

Thousands seek 50,000-euro jackpot in Estonia fishing test

February 17 2013



People take part in a fishing event on the frozen lake Viljandi in Viljandi, Estonia on February 16, 2013. More than 8,000 participants from different countries arrived for the fishing event.

Thousands took to the ice of a frozen lake in southern Estonia on Saturday in the hopes of catching the big one—a marked fish worth a 50,000 euro (\$67,000) jackpot.

Sadly it was the one that got away, despite the 6,500 people who tried

their luck at the Estonian Gold [Fish](#) Festival on Lake Viljandi, organisers said.

The annual festival saw 130 marked fish released into the lake a week earlier. To win the [jackpot](#) contestants had to catch at least 17 marked fish from three different types and the jackpot fish.

Nursing student Merike Maetaga, a 28-year-old from Tartu, came away the day's big winner by catching a marked fish worth 3,000 euros.

"I came here just for fun and getting the biggest prize is a total surprise. I have been a [fisherman](#) since childhood when my dad started to take me to fishing," she told AFP.

Organisers said fishing is one of the most popular hobbies in Estonia, a small Baltic nation of 1.3 million people, and that nearly 8,000 people turned out for the festival, supported on the lake by a 30-centimetre (12-inch) layer of ice.

"It is one of the biggest fishing competitions in world," judge Martin Meier said.

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Citation: Thousands seek 50,000-euro jackpot in Estonia fishing test (2013, February 17)
retrieved 2 May 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2013-02-thousands-euro-jackpot-estonia-fishing.html>

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