrieval of lost fishing gear is mostly not possible due to high risk to human health and cost. However, in some cases there are opportunities to collaborate with professional divers.

Reporting lost gear

- The number of countries where reporting lost fishing gear is possible or mandatory, is increasing and thus when planning leisure fishing abroad, the national regulations should be learned beforehand and followed.
- Sweden: There is no official reporting system available currently.

- Finland: There is no official reporting system available currently. There is a voluntary reporting system [Rosgis](#).
- Estonia: There is no official reporting system available currently. However, RosGIS also available in the Estonian and Swedish also so that can be promoted also in Estonia and Sweden.

2.3. Procedures after fishing

Doing proper gear recovery and repairing

- Many types of fishing gear can be repaired instead of replaced, and there are designated service locations or shops that offer that.
- Investing in quality products often means it can be repaired when necessary, extending its usability and reducing waste. However, the durability of the repaired equipment must be viewed critically.

Regular Maintenance

- Routinely check your gear and perform regular maintenance to extend its lifespan and reduce the risk of loss.
- After each fishing trip, clean your gear to remove dirt and debris.
- Rinse your equipment with fresh water after every fishing trip to prevent damage and corrosion.
- Keep your gear away from direct sunlight. UV radiation degrades the lifetime of the materials, and the total lifetime of the gear shortens significantly.
- The best holding place for your gear should be cool and dry.

Proper disposal of damaged gear

- The EU Single-Use Plastics Directive (EU) 2019/904 and related extended producer responsibility (EPR) to cover also fishing gear came into force in all EU member states on the 1st of January 2025. That means that the producers (shops selling fishery products) are obligated to collect fishing gear containing plastic and ensure proper management and treatment.
- The extended producer responsibility system has been established for fishing gear containing plastic that is placed on the market in an EU Member State. Extended producer responsibility applies to all fishing gear containing plastic that is not intended exclusively for use in inland waters. Extended producer responsibility covers plastic-containing nets, traps, fishing lines, ropes, buoys, and lures, if their plastic content exceeds 80%.

Estonia:

In Estonia the target for collecting back the fishing gear collecting plastic is that from 2027

onwards, at least 10% of the amount of fishing gear placed on the market in the previous year will be collected.

Old or broken fishing gear containing plastic, or parts thereof, must be returned to the manufacturer, i.e., the shop selling the fishing gear. However, currently (February 2026) the full collection and recycling system is forming as a part of the process.

Finland:

- In Finland, the producers had to organize a separate gear collection, which covers at least 10 % of the total weight of the gears put annually on the market.
- The producers have also reported obligations for waste. The reporting frequency in Finland is 4 times a year depending on the amount of reception.
- In 2023 Finnish SUP producers Group Ltd. (SUP-PRO Ltd), Suomen SUP-tuottajayhteisö, was registered in the Trade register, and in September 2024 the controlling Finish authority (ELY- center) approved fishing gear collection to be included.
- SUP PRO should arrange 150 reception points for separate collection of plastic containing fishing gears like nets, ropes and floats. At present 75 collection points are permanent or stationary points, and the other half 75 mobile collection points.
- A total of 10 separate reception terminals has been established to receive gear from professional fishers. The producers must bring their equipment to the terminal. Collection at terminals include also equipment used in aquaculture
- The 75 mobile/pick-up points are mainly for waste generated rod fishing, but also other gears like gillnets can be delivered. In addition to fixed and mobile collection points, collection campaigns will be arranged by stores selling fishing equipment and gears.
- Possibilities to reuse and recycle collected material should always be considered and incineration is the last option.
- The collection fees are determined by the board of the SUP-PRO annually
- The collection fees in 2025 of fishing gear waste in Finland are presented in table 2.1.
- The board decided on the fees in 2026 as shown in table 2.2. The financial guarantees fees covering and assuring the activities will be continued.

Table 2.1. Collection fees of Fishing gears in Finland in 2025. Six-month financial guarantee fees are not included.

	Netting and professional fishers	Rod Fishing	Aquaculture
Fees € / kg	1.62	0.52	0.44

Table 2.2. Collection fees of Fishing gears in Finland in 2026. Six-month guarantee fees are included.

	Netting and professional fishers	Rod Fishing	Aquaculture
Fees € / kg	1.13	0.24	0.44
Guarantee fees € / kg	0.565	0.12	0.22

Sweden:

- The extended producer responsibility for fishing gear (governed by the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive (EU) 2019/904), has been implemented in Sweden through the Ordinance (2021:1001) on Producer Responsibility for Fishing Gear.
- Fiskekretsen AB is now an officially approved producer responsibility organization for fishing gear.
- Swedish municipalities are required to provide collection points where recreational fishing gear can be collected separately, and they receive financial compensation from the producers for this service.
- Most municipalities have chosen to place these collection points at recycling centers, and some also provide additional collection points in marinas for pleasure boats.
- In Sweden the target is that, from 2027 onwards, at least 20% of the amount of fishing gear placed on the market in the previous year will be collected.

