

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND CO-ORDINATION

Brussels,

FAX

To:	EXPERTS	Telephone:	
		Fax:	
Contact:	ROLLER Elisa	Telephone:	(+32-2) 298.69.51
		Fax:	(+32-2) 297.95.38

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Subject: Final minutes of the 5th meeting of the Expert group on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund - Brussels, 10 March 2015, 9.30 – 13.00

Attendance

Chairperson

Elisa ROLLER, Head of Unit MARE A3, "Structural policy and economic analysis".

Member States

With the exception of LU and RO, all the MS' experts were present at the meeting.

EP and Council

EP PECH Secretariat was represented.

Commission

DG MARE was represented by units A3, F1, F2, E1, and D3

DG CLIMA (for agenda point 5), DG ENV and EASME (for agenda point 6) were also represented.

Secretariat:

Carla PALANGA (MARE A3).

1. Adoption of the agenda.

The agenda was adopted.

2. Points for information: update on adoption of EMFF OPs and ongoing work in DG MARE.

COM (Elisa Roller) said 16 EMFF OPs had been officially submitted. Four OPs (LV, NL, AT and MT) had been adopted. Remaining OPs will be adopted after MFF revision is completed. Work is ongoing on the selection procedure for the new FARNET and on FAME. FAME should be operational in 2-3 months; DG MARE is defining the list of tasks for the first year. MS were requested to provide suggestions in writing for tasks that the FAME technical assistance platform could carry out in the next few years in support of monitoring and evaluation in the EMFF. In the second part of 2015 the European Court of Auditors (ECA) is likely to carry out a performance audit on the Partnership Agreements. REGIO is the lead department; MARE will contribute to this exercise.

3. Delegated Act for the criteria for flat rate and extrapolated financial correction (Article 105 (4) of the EMFF)

COM (Elisa Roller) recalled that the EMFF includes three Delegated Acts to ensure compliance with the CFP: DA on admissibility of applications (EMFF Article 10.4); DA on conditions for interruptions and suspensions (EMFF Article 102); and the DA for the criteria for flat rate and extrapolated financial correction (EMFF Article 105.4). This third DA must be considered together with the previous ones. The procedure for financial corrections is an end-of-the-line process that only applies after multiple steps in the procedure following the establishment of a non-compliance. Given the possibility of remedying the situation at various points in time (following an interruption, following a suspension or the MS applying a correction itself), this situation is extremely unlikely. As with the Delegated Act in Article 102, the cases of non-compliance are listed, under six different categories, in the annex. This third DA includes ranges of level of financial corrections to ensure flexibility and proportionality; significance, frequency and duration of non-compliance must be considered.

DK, UK, PT and BE asked if flat rate corrections are only applied to the affected UP. They stressed the need to have a clear text on the level and impact of financial corrections

BE asked whether these flat-rate corrections by the Commission as outlined in this DA would only be introduced at closure.

GR asked about possible financial corrections as outlined in this DA affecting aquaculture or processing.

NL asked what the difference was between cases of non-compliance and cases of serious non-compliance and whether this difference was reflected in the Annex.

PT, EE and DK asked about the legal basis if flat rate corrections are only to be applied to the affected UP.

COM (Elisa Roller) explained that the legal basis is EMFF Article 105 which allows the COM to apply flat rate financial corrections where it is not possible to quantify the amount of expenditure linked to the non-compliance with the CFP rules. This DA defines the level of financial corrections and the criteria for setting this level. The ranges for the level of financial corrections indicate whether or not the case of non-compliance is serious or not. Flat rate corrections are only applied to the affected UP and are not only introduced at closure. COM

concluded by suggesting that a clarification can be introduced in the new draft to make it clear that financial corrections as outlined in this DA are only applied to the affected UP.

MS were requested to submit comments in writing by 24 March.

4. Updated guidance on the calculation of additional costs and income foregone.

COM (Elisa Roller) presented the updated version of the guidance which was presented at the EMFF Expert Group of 20/10/2014. Section 4 highlights the main differences between the EFF and EMFF. In OPs received so far there is certain confusion; this has been identified as a problem area that needs to be improved.

DE enquired if the guidance would be translated and whether it would be included in the publication “compilation of legal texts related to EMFF implementation”. On section 5 DE asked whether point d) “...what legal requirement is considered standard practice, what environmental benefits are expected and how they can be demonstrated” applied only to Article 54. Finally, under section 5, in Article 53, regarding the conversion to organic aquaculture, DE enquired about the 3 years period, which goes beyond current legal requirements.

COM (Elisa Roller) replied that COM does not envisage the translation of guidance documents; the guidance will be available on the DG MARE (EMFF) web site but will not be included in the publication mentioned above which only compiles legal texts. She confirmed also that point d) above refers only to Article 54. Finally, on the 3 years period, she stressed the need for long term commitments in the case of organic aquaculture.

MS were requested to submit comments in writing by 24 March.

