

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

23 September 2020 (virtual meeting)

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was approved, following communication by the Commission (COM) that the item concerning the *Latest updates on the EU MAP discussions* was no longer scheduled for presentation.

2. Adoption of the minutes of previous meeting

The draft minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 June 2020 were approved.

3. List of points discussed

FAME on EMFF Infosys Reports 2019 and their overall tasks

FAME presented the findings of the EMFF Infosys Reports 2019 and the other general tasks carried out in support of Member States (MSs). In addition, they shared a link to a video on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the fisheries and aquaculture sector, highlighting the measures introduced by the COM for the recovery from the crisis.

This year the Infosys Reports were finalized in June due to the impact of the pandemic on the ability of MSs to submit data by the deadline set for 31 March 2020. Despite the delay, the overall quality of the Reports has improved thanks to MS' cumulative experience and the updated FAME Infosys validation tool at their disposal. At the end of December 2019, nearly 56% of the total EMFF was committed, amounting to EUR 3.21 billion, while overall implementation has been incremental, with 2017 and 2018 registering the most rapid advancing in EMFF commitments. With regard to EMFF amounts already paid to beneficiaries, only 33.1% of the total funding has so far been spent, corresponding to EUR 1.73 billion. Payments to beneficiaries started in 2017 and kept at the same level during both 2018 and 2019.

Financial implementation under the different Union Priorities (UPs), as divided into planned, committed and spent EMFF amounts, shows that UP1 and UP3 present similar committed amounts, although, in relative terms, only 50% of UP1 is committed whereas 75% of UP3 is spent. For UP2, UP4 and UP5, committed amounts stand slightly above 50%, showing a quite even

implementation, while the biggest amount already paid to beneficiaries fall under UP3 (data collection, control and enforcement), corresponding to EUR 0.5 billion. In relative terms, UP4 presents the lowest level of implementation, with only 19% of its total allocation already paid to beneficiaries. In 2019, the total number of operations reached 47 038, with a considerable impact provided for by operations implemented under Art. 33 on temporary cessation (12 496).

About half of the operations registered in 2019 have already been fully implemented, and MSs with the biggest EMFF allocations are those with the highest number of operations in place, namely ES, IT, PL and PT. With reference to data on operations implemented under the different EMFF articles, it is worth noting an increasing interest in small-scale coastal fisheries (SSCF). Finally, data on the landing obligation have been aggregated for further analysis, which will be presented in the Annual Implementation Report (AIR) later this year along with data on the overall EMFF implementation progress. FAME is expected to start soon the preparations for the Infosys Reports 2020.

FAME gave a brief overview of the other, more general tasks they will perform over the coming months to support MSs in their EMFF implementation process and preparations for the new programming period. These tasks concern:

- **a working paper on “EMFF programme template”**, which will be based on the CPR Annex programme template (June 2020 version) and will follow DG MARE annotated template logic (2019), while also integrating suggestions and methodological advice received during the Needs Assessment 2019 workshops. A draft version of this document is expected to be developed by the end of the year, although its finalization will be dependent on progress made on the CPR post-2020;
- **a working paper on “simplified cost options”**, which will be developed in accordance with other COM guidance documents and will make use, among other sources, of the EMFF 2014-2020 Infosys data, lessons learnt in ESI funds management, methods already applied, experts advice and preparatory steps by selected Managing Authorities (MAs). A draft version of this document is also expected to be developed by the end of the year and will be based on the CPR Annex programme template (June 2020 version);
- **a working paper on “Common Monitoring and Evaluation System (CMES) 2021-2027”**, which will feature an explanatory part and several fiches in annex format. A draft version of this document is expected to be developed by the end of the year depending on the outcomes of the ongoing trilogue negotiations on the EMFF articles concerning the CMES;
- **the next Annual stakeholder meeting**, taking place on 7 October 2020, which will provide an interactive setting for MAs to discuss with FAME a variety of different topics relating to the preparations for the next programming period, including progress under the EMFF 2021-2027 programming process, the application of Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) in the context of the EMFF, the CMES 2021-2027 and other FAME activities;

- **the Peer Reviews**, within the framework of the “FAME peer review channel”, which will be held online in the format of 2-hour long meetings/workshops taking place every second Thursday, from 15 October until 10 December 2020, and will focus on topics of interest to MAs.

O&A

FR asked if FAME was planning to make available the draft working papers under development. FAME replied by clarifying that MS will receive more information on their content in the context of the Annual stakeholder meeting in view of publication later this year. MA will also have the opportunity to exercise on their content during the upcoming Peer Review meetings held online starting 15 October.