3 Guidelines for raising public awareness on ALDFG topic

All three project countries (Sweden, Finland and Estonia) gave their contribution to share the knowledge and know-how not only to raise peoples' awareness about the ALDFG problem, but also to prevent the future loss of the recreational fishing gear. As the background and traditions are slightly different in all the project countries, it was agreed that each of the project partners can decide the format, methods and topics that would be the most effective in their countries. Additionally, the geographical and morphological differences between the project countries supported the decision.

Successful outreach on marine litter from fisheries, including the loss of fishing gear and equipment, requires more than just a clear message - it depends on choosing the right channels and formats. **Efforts focused on preventing gear loss, promoting proper maintenance, and reducing waste at sea were communicated through both digital media and in-person events.** Public awareness campaigns, workshops, and active social media engagement helped raise visibility among various audiences. In the training

workshops and during the public events scientists and experienced recreational fishers gave the instructions and overview what should be concerned before, during and after the fishing activity to prevent the loss of the gear and act as an environmentally friendly fisher.

Training sessions were developed in close cooperation with local communities, fishers, schools, and other stakeholders to ensure relevance and practical value. Workshops were tailored to different groups, from professional fishers to students, each with a suitable structure and focus. Presenters from various disciplines covered topics such as sustainable practices and the environmental impact of lost equipment. Interactive tools and real-life case studies helped participants understand the consequences of marine litter and their role in prevention. **Events were held in diverse settings - from harbours to classrooms - to maximize reach and engagement.** Using a mix of traditional outreach and innovative tools ensured that the message resonated with all target groups.

Media played a key role in increasing visibility and reinforcing key messages across broader audiences. Short video clips were produced to illustrate practical skills, such as how to tie secure fishing knots, and to raise awareness, for example, through simple animations showing how lost fishing gear can harm marine life. These easily shareable formats helped extend the campaign's reach and encouraged engagement online. The inclusive and interdisciplinary approach proved essential for building lasting awareness and encouraging responsible behavior in fisheries-related communities.

The Re:Fish project team in collaboration with different stakeholders and volunteers has cleaned up 225 km² of sea-and riverbed, retrieved more than 8.763 m of gillnets, 2.044 kg of lost fishing gear, and 1.237 kg of other trash from the Baltic Sea. The activities, results, educational materials, etc., were communicated to the public throughout the project, and **it is estimated that more than 8.6 million people were reached through various awareness-raising campaigns held within Re:Fish project.**

This chapter outlines practical guidance for improving outreach activities related to marine litter from fisheries, based on the experiences and activities carried out during the project. It reflects lessons learned from working with diverse target groups, including professional fishers, local communities, schoolchildren, and the public. It serves as a practical guide for designing impactful ALDFG prevention education in diverse regions.

3.1. General guidelines for public communication with recommendations regarding ALDFG topic

There are multiple options to reach out for the public to increase awareness on some topic, e.g.:

- Social media
- Organization webpages
- Setting up a thematical webpage
- E-mails
- In-person events (i.e., workshops, see 3.2)
- Virtual events
- Newspapers
- Radio
- Television
- Leaflets, handouts, stickers, posters, etc.
- Collaborations with other organizations

Under the Re:Fish project, a variety of different channels of communication was used and based on the countries' experience with public communication, some general guidelines are given below:

- Use different digital and non-digital channels of communication to reach as many people as possible.
- Collaborate with different organizations – NGOs, research institutions, schools, companies etc., that are related or show interest in the topic.
- Produce thematical content and participate in events that relate to the topic and are organized by others. E.g., to increase knowledge on the topic of sustainable leisure fishing, the project partners of Re:Fish participated in Open Harbor Day, World Cleanup Day, Science Night, Boat Show, scientific conferences etc.
- Include hands-on activities either when organizing thematical workshops or participating in different events, especially when the younger generation and/or families are included in the target group (see 3.2 for more information).
- If applicable, produce a variety of thematical, informative and visually appealing handouts, stickers, special items, etc., that are easy to share and take home and that have some practical use as well. However, the production of items needs to be addressed separately and responsively.
- Organize thematical seminars and workshops to share more detailed information and facilitate fruitful discussions between interested parties.
- Be active in the media (newspapers, radio, television).
- New and often unforeseen opportunities for collaboration will rise from being active in the field and from being visible. E.g., Estonian students participating in a global scale organized inventive competition LEGO Submerged contacted the local scientists related to the Re:Fish project and worked on a specific solution for fishermen to prevent loss of fishing gear (nets).

3.2. General guidelines for organizing workshops with recommendations regarding ALDFG topic



Workshops are one of the possibilities to reach target groups and provide in-depth information. However, the number of people reached via workshops is smaller compared to e.g., social media campaigns, but at the same time communication is direct and more personal. Organizing events is something most people have encountered and experienced in their lifetime. However, running workshops can be tough work and as usual, having a strategic approach gives better outcomes both for organizers and attendees. Organizing successful

workshops generally follows four phases: visioning, designing, executing, and learning (for more detailed overview see e.g., <https://www.sessionlab.com/blog/planning-a-workshop/>), figure generated by artlist.io. This chapter provides a step-by-step overview of general work related to organizing workshops and some specific recommendations when organizing events focusing on leisure fishing activities based on the experiences gained within Re:Fish project.

