

Draft Minutes

Meeting of the Expert group on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

30 September, 2019, Brussels

1. Approval of the agenda and of the minutes of previous meeting

The agenda and the minutes were approved.

2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was not public but webstreaming was arranged within Commission Services including JRC-Ispra.

3. List of points discussed

3.1. Experiences of Member States concerning the performance review

COM (E. Mac Aoidh, MARE.D3) presented a short overview of the results of the performance review, which assessed Member State implementation rates at the end of 2018 as reported in the AIRs against the milestones set in the Operational Programme. 70% of the milestones set in the 27 EMFF programmes were met. It was recalled that the Commission's proposal for the 2021-2027 period retains the concept of annually reviewing performance at the annual review meeting, but the performance reserve, to be awarded or reallocated according to performance, does not feature.

NL, DE, PT, BE and ES expressed the opinion that the review was of no benefit. IT and EE saw some limited benefit; that it allowed reallocation of the reserves to priorities that have high absorption rates, and which are ring-fenced under article 13. Outside of the review context, these priorities would not be eligible for additional allocation of funds. All Member States taking the floor shared the opinion that the administrative burden of the exercise was excessive. SE asked for further clarification on the process that would be applied in 2021 in relation to the achievement (or not) of 2020 targets, further adding that there were additional complications for non-Eurozone Member States.

3.2. Risk of automatic de-commitment by the end of 2019

COM (R. Croft, MARE.D3) outlined the state of play of financial implementation. A considerable improvement on the position compared to 12 months ago was highlighted, although vigilance and efforts would still be needed to clear the 300 MEUR at risk.

PT and IT signalled that everything was on track. ES was a bit more pessimistic, citing problems with the programme. They anticipate a decommitment, but lower than the 50 MEUR of last year.

3.3. Update on the state of play of Data Collection Framework (DCF): EU Multiannual Programme (EU MAP) and National Work Plans for data collection

COM (V. Kostopoulou, MARE.C3) provided an overview of the current state of play for the DCF. She described the 2-step approach during the 2019-2020 period:

- 1) Renewal of the current EU-MAP provisions, and

- 2) Revision of the EU-MAP including the work plan template to follow soon after the EU-MAP content has been stabilized.

The EU MAP includes a Commission delegated act and a Commission implementing act with thresholds for data collection and list of surveys. For the revision of the EU-MAP, the aim is to preserve the core requirements of the EU-MAP and to make adjustments on a case by case basis, as well as to ‘convert’ pilot studies into data collection requirements.

3.4. Presentation on the EUMOFA work programme 2019 and deliverables

COM (Ch. Vande Weyer, MARE.A4) made a presentation on the main priorities and achievements of the European market observatory for fisheries and aquaculture products (Eumofa) in 2019. The activities are carried around 4 areas including data collection, harmonisation and analysis, reports, studies, and market analysis, as well as communication and dissemination and IT services. COM recalled that a new contract was awarded by the end of 2018 for the management of Eumofa over 4 years. The amount of the contract is 20% lower than the previous contract. Nevertheless, Eumofa will continue to deliver the same services and will pay particular attention to a couple of additional priorities: extend its geographical coverage and complete its datasets at all stages of the value-chain. COM provided the list of all the studies, analyses and reports that will be carried-out and published in 2019 as well as a couple of new functionalities.

There has been no question from the experts.

3.5. Direct management: MSP cross-border projects

COM (F. Leinemann, MARE.A2) explained the role of maritime spatial planning (MSP) in access to maritime space, the preservation and protection of the marine ecosystem, the reduction of the cumulative impact of maritime activities on the environment, as well as reducing the coordination costs for public authorities. Since 2014, the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive requires Member States to set up competent authorities and by 2021, to set up maritime spatial plans. Through direct management, the EMFF supports the MSP platform including studies, putting available information online, country sheets, available tools for maritime spatial plans, etc. This includes workshops on specific topics, land-sea interactions, small sea spaces, MSP in island communities, etc.