SI raised a question regarding the new EMFF intervention logic, asking in particular how the climate and environmental coefficient fit into the programming picture. FAME explained that the intervention logic will be looked at during the Peer review meetings, where further guidance will be systematically provided to MS.

SE asked for clarifications regarding the guidelines on the future CPR, which feature contributions from several COM DGs. FAME replied by explaining that they are trying to keep track of all the relevant developments also through the support provided by DG MARE. The COM further clarified that CPR DGs do not plan to develop any guidelines for the next programming period.

CY requested more information on where FAME working papers and other relevant reports could be found. FAME clarified that all their documents are available on the internal MSs platform, whose login details had already been provided as well as on FAME dedicated webpage on DG MARE website.

Finally, the COM informed participants that DG REGIO, along with the other CPR DGs, including DG MARE, are working on the closure guidelines for 2014-2020, which will be discussed with MSs in due time.

FARNET on their latest outputs and upcoming meetings

FARNET presented their latest guidance documents on how to deliver CLLD effectively. These are addressed respectively to MAs, with a focus on delivery systems, and to FLAGS, with a focus on how to better develop post-2020 strategies. In addition, they informed participants that they are also working on a guide for FLAGS on how to improve the quality of CLLD projects.

Following, they drew MSs’ attention on the upcoming FARNET MAs and NNs meeting, which will be held online in two morning sessions on 20-21 October 2020 with the aim to help MAs finalize the current period and design effective post-2020 CLLD. These practice-oriented sessions will cover several topics among which feature delivery, quality of projects and cooperation. Country-specific meetings between MAs/NNs, DG MARE desk officers and FARNET will be organized on the side of the main sessions.

With reference to the organization of transnational seminars for FLAGS, FARNET regretted having had to postpone to 2021 the seminar dedicated to the Baltic and inland areas, while announced that the seminar covering the Mediterranean and Black Sea will be held online on 25-27 November 2020. The latter will focus on targeted topics, such as sustainable tourism, protection of marine environment, SSCF and sustainable aquaculture as well as on horizontal themes ranging from the need for improving the quality of CLLD projects to the COVID-19 response. A seminar specifically dedicated to the Atlantic and North Sea will be organized in March 2021.

As regards information on initiatives that FLAGS have been implementing on the ground in response to the COVID-19 crisis, FARNET briefly mentioned few examples of projects put in place with the aim of facilitating consumer access to local fisheries products through innovative solutions, such as vending machines and contactless buying. Further examples of how FLAGS have been successful in dealing with the impact of the pandemic could be found on FARNET website. Finally, FARNET illustrated the findings of two surveys on FLAGS actions related to algae, launched with a view to providing information on algae-related projects funded by CLLD. According to these surveys, the Atlantic FLAGS are highly involved in the development of algae projects, while the vast majority of FLAGS across the EU are aware of potential future opportunities for algae.

Due to technical issues, FARNET had to interrupt their presentation and could not address MSs' questions.

Horizon Europe (2021 – 2027) and potential synergies with the EMFF post-2020

The COM (Unit A1 – Maritime Innovation, Marine Knowledge and Investment) presented the main features of Horizon Europe, the EU Research and Innovation framework programme for 2021-2027, and illustrated the potential synergies with the future EMFF.

The COM proposal for the successor of Horizon 2020 focuses on three main objectives:

- **tackling climate change**, which account for 35% of the overall budget of the programme;
- **achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals**; and
- **boosting EU competitiveness and growth**.

The EU is considered at the forefront of world-class research, accounting for 20% of global R&D and 1/3 of all high-quality scientific publications developed worldwide. With a budget of around EUR 100 billion, Horizon Europe aims to help the EU transform this potential into a global leadership in innovation and entrepreneurship by strengthening Europe's scientific and technological bases, boosting its innovation capacity, competitiveness and jobs, and ultimately delivering on citizens' socio-economic priorities.

The programme is structured around **three main pillars** that focus on:

1. **bottom-up research** through the promotion of excellent science across the EU;

2. **programme research** through the support of policy initiatives aimed at meeting global challenges and boosting European industrial competitiveness, on the basis of 6 thematic clusters; and
3. **innovative Europe** through the financing of the European Innovation Council, European innovation ecosystems and the EIT.

Under pillar 2, **seas, oceans and inland waters** feature prominently within **cluster n. 6** (food, bio-economy, natural resources, agriculture and environment) both for their fundamental role in contributing to stable food systems across the EU and their potential for ensuring environmental and biodiversity preservation of Europe's natural capital. In addition to the latter, other areas of intervention offer significant opportunities for synergies in the context of the promotion of a prosperous marine environment and the development of a competitive blue economy.