Visioning

- Why? Sharing intentions and possibilities in a small group of event organizers. It is also important that all the organizers agree on one key question - "Why the workshop is needed?" In case of organizing a leisure fishing related workshop, one answer to "Why?" is the need for awareness raise related to sustainable recreational fishing practices.
- Who? Defining the target audience and expected number of participants. The target audience can be the preschoolers, youngsters, and/or older generation etc. Whether to address the already active leisure fishers or target the wider public depends on the local circumstances and on organizers' view on the topic. The choice of target groups sets also tone for the design, registration channels, timing and communication.
- What? Drafting the initial concept contains a summary of the desired outcomes, a list of key objectives, and a description of the main activities of the workshop.

Designing

- What is the cost? Workshop design depends strongly on the budget; thus, it is important to know the financial obstacles and possibilities depending on the local circumstances. With a small budget it is possible to organize workshops by e.g. attending schools, offering special activities for the local festivals etc.
- When and where? Choosing the time and place of the workshop based on the availability of the target audience. Any needs related to the location, e.g., such as accessibility, type of space, and equipment for presentation should be listed

beforehand. Virtual and physical workshops have different needs and in case of deciding for a hybrid meeting, more pre-work must be done in the design phase. However, physical workshops are suggested to facilitate communication and learning processes.

- I.e. the workshops organized within Re:Fish took place on Saturdays.
 - If possible, it is suggested to choose the locations that already are involved in environmental education (e.g., Nature houses). It also benefits the informational spread as the information about the workshops can be distributed via those channels as well.
- Creating the workshop agenda – establishing the timeline, listing the activities and topics, assessing the time-limit of activities and adding buffer, adding essential opening and closing activities (i.e., introduction in the beginning and conclusions at the end). It is important to schedule enough breaks depending on the length of the workshop and age of the participants.
 - List of topics/issues to address can be found under paragraph “Guidelines for sustainable recreational fishing”
- If applicable, add interactive and hands-on activities – especially when related to leisure fishing, there are several possibilities to actively incorporate all age groups.
 - E.g., visiting the main fishing areas and picking up the litter from pre-chosen locations, practicing making of the knots, learning life-saving skills when fishing in winter etc.
 - When hands-on activities are planned, it is suggested to keep the group of participants small (up to 20) or incorporate more trainees and activity spots to avoid long waiting times.
 - Including learning by games is recommended. A pre-planned Kahoot! Jeopardy or a simple pop quiz based on the workshop materials is also a good way to facilitate active participation and enables also to get feedback about the workshop itself and recall the main take-home messages. Plus, there is possibility the share some thematic prizes.
- Incorporate locals and specialists based on their interest and skills as presenters.
 - E.g., the local rescue team attending the workshop and talking about real-life experiences when saving hobby fishermen from drifting ice banks.
- It is important to schedule enough breaks depending on the length of the workshop and age of the participants.
 - If possible, include on-site lunch breaks to keep the group together, facilitate communication between participants, and to keep the breaks at optimum length.
- Refining the agenda depending on the availability of planned presenters, availability of the location, etc.
- How? Creating a communications plan includes preparing materials for dissemination, creating pre-registration forms, and choosing the right channels to reach out to the target group.

- Establishing who will be there (team and participants) - that also means including and reaching out to the host, assistants, photographer etc. At this stage it is also needed to have at least almost final participant list.
- It is also important to address the environmental footprint when organizing different events. E.g., in 2025 Republic of Estonia, Ministry of Climate provided the “National Guide to Organizing Environmentally Friendly Events” – a practical tool that helps organizers make informed and sustainable choices at every stage of the organization. The guide does not only focus on reducing environmental impact but also supports raising awareness among participants. An informed participant is not just a visitor but also a carrier of environmentally friendly values in their community and everyday life. The guidelines can be found at https://kliimaministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2025-07/Keskkonnahoidlike%20%C3%BCrituste%20juhend%20%28ENG%29_0.pdf

Executing

- Assembling materials including presentations, virtual whiteboards, physical goodies and printed materials if needed, etc.
- Briefing team and speakers a few days or shortly before the workshop. Even when all seems clear, during briefing some additional problems might arise and, in that case, spare time gives a possibility to find better solutions. When working with a team, it is important to know who will take care of what and thus rules and responsibilities should be clearly divided between team members.
- Personal energy management of the facilitator (and presenters) is an important topic that has gained more focus lately. Several focused activities and work-related suggestions have been addressed in thematic literature. For quick overview see e.g. in <https://www.sessionlab.com/blog/planning-a%20workshop/>
- Running a workshop: going with the flow. The agenda is set, however, sticking to the plan or changing the plan depends on the moment.

