

ECO-CATCH Spring Meeting 2026

Meeting Summary

The first ECO-CATCH General Assembly brought together project partners, Advisory Board members, sister projects, stakeholder representatives and external experts to review project progress in its first year and align on priorities for the next phase.



During ECO-CATCH's first year, the consortium has established the necessary foundations for long-term collaboration and implementation success, with a major achievement being significant progress on **the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based monitoring and detection tools**. Early testing has compared different detection approaches for identifying human activity and bycatch events, with promising results for both detection performance and processing speed. **Progress has also been made on in-trawl camera and live catch monitoring solutions.** These systems aim to transmit information wirelessly from the trawl to the wheelhouse.



Work on mapping important habitats, sensitive life stages and bycatch-risk areas has also progressed through the identification of key data sources for commercial species, marine mammals, seabirds and other endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species. Gear innovation activities are also advancing, with work on **low-impact trawl solutions, selective devices, pots, crustacean gears and downscaled seine concepts moving into practical planning for design refinement, field testing and evaluation of potential uptake.** Discussions highlighted that technical effectiveness alone is not enough: successful implementation will depend on fisher involvement, evidence of catch retention, operational practicality, cost considerations, trust-building and clear incentives.



“It has been a privilege to witness such enthusiastic and focused participation from all ECO-CATCH partners. We are deeply grateful to all our participants for dedicating time to contribute to these meetings, which are vital to our success. I have been energised to see the collaborations developing not only across ECO-CATCH but with our sister projects and the wider bycatch cluster.”

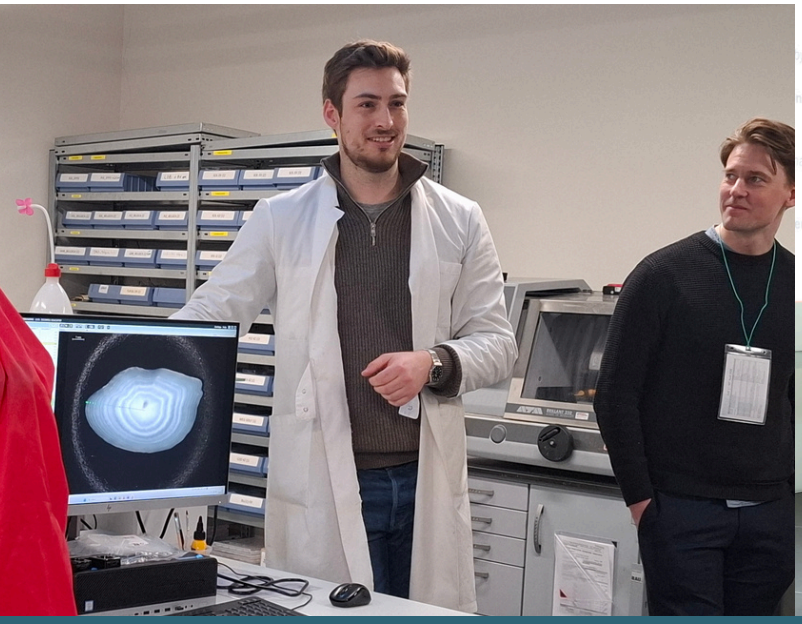
Valentina Melli, ECO-CATCH Coordinator





A key milestone from the General Assembly was the **selection of four candidate fisheries for MSC pre-assessment** under ECO-CATCH. Together, these cases provide a strong basis for demonstrating how innovation can reduce impacts on habitats, juvenile and sensitive species while supporting potential market recognition and improved sustainability performance.

The meeting also reinforced the importance of communication, stakeholder engagement and shared narratives.





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