

# MY OPEN LETTER TO NON-EFTTA MEMBERS

*Your support for the Association is the key to safeguarding angling, writes CEO Jean-Claude Bel.*

**H**ow would you react if your company was made to stop trading? If the business you had built up, perhaps over many years, was threatened with such force that it would cease to exist?

I am sure you would fight tooth and nail to save it, and spend whatever you could afford to fend off the outside influence that threatened it. And if



other companies that you relied on for trade were similarly at risk, surely you would not hesitate to join forces with them too?

So why have you not joined EFTTA? For more than 25 years when the interests of the trade in Europe – and by that I mean the interests of your company – have been threatened, EFTTA has reacted.

I would not like to imagine the state of the industry if EFTTA had never existed, and yet the threats are still there. In fact, they are growing more numerous, more powerful and more determined.

Thanks to the support of our current membership and a 50/50 financing partnership with the European Anglers Alliance (EAA), we have run a lobbying office close to the European Parliament. It has worked to counter the pressure exerted by national governments and powerful publicly-financed NGOs. We are very active, but sometimes it is like being David against Goliath.

Lobbying consumes time and energy. You need to supply precise data and economic statistics; and you need to hire expert and scientists to counter the arguments of your opponents, in angling's case most of them heavily financed with European public money.

Our opponents have a big voice and yet we have taken on fights and won.

With the precious support of EFTTA members, we fought a long battle to convince the European Parliament to vote to adopt a control of Europe's cormorant population.

With our members' support we have been able to save sea anglers from quotas and licence requirements and won recognition of recreational angling as an important socio-economical activity.

With our members' supports we have been able to create inside the European Parliament a forum called Recfish. We now have access to the Parliament premises and facilities to regularly organise conferences and forums with the active presence and support of numerous MEPs. In 2015 and 2016 we organised four forums:

**1. The socio-economical importance of recreational fishing**

**2. The Sea Bass issue** where although we were not 100% happy with the final measures, we know it could have been much worse without our actions.

**3. Is Hydropower Electricity green?** Five scientists joined us to explain how uncontrolled pseudo-Green micro-hydropower can be a mass destruction tool of the biodiversity of our rivers (*see pic*). A documentary financed by EFTTA and EAA, *The End Of The River*, has been viewed hundreds of thousand of times on Youtube. As a result, the regulation may now be strengthened.

**4. Danube under Threat** Scientific demonstration of the damage done in the Danube and its whole basin and the dire consequences for some species of fish (including the totemic Hucho Hucho) if work continues on a massive hydropower plant.

For more details see [www.eftta.co.uk/lobby/](http://www.eftta.co.uk/lobby/)

Our successes do not only benefit our members; every tackle company in Europe gains an advantage, including your own. So, I ask again, why have you not become a member? Surely you cannot believe it is right that a membership of 300 companies is financing an action that benefits all 2,000 companies across Europe – including your own?

But if the interests of fair play do not motivate you, think about this. We have achieved so much with one full-time lobbyist; just imagine what we could achieve with extra resources.

Already we have increased our task force in Brussels by hiring a very efficient lobbying consulting firm, Alienor, which has gained us direct access to the Parliament and its MEPs. Alienor also organises with a great

**“GOODWILL IS NOT ENOUGH. TO PROTECT YOUR INTERESTS WE ALSO NEED RESOURCES.”**

professionalism and efficiency our forums and meeting inside the Parliament.

Why have you not become a member when there are powerful forces who want to ban fishing altogether? This is happening right now in Spain where there is an ill-informed law banning angling on seven freshwater species and jigging in the Canaries. A rally took place in Madrid in early June and EFTTA co-financed the logistics with the Spanish trade association, ADAPT. Meanwhile, in Denmark EFTTA co-financed experts and lawyers to help win a two-year exemption on the lead ban.

What about those extremists who argue without scientific evidence that fish feel pain and that it is not fair to play with them without killing them, or simply not fair to fish? It's happened in Switzerland, so where next?

Why have you not become a member when yet more threats, as yet unknown, could rear their heads and catch the industry off-guard? When will it be too late for you?

I know that EFTTA has your goodwill. But goodwill is not enough. If we are to protect your interests, we need resources, and for that we need finance. We need your membership.

You need to understand that being a member is not just about participating at EFTTEX, it is about contributing to the future of the trade – and ultimately saving your own business.

The more finance we have, the more effective we will be. It's as simple as that.

EFTTA is a well-run Association that has proved itself over many years. Your contribution will be used wisely to pay for other forums, for access to important data, for the appointment of credible experts, for meeting MEPs and arguing our case.

Over 750,000 Euros have been invested by EFTTA and EAA in the last four years, thanks to our loyal members and EFTTEX. It seems a lot but not when you consider the threats to your businesses. We should react quickly when we feel danger coming. When laws are voted it can be too late – it certainly costs much more to challenge them.

Why have you not become a member? I don't think you have an answer.

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