Following its 2018 proposal, the COM has been working on a series of orientation papers subject to intense public consultations and discussions with key stakeholders in order to finalise the 4-year strategic plan of the programme. The first work programme is also under development. Among the key novelties compared to H2020 are (i) the European Innovation Council, (ii) R&I missions, (iii) extended possibilities for partnerships, and (iv) a more open approach to science policy. Specifically, in relation to the new approach to missions, the programme defines mission characteristics, elements of governance and 5 mission areas, including one on **healthy oceans, seas, coastal and inland waters**, which gather a portfolio of actions across disciplines with a strong visibility and impact on both society and policy-making processes. The COM will soon publish a communication on the mission areas that will be brought forward under Horizon Europe and integrated in the work programmes to be adopted under comitology procedure.

Concerning the new generation of partnerships, the COM has put particular emphasis on a simpler architecture by foreseeing **three different types of collaboration agreements** in support of EU policy objectives: co-programmed, co-funded and institutionalized partnerships. Among the first two types, initiatives in the field of marine and maritime affairs are particularly relevant for the development of a sustainable blue economy, safe and sustainable food systems, biodiversity and waterborne transport.

Finally, with reference to potential synergies with the EMFF, the COM informed participants that under H2020 some 200 projects related to fisheries and aquaculture have been supported with a total budget of EUR 480 million. Under Horizon Europe, there is also a commitment to keep on ensuring that relevant synergies and complementarities with the EMFF are in place in order to develop novel technologies, products and services as well as promote efficient data collection and processing techniques in the field of marine and maritime policy. The EMFF, under direct and indirect management, will in turn focus on the enabling conditions for the development of a sustainable blue economy based on frontier research, innovation and technology as supported by other Union funds, not least by Horizon Europe.

Q&A

EE raised a question regarding the possibility to co-finance a Horizon Europe project via the future EMFF. The COM confirmed that such a possibility exists, in which case the share of the project

supported under Horizon Europe will have to follow Horizon Europe rules, while the remaining part financed under the EMFF will have to follow the EMFF own rules. In addition, the COM signaled the possibility within the CPR - currently under development by DG REGIO - to transfer funds from shared management to direct management and vice-versa.

As a follow up question, SE asked whether in case of co-funded projects there are any indications as to where support from one fund stops and support from the other starts. The COM replied by pointing out that there are specific *technical readiness levels (TRL)* of research, which help determine the appropriate financing tools to deploy when supporting R&I projects.

Explanatory fiche on non-compliance: oral reminder

The COM (DG MARE Unit D3 – CFP and Structural support, Policy development and coordination) reminded MSs to submit their inputs and comments on the explanatory fiche on non-compliance with CFP rules, as only three contributions had been received following its presentation at the EMFF Expert Group meeting held on 10 June.

Specifically, MSs were asked to indicate whether they considered that the list included the right number of cases or rather offered potential for adding/removing cases, and to explain why this was eventually the case. The COM set a deadline for MSs to send their contributions for **Friday 9 October 2020**, in view of further discussions on the fiche scheduled to take place at the next EMFF Expert Group meeting to take place in mid-November.

O&A

BE asked if the COM could present once again the list of cases figuring on the fiche. The COM answered that this was not possible given the already dense agenda of the meeting but pointed out that MSs will have the possibility to exchange views with the COM on this topic at the next EMFF Expert Group. In addition, he COM further reminded MSs that the list had been presented at the EMFF Expert Group meeting held in June and uploaded on DG MARE website, under the section specifically dedicated to the material presented during EMFF Expert Group meetings.

Informal stage of programming - Overview from Member States

Following a letter sent by DG MARE Geographical Units back in July, the COM invited MSs to share progress made on their respective programming arrangements under the future EMFF programme. In this respect, MS were informed that although the COM was aiming to reach a political agreement on both the CPR and the EMFF regulations by the end of the year, it was highly unlikely that the regulations would be adopted before the beginning of 2021. Nevertheless, the COM highlighted the need for action from MSs and encouraged them to advance their programme preparations.

The COM (DG MARE Unit C2 - Atlantic, North Sea, Baltic and Outermost Regions) thanked those MS who had sent their replies to the letter and informed participants of the outcome of their

consultations on EMFF post-2020 programming with the concerned MA. Overall, the preparations underway in the MSs were reported to be at very different stages, with some MSs having already submitted a clear overview of their programming process while others had only shared some background information with no further details on their planned roadmap.