He presented an overview of the cross-border projects in sea-basins which have benefited from EMFF financial support between 2014 and 2018, amounting to 20 million. Some of the maritime spatial planning projects which have been financed under the EMFF include

- the Baltic SCOPE (designed to increase collaboration and coordination between national authorities and other key stakeholders);
- SIMNORAT, supporting the implementation of maritime spatial planning in the North Atlantic Region;
- SUPREME (Supporting maritime spatial planning in the Eastern Mediterranean);
- OCEANMETISS.

There has been no questions, comments from the experts.

3.6. Direct management: Results of blue calls

COM (V. Favrel, EASME) provided an overview of the budget managed by EASME under direct management (€340 million) to support the CFP (scientific advice for fisheries), maritime policy, blue economy and blue investment, as well as maritime surveillance and marine knowledge. He focused specifically on the Blue Economy Calls launched between 2016 and 2018 and the 68 selected projects until now for a total EU contribution of over €43.5million including 26 projects to be launched before end 2019.

With a view to boost the European blue economy, the selected projects have focused on investing in skills and blue careers for young students and employees as well as fostering innovation by bringing ideas from lab to the market (Blue labs); investment in the blue economy in order to harness new business and investment opportunities and overcome the “valley of death”; preserving the marine environment (including marine litter and ecosystem restoration; and supporting sustainable tourism. All sea basins are represented and sectors covered are much diversified including: underwater technologies, cultural heritage, blue bioeconomy, aquaculture, renewable energy, maritime transport, water sports and bioremediation. Some projects had already significant impacts in terms of jobs creation, costs savings and potential market. COM also stressed the key role played by synergies between EU-funded programmes managed in EASME in the success of the projects. Two Blue Economy Calls are still expected in 2019 (expected publication date: 21/11/2019) and 2020 for more than €42million EU investment. A brochure presenting some examples of projects was just published (see <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a994b3d4-ee2b-11e9-a32c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-107083882>).

3.7. Outcome of the fi-compass questionnaire

EIB (Miglena Dobрева) presented the results of the fi-compass questionnaire: a survey of the preparation for, and use of, financial instruments in the EMFF. The questionnaire was in multiple choice format, and respondents were grouped into 3 categories:

- Type I – no ex ante assessment and no intention to use FIs (13 respondents);
- Type II – ex ante assessment carried out, but no “progression” (yet) to use of FIs (3 respondents);
- Type III - ex ante assessment and FI use (Estonia only).

Main reasons for replying “no” (Type I)

- ex-ante study not performed,
- too costly for the MA to set up and manage FIs, and
- grants are more attractive for stakeholders

However, 62% of Type I respondents did not rule out FI use in the future. For this group, the areas with most potential for use of FIs are diversification within and outside the fishing sub-sectors and start-up supports. Both Type I and II respondents see scope for FIs in modernisation and start-ups. Estonia adds resource efficiency to this list.

Other key points:

- A strong need for capacity building (including support in the design and set up of FIs and awareness raising, via workshops and EU guidance);
- The main FI types seen as appropriate were debts (guarantees/loans) and a combination of these with grants.

BE expressed scepticism about the use of FIs, saying that these issues had already been discussed. IE advised that its ex-ante assessment had concluded that that an EMFF FI was not viable without partnership with another Fund, as the EMFF was too small to be of interest to the commercial banks. EE pointed out that banks’ interest in real estate is much greater than in aquaculture, and that the EMFF rules do not encourage FI use.

COM (E. Roller, MARE.D3) stated that the Commission is always looking for better value for money – across the board. She acknowledged there are issues with access to

credit in the EMFF, and that beneficiaries prefer grants. In the upcoming programme negotiation process, the scope for FI use will be explored.