5. Promotion of European aquaculture: the “FARMED in the EU” campaign.

COM (Gilles Doignon) presented this COM communication campaign launched last year to promote European aquaculture, focusing on the high quality/standards of European aquaculture products. The campaign aims at changing the image of aquaculture sector in consumers mind, so that it is considered similar to other animal production sectors, and gives the chance to European producers to be ambassadors of EU aquaculture in their communities and beyond, by participating in school projects. Aquaculture production world-wide is growing as demand increases. 68% of seafood consumed in the EU is imported from third countries while aquaculture in Europe is stagnating. Communication and promotion of EU aquaculture production must be positive and product-specific, and must highlight quality, health benefits, traceability and sanitary safety. COM encouraged MS to go through the website (<http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/inseparable/en/farmed-eu>), to consult relevant pages on social media (<https://www.facebook.com/InseparableEU> and https://twitter.com/EU_MARE) and to be involved in the campaign in their MS, particularly by disseminating the school kit to their communication colleagues, aquaculture producers organizations and education networks (including Education Ministry).

FR welcomed the campaign, provided interesting information on aquaculture in France and stressed the need to inform European consumers about the high production standards, low impact on the environment, health safety and benefits of the products in order to improve the perception of EU aquaculture production; a good communication campaign is the best way forward.

6. Mainstreaming of climate change in the ESI funds.

COM (Claus Kondrup, DG CLIMA) gave a presentation including general background information on the impact of climate change and on pathways for adaptation and mitigation. He gave an overview of the EU strategy on adaptation to climate change, presented the European Climate Adaptation Platform and explained how climate action could be mainstreamed into EU policies and funds, into the ESI funds in particular. COM (Leticia Martinez) explained how the EMFF may support climate objectives and encouraged MS to make the best use of available measures in the EMFF in support of such objectives.

COM (Elisa Roller) pointed out the lack of sufficient experts in climate change related issues among partners consulted by the MS in the drafting of OPs. This expertise seemed to be insufficient in some of the OPs submitted so far.

BE asked about the possibility to use EMFF Article 69 to reduce climate impact by supporting processing industries that work with local products thus reducing the carbon footprint.

COM (Elisa Roller) answered that this was possible.

7. Implementation of direct management funds under the EMFF: role of the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME).

EASME (Alenka KAMPL) presented the delegation of EMFF actions under direct management (scientific advice, control and IMP) to the Agency and explained how COM maintained the political responsibility of these areas while the Agency was in charge of implementation. Delegation of tasks aims at efficiency gains and synergies, both within the EMFF and with other EU programmes managed by the Agency on behalf of COM.

BE asked if half of the budget under direct management was allocated to IMP.

FI sked whether MS are consulted in developing the Work Programme (WP).

COM (Elisa Roller) explained that the final agreement on the EMFF foresees that part of the budget for IMP and also for control and data collection under direct management is under shared management. MS are consulted on the different components of the WP through the different expert groups such as the national correspondents group for data collection or the expert group for control. COM will reflect on whether parts of the WP can be presented at a future meeting of the EMFF Expert Group.

8. Simplification for beneficiaries within the EMFF.

COM (Elisa Roller) said that COM is looking at measures put in place by the MS to simplify the access to EMFF funding for beneficiaries. COM will send to MS a questionnaire asking about relevant measures in place and asking them to highlight good practices.

DK pointed out that the reference to CPR Article 122.3 should be deleted because e-cohesion is not a requirement for EMFF. DK asked how CPR Article 61.1 (operations which generate net revenue after its completion) should apply to the EMFF.

EE suggested comparing the situation of the EMFF with that of other funds (not only comparing with EFF)

SE referred to CPR Article 132.

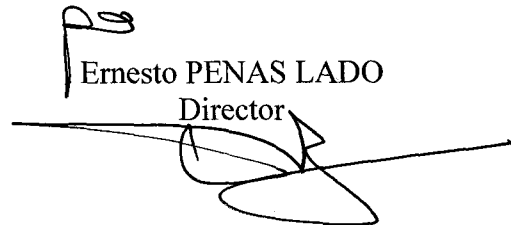
FI asked about the possible use of the "leading fund model".

PL asked about the interpretation of 'collective beneficiary' in EMFF Article 95.3 (a)

COM (Elisa Roller) agreed with DK on the need to delete reference to CPR Article 122.3. She agreed on the difficulty to compare the EFF with the EMFF as they are quite different. COM will consider making a comparison with other funds such as the ERDF in the questionnaire. CPR Article 132 needs to be respected; when drafting national rules, some MA tend to add further requirements; this is difficult for beneficiaries and should be avoided. COM encourages synergies between funds; there are some examples in OPs of combining funds (CLLD, Financial Instruments and processing); depending on arrangements at national level (accounting, application procedures) projects may have to be kept separately. In response to the question by PL, "collective beneficiary" implies a collective dimension (i.e. projects that benefit the whole sector). CPR Article 61.1 only applies to projects above one million EUR which have been rare under the EFF; guidance on this Article is provided by EGESIF and COESIF; there is no need of EMFF specific guidance on this case.

COM will finalise and circulate the questionnaire in the next few weeks.

The next meeting of the Expert group on the EMFF is scheduled for 29 April. MS were requested to send their proposals for the agenda by 24 March.


Ernesto PENAS LADO
Director