- In terms of SWOT and needs analyses, Unit C2 reported that they had received drafts only from 6 out of 14 MSs under their remit, hence encouraged the remaining MSs to share their draft documents to be able to provide them with timely feedback on the coherence of their programming choices with the main EU priorities for post-2020. With reference to draft programme submissions, Unit C2 expressed their concern at having so far received only one draft programme. In terms of formal programme submission, a wide spread was announced by MS ranging from end 2020 until well into 2022. However, 5 MS had not provided any indicative date yet for their formal programme submission.

Concerning the intermediate steps before programme's formal submission, the Unit C2 reported that only 4 MSs intended to launch a public consultation in 2020, while the rest planned it either in 2021 or 2022. A similar situation was reported in relation to the strategic environmental assessment, which will be launched this year only by very few MSs. As regards the development of the multiannual national plans for aquaculture in the context of the revision of the Strategic Guidelines at EU level, Unit C2 stressed the importance of securing alignment between the EMFF and the direction set out in those plans, adding that in this respect they had not received much information from MSs. Finally, with reference to the PAs, Unit C2 informed participants that DG REGIO had so far consulted them only on one draft PA.

The COM (DG MARE Unit D2 – Mediterranean, Black Sea and Landlocked Member States) further illustrated the situation concerning the progress made up to this point by MSs under their remit, encouraging those who had not yet submitted an informal draft to do so. With reference to the roadmaps so far received, they stressed the need for MSs to be more concrete on ongoing actions, such as the SWOT analyses (submitted by 5 MSs), draft programme ideas (submitted by 3 MSs), the strategic environmental assessment, the national aquaculture plans and the PAs (submitted by 1 MS in the form of an early draft). In light of this, Unit D2 stressed once again the importance for MSs to advance their preparations by adopting a strategic approach that would allow them to receive timely feedback on their vision linking national and EU priorities for 2021-2027, such as those arising from the twin green and digital transitions, recovery and resilience.

O&A

SE informed that they had already submitted their SWOT and needs analysis to their government in order to receive political guidance to steer preparations for the future EMFF. Further, they reported that they were waiting for feedback from SE administrative authorities on the previously called EMFF 'measures' along with any suggestions on the future EMFF actions. Finally, they reported that they had the strategic environmental assessment ongoing and planned to submit their draft programme in February 2021.

PL informed that they were finalizing their SWOT and needs analysis and assessing their strategic priorities with a view to submitting their draft programme by the end of this year.

FR reported that they had brought their SWOT and needs analyses to a well-advanced stage, and were about to launch the public consultation and the environmental assessment. They informed that they were planning to submit their draft programme by the end of the year, while stressing how difficult it was to develop some of the more technical parts of the programme work based on a regulation still under negotiation.

NL reported that their situation was very similar to that of SE, adding that they planned to submit their draft programme on the same day of the meeting. Their intention is to launch a public consultation and environmental assessment by the end of October and submit their programme formally by the end of the year, depending on progress on the EMFF negotiations. Finally, they expressed their concerns about the level of detail requested compared to the current period and asked for further clarifications as to how the Sea Basin analyses adopted by the COM would affect their own programming. The COM explained that, while the new EMFF structure had been designed to be more flexible, they still expected MSs to provide a detailed description of the types of actions supported under each specific objective as well as to integrate the content of the Sea Basin analyses.

DK informed that they had already prepared a well-advanced draft, but still lacked the political agreement in the national Parliament, expected later this year, to be able to finalize the public consultation, environmental assessment and draft programme, in view of its formal submission in the spring of 2021.

HR reported that they had already started their programming exercise by launching a stakeholder survey based on which they had prepared the SWOT and needs analysis. They also informed that they were currently in the process of updating these documents to account for the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the sector and planned to submit their draft programme by the end of November. Finally, they added that they had also launched the environmental assessment, which is likely to be finalized in the next 6 months or so.

BE gave an overview on the progress made so far, informing that they had launched public consultations based on which the SWOT and needs analysis had already been developed. They also reported that they had already drafted their national plans for aquaculture, while pointing out that the environmental assessment might take longer due to administrative specificities. Finally, they informed of their plan to submit their formal programme in Q2 of 2021.

CZ informed that they were finalizing their national plans for aquaculture following the recommendations provided in the Strategic guidelines, while at the same time complementing parts of their programme in accordance with the other EU priorities for post-2020 as set out in the European Green Deal and other relevant strategies. They reported that their draft programme would be ready for submission to the CZ government by the end of October and confirmed their intention to submit the formal programme in time for the new legislation to be adopted.

FI informed that their situation was very similar to that of SE, DK and NL.