Learning

- After the end of the workshop, it is important to summarize the event by specific reports (including the agenda and data related to participants) and include also learnings from the workshop. This means subjective reflections from the organizers and participants and key recommendations for further similar events.
- Following up may include actions such as sending extra materials for the participants, collecting feedback through the questionnaire, and/or providing people with ways to stay in touch.
- It is also important to process the reflections and celebrate the work done.

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Appendices

A1. Overview of public communication carried out under Re:Fish project.

In Estonia, UTARTU decided to do physical training and educational events back-to-back with raising awareness on social media and presenting the topic on public events. In Sweden and Finland more effort was put to public events and communication campaigns. Each partner found themselves the best method to reach the people most effectively.

Estonia

Public events and media outreach played a crucial role in raising awareness throughout the project. The initiative actively participated in Open Harbor Days, providing opportunities to engage directly with the community and share information about marine litter from fisheries. Several thematic short videos were produced to illustrate key messages and practical tips, making the topic more accessible to a wider audience. The project's activities and achievements were also regularly featured in media outlets and television programs, further expanding its reach. These combined efforts helped ensure that the issue received broad public attention and encouraged responsible behavior among different target groups. Youth engagement was strengthened through activities with a robotics club, encouraging innovation and environmental thinking and brought a creative, tech-oriented perspective to awareness raising activities.

Additionally, these activities were publicized through the project at the Central Baltic Programme website, Facebook and YouTube channels of Estonian Marine Institute, University of Tartu, and other social media platforms to maximize visibility and engagement.

Press releases

- Re:Fish project launch and introduction press release in the newspaper Postimees (2.09.2023) <https://parnu.postimees.ee/7846578/liivi-lahe-voetakse-luubi-alla-uppunudkalavorgud>
- Press release about beach litter clean-up campaigns and EOL fishing gear collection containers in the newspaper Postimees (12.06.2024) <https://parnu.postimees.ee/8039279/voitlus-kummitusvorkudega-kogub-tuure>
- Overview of the ALDFG problem in the Baltic Sea and the Re:Fish project activities. Newspaper MK Estonia (07.09.2025) <https://www.mke.ee/et/pohiteema-et/kummitusvorgud-kuidas-laanemeri-huljatud-puugivahendite-tottu-lambub-jakes-puuab-seda-paasta/>

Short videos produced in the project

- ALDFG prevention <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HjOjOMbqm4>
- Ice safety <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F52k-NND1D0>
- How to tie secure fishing knots <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9xyOUGHKkU>
- Audru Polder Nature Reserve and Valgerand Conservation Area marine litter clean-up campaigns with NGO Estonian Fund for Nature
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OdwQMpaBT_k
- Short animation on bringing light to proper waste handling and environmentally responsible actions during leisure fishing <https://centralbaltic.eu/project/refish/71-project-materials/>

Participation in events and appearances on television

- **Open Fishing Harbour Day** in Pärnu JAPS Fishing Harbour on 26.04.2025. UTARTU Re:Fish project team introduced and advertised activities in Re:Fish project and promoted the existence and locations of EOL collection containers.
- **Educational theme evening “Voice of the Baltic Sea”** at Tallinn Seaplane Harbour on 15.10.2024. The Estonian Marine Institute of the University of Tartu, together with the UTARTU Re:Fish team, had a task on the topic: What are the current "hot" topics in the Baltic Sea? UTARTU Re:Fish team introduced and advertised activities in Re:Fish project.
- Re:Fish project was introduced at local TV channel Kanal2 a summer **TV show “Elamusi täis Eesti”**.
- To highlight the problem of fishing related litter, one of the Re:Fish beach-cleaning events with Estonian Fund for Nature was filmed by the Estonian national television crew and on the 6.05.2024 it was showed in the most **popular science broadcast “Osoon”** at national TV channel ETV. <https://arhiiv.err.ee/video/vaata/osoon-virumaa-veed-puhtaks-mereprugi>