3.8. FAME – tasks for post-2020 period

3.9. FARNET – tasks for post-2020 period

The two points were discussed together. COM consulted the experts on the experiences with the scope of work of FAME and FARNET with a view of a potential similar arrangement in the future.

FAME and its work was widely welcome and the need for such a support to MS was confirmed. As potential areas for extending the scope of activities, the followings are identified:

- improving the intervention logic in MS (NL);
- assistance in the use of Simplified Cost Options (SCOs), developing EU-level off-the-self instruments in this regard (EE, NL, CZ, ES);
- translation of documents (FR, DE).

EE proposed transferring to FAME also tasks concerning analysis of data and production of reports related to CLLD and funding under direct and indirect management

As regards tasks on monitoring and evaluation, experts suggested that the scope of the two support should be clearly divided and these tasks should only be carried out by FAME.

As regards FARNET, experts were a bit more shared. While EE does not need such a support any more, SI, ES, IT would welcome the continuation of FARNET. ES mentioned that FARNET may focus on being a bit more visible for Managing Authorities.

COM in its reaction explained that a separate task for on demand translation is being considered for the tasks of both Support Units. COM also clarified that overlaps occurred in the beginning of the current programming period mainly for the reason that FAME SU had not have sufficient experience yet. A clarification on who does what was found a good initiative.

3.10. Explanatory fiches on post-2020 EMFF

- *Common Monitoring and Evaluation System*

COM (E. Mac Aoidh, MARE.D3) presented information fiche 13, which complements information fiche 11 on the common monitoring and evaluation system by updating the list of common result indicators. The indicators presented are a result of several rounds of discussion and feedback from the Member States. It was clarified that the indicators presented are designed to be broad and general, and should sufficiently capture any type of EMFF investment envisaged. Infosys should be the tool to capture specific details under each indicator to allow for a more detailed analysis. Member States were encouraged to send written comments on the indicator definitions to ensure that their specific circumstances can be captured as necessary. This objective is to capture all investments using the proposed common indicators and to eliminate the need for programme-specific indicators which cannot be aggregated to EU level. EE and LV suggested that the indicators marked as being uniquely for direct management could also be applied to shared management. COM agreed and confirmed that these indicators would also be available, on a par with the others, for shared management operations in subsequent

presentations of this topic. Member States should select the indicators most suited to their programmes, from the full extent of the list, selecting at least one per area of support.

Further comments made mostly focused on technical aspects of the indicator definitions. In particular the scope of indicator 10 should include compensation for ponds and should not be limited only to formally protected areas (CZ, EE). The term *eligible* operations in the definitions is misleading. *Suggested* operations would be better. (NL, EE). *Watercourses* is a preferable term to *rivers* (DK). Marine knowledge operations could be considered under indicator 21. (BE). Definitions need not distinguish between individual operation and OP level. Sectors benefitting should be considered under indicator 7. COM acknowledged the opposition of several MS to the inclusion of volume and value as indicators and repeated that these are important figures to describe the sector. LV restated that these indicators are largely influenced by external factors.

COM further clarified a number of issues in response to comments from EE, CZ, LT and LV: Values are not expected to be precise and evaluated in every case, for example in the case of *production capacity*. An estimated, average expected capacity under normal operating conditions is sufficient. Double counting and possible error values can be identified and reduced at central level in Infosys, based on expected range values. COM are closely following developments in the Council on both the EMFF and the CPR and are working to ensure that data requested under the CPR will be aligned with that specified for collection in Infosys. In particular, in response to LV, COM confirmed that that the EMFF proposal mistakenly omitted a clear legal reference to Infosys, but that the intention is to replicate the current Infosys system and its requirements, aligning EMFF and CPR requests for data. The FI presidency has included the necessary text in the Council's General Approach.

3.11. AOB

N/A.

4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

There were no points submitted for the approval of the Expert Group and therefore there was no voting at the meeting.

5. Next steps

N/A

6. Next meeting

Next meeting will take place on 26 November, 2019.

7. List of participants

See annex.