

European Union/ The Netherlands

Their voices heard

Women from VinVis found the meeting on women in fisheries very interesting, if overwhelming

By Cornelia Quist, a member of ICSF and contact person for VinVis.

Six wives of fishermen from *VinVis*, the Women in Fisheries Network of the Netherlands, attended the EU conference on women's roles in fisheries.

It was their first time to participate in an event like this and they were rather overwhelmed by the formal and massive character of the conference. But all of them said that it had been a very important experience for them.

They found it very interesting and encouraging to hear about the experiences of other fisherwomen in Europe and about the importance of woman's roles in fisheries everywhere. They also learned a lot about EU programmes, although they felt inundated with information.

They also said that, earlier, the EU always had been something very abstract and far away. However, their direct interaction during the conference with high officials of the Commission, was an encouragement for both sides to promote women's role in fisheries.

The Dutch women also used the opportunity to approach Commissioner Fischler in person and to hand over to him a letter with issues concerning the women in fisheries of the Netherlands. And they were very happy that the Commissioner took time to speak with them, showing his interest in their situation. The women attached great importance to the fact that their voices were being heard. They feel encouraged in their struggle for recognition.

The women felt, however, that the conference had given too little opportunity for women in fisheries to exchange among themselves. To be able to achieve something at the national level, they felt that strengthening women's organizations and networking was of first priority. They hoped that the commitment expressed by the Commission towards this would not remain empty words.

Cornelia's e-mail: cornelie.quist@wolmail.nl