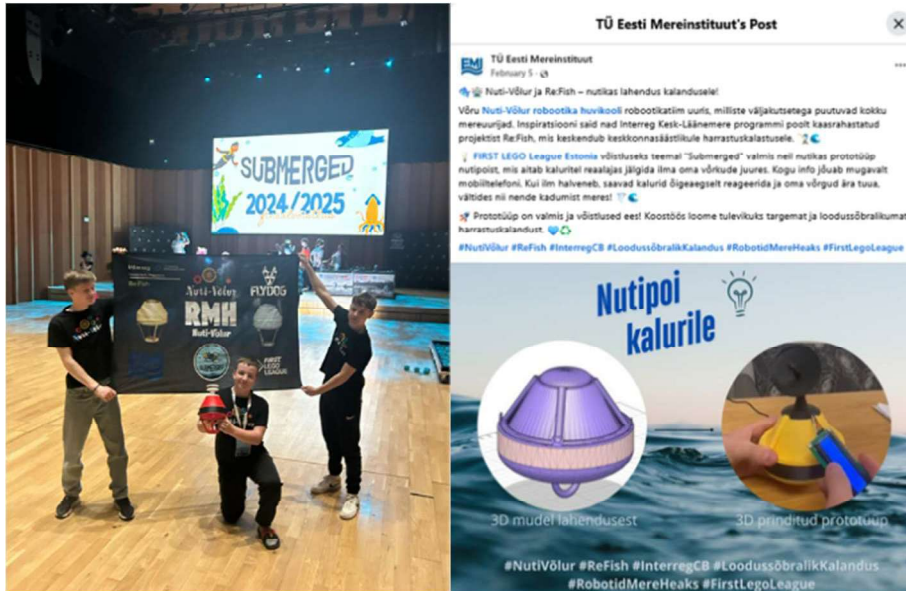
Leaflets



As part of the workshops, practical hands-on activities were recorded and transformed into short instructional videos. The videos focused on practical topics such as how to tie secure fishing knots, ice safety, and beach clean-up activities. QR codes linking to these videos were created and integrated into specially designed bookmarks. These bookmarks were distributed to children and young people in schools/workshops and at public events where the Re:Fish project was presented.

Collaboration

Võru robotics team Nuti-Võlur crowned Estonian champions – With support from Interreg CB Re:Fish project UTARTU scientists' team (<https://centralbaltic.eu/project-events/first-lego-league/>). For the competition, themed “Submerged”, the young innovators created a smart buoy prototype that allows fishers to monitor weather conditions near their fishing nets in real-time. The data is sent directly to a mobile phone, allowing fishers to react promptly to worsening weather and retrieve their gear—preventing net loss at sea.



Finland

Project communication in Finland used diverse methods. Fairs, workshops, use of social media, organizing a cleaning event, publishing press releases, giving interviews to media (radio, tv and podcast), articles in magazines and newspapers and electric papers, they all aim to make the project known and to increase the awareness of the problem of ghost nets and abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). KATA informed their members regularly about updates on the project and wrote about them in their newsletter.

Press releases

- Press release of the start of the project together with Keep the Archipelaog Tidy Association (25.08.2023) in Finnish <https://www.sttinfo.fi/tiedote/kadonneet-kalanpyydykset-halutaan-pois-luonnosta?publisherId=69819243&releaseld=70005865&lang=fi> and in Swedish <https://www.sttinfo.fi/tiedote/malet-ar-att-fa-bort-forrymda-fiskeredskap-ur-naturen?publisherId=69819243&releaseld=70005879>
- When the first draggings were started, the second press release was launched in spring 2024 (17.5.2024) <https://www.sttinfo.fi/tiedote/70219566/kalanpyydykset-pois-luonnosta?publisherId=69819243&lang=fi>
- The third press release on the first results of the retrieval operations in 2024 was published (04.11.2024) <https://www.sttinfo.fi/tiedote/70634877/kadonneita-kalastusvalineita-kerataan-meresta?publisherId=69819243&lang=fi>

Videos

- Project video of recommendations for producers, retailers and fishers https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RFgUt_p8is

Organizing of/Participation in events and appearances on television

- In June 2025 Re:Fish organized a **cleaning event** in the estuary of the River Vantaa on Helsinki Day (12.06.2025) together with co-operators and stakeholders also for public. <https://www.mtvuutiset.fi/artikkeli/hylatyt-koukut-siimat-ja-verkot-piinaavat-lintuja-ja-kaloja-kotikasvatus-taitaa-olla-pielessa/9173888>
- In September 2025 the **Finnish television** channel MTV3 participated in the dragging operations shortly. <https://www.mtvuutiset.fi/artikkeli/haamuverkot-ovat-iso-ongelma-suomen-rannikolla-kymmenia-ellei-satoja-kilometreja/9220514>
- **Collection and reuse campaign:** Keep the Archipelago Tidy Association mainly organizing public and social media outreach. During the project KATA organized end-of-life fishing gear collection containers in the Archipelago Sea during the summers of 2024 and 2025, collecting 69 kg of end-of-line fishing nets in total, but excluding 1625 kg that was collected due to large portion of the nets being from commercial fishing! We also set up a collection container in a fishing gear and accessory retail store. From this, 10 kg of fishing nets were sent to LAB school of applied science to analyze if the fishing gear was suitable for recycling and reuse.
- **Diving campaign:** KATA also organized and participated in diving events throughout Finland. We ourselves organized diving events in 2024 and 2025 and the object of these dives was to see how much fishing gear accumulated after a cleanup. To raise awareness of the project we also organized a dive with two social media influencers in Helsinki on 5.6.2025. We also participated in cleanup and diving events in Helsinki 12.6.2025, in Mariehamn 28.7.2025 and in Vaasa 23.4.2025.
- In Finland Re:Fish project team introduced and advertised activities in Re:Fish project and hold the focus on decreasing environmental impact from leisure fishery also by participating in several **fairs**:
 - Vesille till Havs 2023, 2024, 2025
 - Baltic Sea Day Helsinki & Turku 2023, 2024, 2025
 - Vene 24 Båt, Vene 25 Båt
 - Itämerihaaste minifair 2024, 2025
 - Vesille till Havs 2024, 2025
 - Diving activity in Mariehamn 2025
 - Satahanka XIV marine scouts 2025

