



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Food Sovereignty

Šubičeva ulica 4, SI-1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia

T: +386 1 478 94 70, E: gp@dz-rs.si, www.dz-rs.si



GENERATIONAL RENEWAL, FINANCING AND COMPETITIVENESS OF SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES AFTER 2027

With 46.6 kilometres of coastline, Slovenia has one of the smallest fisheries sectors in the European Union. The sector is dominated by small-scale coastal fishing: 88 per cent of fishing vessels are under twelve metres in length, and most of the fleet is more than fifteen years old. It consists mainly of individual fishers and family businesses that supply the local market while preserving traditional knowledge and the distinctive identity of Slovenia's coast.

The sector is shrinking rapidly. In 2018, 89 people were economically active in marine commercial fishing; by 2024, that number had fallen to just 58. Full-time employment decreased from 45 to 30, while the number of self-employed fishers fell from 66 to 35. The average age of commercial fishers is over fifty, and in 2023 only 18 active fishers were under the age of forty.

In 2025, Slovenian marine fishers landed 90.6 tonnes of fishery products, just over 15 per cent less than the year before. Their total value was approximately EUR 830,000. In a sector this small, the loss of even a few active fishers has a significant impact on production. And when a fisher retires without a successor, we lose not only a job but also a vessel, experience, knowledge of the sea and links with local buyers.

Young people are reluctant to enter the fishing profession because they do not see it as offering a secure economic future. To get started, they need capital, a vessel and access to fishing opportunities. They must then be able to make a living despite high maintenance and energy costs. Some Slovenian fishers have therefore sought additional sources of income, particularly in tourism, and now engage in fishing only occasionally.

Generational renewal cannot therefore be achieved through the promotion of the profession and training alone. New entrants must be given the opportunity either to take over an existing business and vessel or to obtain funding to start their own activity. European support should make it possible to purchase a new or used vessel, renew an ageing fleet and invest in safety, digital equipment and energy efficiency. The conditions must not be so restrictive that new entrants who meet all the professional requirements are still prevented from getting started because they lack sufficient capital or face administrative barriers.

Support should not be limited to people under the age of forty. In small-scale fisheries, there are few potential candidates, so entry should also be open to other new fishers

and fish farmers who have the necessary knowledge and a viable business plan. Every qualified new entrant matters if the sector is to survive, whether they are taking over a family business or entering the sector for the first time.

Because of the limited scale of its catches, Slovenia cannot compete with major fishing nations in terms of volume. It can, however, compete on quality, freshness, local origin, processing and direct sales. Slovenia has 36 approved establishments for the production of fresh or processed fishery products, as well as three dispatch centres and two shellfish purification centres. This infrastructure makes it possible to build closer links between fishers, fish farmers, processors, the hospitality sector and local consumers.

European measures should therefore support not only vessels but also processing, marketing and short supply chains. A fisher or fish farmer who processes their product or sells it directly to local hospitality businesses and consumers can generate greater added value and a more stable income. After all, people will only be willing to enter the sector if they see a real prospect of running a profitable business over the long term.

Aquaculture also has significant development potential. In 2025, Slovenia produced approximately 822 tonnes of freshwater fish and 275 tonnes of products from marine aquaculture. The value of aquaculture production was around EUR 5.8 million, significantly higher than that of marine commercial fishing. Despite this, employment in the sector is declining. In 2018, 199 people were economically active in aquaculture; by 2024, the number had fallen to 158. The number of full-time employees decreased from 80 to 73.

Freshwater aquaculture in particular still has untapped development potential in Slovenia. In 2025, Slovenia produced 551.9 tonnes of cold-water fish species and 269.7 tonnes of warm-water species. Overall, however, production was 12.3 per cent lower than the previous year. With access to financing, suitable sites, water resources and modern technologies, Slovenia could increase domestic fish production and create new business opportunities beyond the coastal area.

The financial framework for the 2028–2034 period must take account of differences between Member States. Measures designed for large industrial fleets are not always suitable for a Slovenian coastal fisher or a small fish farm. Slovenia therefore believes that Member States should have sufficient flexibility to direct funding according to the structure and actual development needs of their sectors.

Future funding must support the sustainable management of fisheries resources, the economic viability of the sector, and investment in modernisation, digitalisation and energy transition. Safer and more energy-efficient vessels can reduce costs and improve working conditions without increasing fishing pressure. Investment in aquaculture, processing and marketing is equally important, as incomes across the sector cannot be improved without generating greater added value.

Procedures must be tailored to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, which form the core of the Slovenian sector. An individual fisher cannot be expected to have the same administrative and financial capacity as a large company. If even a small

investment requires complex procedures, a high financial contribution from the applicant and extensive supporting documentation, the measure may exist on paper, but in practice it will remain out of reach for new entrants.

Slovenia is already supporting generational renewal through the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund, with funding for investment and vessels, as well as support for innovation and measures to promote sustainable aquaculture. After 2027, these measures should be continued and linked more directly to business transfers, the entry of new operators and the creation of greater added value.

The aim is to ensure that, ten or fifteen years from now, Slovenia will still have professional fishers, fish farms and local processing capacity, and people to whom the knowledge built up over generations can be passed on. If new entrants can access financing, take over or purchase a vessel, invest in modern equipment and sell their products at a fair price, generational renewal will be possible. Without these conditions, the number of fishers and the level of domestic production will continue to decline, as will the economic and cultural importance of fisheries for Slovenia's coastal and local communities.

14 September 2026

Katja Kokot,
Chair of The Committee
on Agriculture, Forestry
and Food Sovereignty,
National Assembly of the
Republic of Slovenia