Press releases

-
- A scenic view of a canal in Amsterdam, featuring a small bridge, a boat, and a street lamp. The canal is calm, reflecting the sky and the surrounding buildings. A small white boat is docked on the left side. A black street lamp stands on the left bank. A small bridge crosses the canal in the middle ground. The background shows more buildings and trees under a blue sky with some clouds.

Dykare satte stopp för spökfiske i Trosaån



Dezerna på plats i Trossa kometar från vattenytan uppåt.

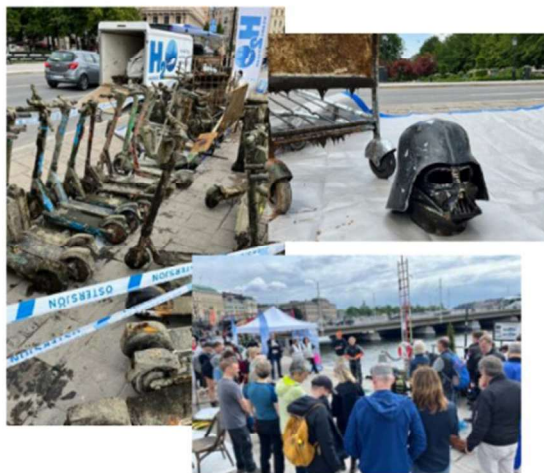
APRIL 2014 SVENSKT

[illegible]

22

fishing spots. The event centered around a litter dive to address one of the most pressing global environmental challenges: marine pollution, with a special focus on salvaging lost fishing gear. This engaging activity aimed to shed light on how litter affects ocean health while offering practical solutions for waste-free fishing practices.

Carried out in collaboration with partners from Sweden, Finland, and Estonia under the Interreg Central Baltic Programme, the initiative highlighted the importance of transnational efforts to protect marine ecosystems.



The litter dive proved to be both eye-opening and impactful, shining a spotlight on the scale and composition of underwater waste. The following items were recovered:

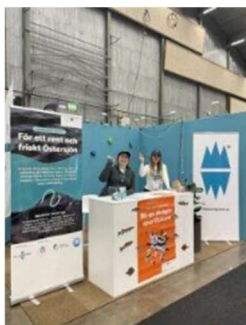
- 22 electric scooters, several bicycles, and even a Darth Vader mask.
- 170 kg of tires and 300 kg of miscellaneous waste, including fishing equipment.

These findings illustrate the pressing need for continued cleanup efforts and underline the larger issue of plastic pollution and its harmful effects on marine life. The event attracted over

500 visitors, including members of the public, families, and maritime enthusiasts. Visitors explored interactive activities, received valuable insights into sustainable fishing, and witnessed the tangible impact of marine cleanup efforts firsthand. Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtKzCTwKTjo&list=PLWWVGJ8QCKJsNRlxU4z_J323s8KGqMiAB&index=3

Fairs

Keep Sweden Tidy participated in different fairs to meet recreational fishermen. During the Sportfishing Fair 2024 in Jönköping during the dates 15-17 March. A total of 16,487 sport fishing enthusiasts visited the fair. Keep Sweden Tidy had a showcase with the aim of disseminating information about the ongoing EU project Re:Fish as well as spreading knowledge about lost fishing gear. The visitors had the opportunity to take a “trash-free fishing” quiz. The quiz consisted of five questions about lost fishing gear and information on how anglers should act if they lose a fishing gear. The visitors who completed the quiz received a patch with the text “Litter-free fisherman” and the children received a stuffed fish toy.



The difficulty level of the quiz was at a good level for the anglers in our target group. However, we felt that competitions in the form of throw fishing, or other more physically active forms were more popular activities than a knowledge quiz. The Re:Fish booth was popular, with visitors actively engaging in discussions on the importance of litter-free seas and fishing areas.

Videos

Swedish famous professional sport fisherman Tobias Frändstam made several of videos for Keep Sweden Tidy and Re:Fish to promote and reach more recreational fishermen.



- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MSlBAWqaok&list=PLWWVGJ8QCKJsNRlxU4z_J323s8KGqMiAB&index=4
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7uLeNa2KKI&list=PLWWVGJ8QCKJsNRlxU4z_J323s8KGqMiAB&index=5

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7uLeNa2KKI&list=PLWWVGJ8QCKJsNRlxU4z_J323s8K GqMiAB&index=5
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hpOBVJ8zKI&list=PLWWVGJ8QCKJsNRlxU4z_J323s8K GqMiAB&index=6
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzAmVAu84i8&list=PLWWVGJ8QCKJsNRlxU4z_J323s8K GqMiAB&index=7
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyYAbveiOCA&list=PLWWVGJ8QCKJsNRlxU4z_J323s8K GqMiAB&index=8
- We also published an article and a video about the OSI fishing event at Stockholm Ström: <https://centralbaltic.eu/story/diving-for-change-from-scooters-to-fishing-gear-in-stockholms-waters/>

Signs



We made signs together with the Swedish Angler Association, that informed recreational fisherman about ghost fishing and how to take better care of their gear. The 360 signs will be distributed by the association to be put up in the project area where there are many active recreational sport fishermen.

A2. Overview of training and educational workshops held under Re:Fish project.

Different countries within the project adopted varying methods to ensure their outreach efforts were as effective as possible. In Estonia, the strategy focused on combining physical training sessions and educational events with active social media awareness and participation in public events. This dual approach aimed to engage both direct stakeholders and the wider public. In contrast, Sweden and Finland prioritized public events and broader communication campaigns to increase visibility and awareness. These differing strategies reflect the need to adapt communication methods based on cultural, geographic, and stakeholder-specific factors. Successful outreach depends not only on the message itself but also on the channels and formats used to deliver it. Consultation with local communities and industry actors helped shape the direction of training and awareness efforts. By

experimenting with different outreach models, each partner identified the most effective tools for their context.

This chapter gives a short overview of training and educational workshops held to raise the awareness of sustainable leisure fishing in Estonia, Sweden and Finland.

Estonia

One of the key objectives of the Re:Fish project was to reduce the generation of marine litter resulting from abandoned, lost, or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). To achieve this, the project placed strong emphasis on education and training, aiming to equip recreational fishers with the knowledge and skills necessary for more responsible and environmentally sustainable practices.

Through a series of Re:Fish-initiated workshops, experienced fishers were enabled to pass on their expertise to new entrants in the sector. These workshops focused on practical methods for preventing gear loss, including:

- **Avoiding high-risk areas:** Participants were trained to recognize and avoid locations where gear loss was more likely due to gear conflicts, marine traffic, seabed structures, litter, or underwater infrastructure.
- **Gear design, materials, and maintenance:** The workshops highlighted the importance of using equipment that is less prone to loss, as well as the need for routine maintenance to prolong gear lifespan and prevent failure.
- **Recovery of lost gear:** Fishers were familiarized with techniques and equipment used to locate and retrieve temporarily lost or abandoned fishing gear.
- **Practical handling of equipment:** A key part of the training involved hands-on learning, including demonstrations and practice in properly handling fishing gear. This included, for example, how to tie secure and appropriate knots to prevent gear detachment and loss during fishing activities.

In addition to topics directly related to fishing gear, the training sessions also addressed the issue of **general litter associated with recreational fishing activities**. Participants were encouraged to consider the environmental impact of waste generated during leisure time near the water — such as food wrappers, drink containers, cigarette butts, and other personal waste — and to adopt responsible waste management habits while fishing. By including this broader perspective, the project promoted a more holistic understanding of human impact on marine and freshwater environments.

In addition to training new entrants, the project also offered refresher courses for recreational fishers. These serve to reduce human error and reinforce best practices. Through this targeted outreach and education, the Re:Fish project increased awareness among fishers of the environmental consequences of ALDFG and helped foster a stronger conservation ethic.

By raising awareness and building practical capacity, the project successfully supported behavioral change among participants—encouraging actions that minimized gear loss and contributed to the overall reduction of ALDFG in marine environments.

List of training and educational workshops for recreational fishers carried out in Estonia under Re:Fish project in the years 2024 and 2025:

- 1) "ALDFG prevention education and training" event in Pärnu on 28.09.2024
- 2) "Recreational fishing and environmental education day for children and young recreational fishers" event in Pärnu on 08.02.2025
- 3) "Recreational fishing and environmental training day for elementary school students" event in Tartu on 24.05.2025 (the timetable shown below).



 Co-funded by
the European Union
 Central Baltic Programme
 Re:Fish





Recreational fishing and environmental training day for elementary school students

Where: Tartu Nature House (Lille 10, Tartu)
When: 24.05.2025
Time: 11:00-14:00
Who: elementary school students




 Register here:


 NB! 25 participants max, places based on registration.

Time	Topic
10:45 – 11:00	Gathering
11:00 – 11:20	What danger does abandoned fishing gear pose? (Tiia Möller-Raid, Estonian Marine Institute, Uni. Tartu)
11:20 – 11:40	Overall fishing-related litter and environmentally friendly behaviour. (Maria Põldma, Estonian Marine Institute, Uni. Tartu)
11:40 – 12:00	Lunch (snacks on site)
12:00 – 12:45	Taking weather and other risk factors into account when fishing (Estonian Rescue Services Agency)
12:45 – 13:00	A simple overview of recreational fishing legislation (Anu Albert, Estonian Marine Institute, Uni. Tartu)
13:00 – 13:20	Kahoot (prizes for the top three)
13:20 – 14:00	Making the right hook knots and other practical lessons. (Estonian Recreational Fishermen's Association)

Finland

A participatory argumentation and mutual learning workshop were arranged on 13th of November 2024 in Helsinki. In total 39 on-line and present participants represented 25 different stakeholder groups (e.g. representatives of research institutes and organizations, state and city authorities, both professional and recreational fishermen, divers, suppliers, fishing gear manufacturers and importers).

An overview of the sources of marine litter was given, Rosgis application, where lost and found fishing gear can be announced, was presented. Several presentations were held on

different topics of sources of micro plastics. Facts related to Fish act and signing of gears were enlightened and a view of lost gears by the inspector was given. Representative of the recreational fishers highlighted the work of responsible fishers in Finland. Cases when navigation and maritime safety conflicts or faces near miss situations related to fishing or fishery were given and a representative of gear producers was interviewed on development of biodegradable gear material and their characteristics in future.

Sweden

Keep Sweden Tidy held, in collaboration with Swedish Anglers Association, a workshop with children during a diving event at Nyköpingsån. Where children were educated about ghost nets and how to prevent losing fishing gear by tying better knots and taking care of fishing equipment. Children also took part in the Re:Fish and Swedish Anglers association contest "Artkampen", which challenged and educated 317 kids to becoming litter-free fishers. Keep Sweden Tidy informed hundreds of people, of all ages, during our diving events held on the importance to how to take care of equipment and what the consequences were if gear were lost in rivers or at sea.

A3. Cross-border collaboration

Study visit

A study visit to Sotenäs Marine Recycling Centre, in Sweden, was organized under Re:Fish to present a methodology for recycling and collection of EOL gear on 4 October 2023. The study visit included a guided tour at the recycling center for project partners and several stakeholders from Finland and Estonia that potentially could implement a similar system. Sotenäs is Sweden's first Marine Recycling Center. At the center, they take care of, for example, marine waste, used fishing gear and ghost fishing nets. Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vv3K8p1qNNE&list=PLWWVGJ8QCKJsNRlxU4z_J323s8KGqMiAB&index=1

Workshop on clean-ups, national reporting systems and single use plastic directive

The Re:Fish project team welcomed several organizations to join an online workshop on clean-ups, national reporting systems and the Single Use Plastic Directive in September 2025. There were presenters from Väst kuststiftelsen, the Directorate of Fisheries in Norway, Estonian Marine Institute, University of Tartu, Syke, Finnish Environment Institute, Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, Ministry of Climate, Keep the Archipelago Tidy Association and Finnish SUP-Producer Group Ltd.

There was a total of 33 participants – 8 from Sweden, 13 from Finland, 10 from Estonia and 2 from other countries. We had representatives from 25 various organizations, government agencies, private companies, and universities.

The workshop was filled with interesting presentations and fruitful discussions. Several challenges were identified, including the need for stronger funding models and a more developed system for the full recycling chain of end-of-life fishing gear (EOL). The importance of addressing the issue from both ends – prevention of gear loss and improved recycling/reuse – was highlighted.

Participants also noted that imported fishing nets, particularly low-quality ones, often do not contribute to the costs associated with end-of-life handling or ALDFG (abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear), pointing to a potential need for measures.

Early results from Finland's collection efforts suggest that mobile collection stations are more effective than permanent ones – a valuable insight for future initiatives. At the same time, the end of national funding for Fiskereturen in Sweden raised concerns about long-term financing for such programs.

The SUP Directive was also discussed, with participants noting that while it mandates collection of gear, it does not yet offer a framework for circular solutions such as recycling. Furthermore, taking small producers into account when looking for solutions and increasing public awareness were seen as critical next steps.

Final conference Tallinn, 20th November 2025

More than 60 people from Sweden, Finland, Estonia, and several other countries attended the event, which offered a mix of videos from the project, keynote presentations from Marta Ruiz (HELCOM Secretariat) and Kelli Seppel (Estonian Ministry of Climate), Re:Fish project partner presentations, and a speech from the EU Central Baltic Programme secretariat representative, Mr Normunds Strautmanis.

In the project, there have also been analyses of the fishnets, data gathered about citizens' and sport fishermen's knowledge, and much more. These reports will be published on the website in 2026. We also shared information about [Rosgis](#), a service by the Finnish Environment Institute that allows you to report litter in the environment.

The participants' main takeaways from the workshop were that preventive action is essential and far more cost-effective than cleaning up the consequences of marine litter, and that keeping the seas free from abandoned and lost fishing gear requires joint commitment from government, ports, and both commercial and recreational fishers. They further noted that while the ghost-net situation is improving, littering remains a costly challenge for people and

nature, making early action crucial. Participants also highlighted the complexity of regulating recreational passive gear, the importance of understanding its social dimensions, and the value of transdisciplinary cooperation in fostering environmental stewardship.