ES reported that they had already prepared the SWOT and needs analysis, although they were now planning to update their content to account for the COVID-19 crisis and the content of the Green

Deal, Biodiversity and Farm to Fork strategies as well as Sea Basin strategies. The added that a very productive dialogue with regional and intermediate authorities was already underway, as was the environmental assessment, with a view to having a meeting with all the relevant stakeholders at the end of the year. Finally, they informed that they expected to submit a public consultation by the end of 2021 and submit their programme at the beginning of 2022.

IT informed that their SWOT analysis would be ready by the end of September. Based on this, they would proceed systematically to draw up the final version of the programme in view of its formal submission in June 2021.

AT reported that their situation was very similar to that presented by NL, SE, DK and FI.

LV informed that their situation was very similar to that of NL, SE, DK, FI and AT.

RO reported that they had already prepared the SWOT analysis along with having held several presentations across the country to illustrate the opportunities under the future EMFF to gather feedback from the consulted communities. They also informed that, in light of the COVID-19 crisis and the recently published Green Deal and Biodiversity and Farm to Fork strategies, they were now planning to update their SWOT analysis with a view to submitting a first draft OP by the end of the year. As for the plans on aquaculture, they informed that they had already established complementarities between the latter and the programme. Finally, they asked for further clarifications on the **expected links between types of intervention and actions** under the future programme. In this respect, the COM clarified that:

- **types of intervention**, around 15 and predefined in an Annex, will need to be selected by MSs for each specific objective and to be attributed an indicative programming amount;
- **types of actions**, contained in a dedicated section of the programme template for each specific objective, will need to be illustrated by MS based on their own priorities and programming choices;
- **types of operations** will refer to Infosys codes, used to further describe their operations features.

In addition to the explanation provided by the COM, FAME reassured participants that the distinction between types of interventions, actions and operations would feature in the 'FAME peer review channel', where MSs will be offered the opportunity to do exercises on how to best differentiate between these categories.

EL informed that they were going to finalize their draft SWOT and needs analysis by the end of September, while they had already worked on a national strategy in collaboration with the EL government and authorities dealing with cohesion funds, based on which a first draft PA was being developed. Finally, they added that their work on the strategic plans for aquaculture was well underway via an external consultant and expected to be finalized by the beginning of November.

DE reported that they had focused on the development of their aquaculture strategic plans, which were ready to be sent to a contractor working also on their programme. They also informed that they had already finalized their SWOT analysis and identified measures they would like to

incorporate in their programme in view of submission of the draft programme in Q1 of 2021 followed by a public consultation and submission of the PA.

HU informed that their programme was currently under public consultation until the end of the year and that the formal programme submission was expected to take place sometime in January 2021.

Finally, BG reported that they had already finalized both their strategic plans for aquaculture and the SWOT and needs analysis following discussions with all relevant stakeholders. They also informed that they planned to submit their draft programme by the end of 2020, while organizing public consultations in parallel with the different stages of programme drafting.

Outline of the 2021 EMFF Work programme for procurement and grants

The COM (DG MARE Unit E1 – Budget, Audit and Public Procurement) presented the outline of the 2021 EMFF Work Programme (WP) falling under the direct management component of the EMFF for which the COM adopts financing decisions every year to implement grants and procurement related to the directly managed expenditure. Consequently, DG MARE was reported to be in the process of launching the preparations for the first WP under the new EMFF, which are carried out in parallel with the negotiations on the EMFF regulation.

According to the breakdown of the various spending strands related to the 4 EMFF priorities, the COM presented the different types of expenditure foreseen for 2021 underlying, at the same time, their substantial continuity with the current EMFF programming period except for the **newly added strand on International Ocean Governance**.

In terms of the indicative split of resources dedicated to the different spending areas, half of the total available resources will be dedicated to **maritime policy (52%)**. With reference to scientific advice, the COM will keep on supporting the ICES advisory process and STECF experts to enable them to develop studies that form the basis for efficient fisheries management decisions under the CFP. Continuity is also ensured with respect to the support for the implementation of the EU control, inspection and enforcement system, in particular through the enhancement of IT infrastructures and missions aimed at assessing the implementation of the CFP rules. Regarding voluntary contributions, the COM will continue to support operations in the area of international relations through the financing of several RFMOs, the support of projects managed by the FAO and the provision of grants within the GFCM. Finally, the operating costs of the Advisory Councils (ACs), whose role has been strengthened over the years, will continued to be supported, along with the development and dissemination of market intelligence for fishery and aquaculture products.

Following, the COM (DG MARE Unit A2 – Blue Economy, Aquaculture and Maritime Spatial Planning) presented the different spending areas under Art. 43 (**Maritime Policy and development of a Sustainable Blue Economy**), which will continue to be supported under direct management. These include, among others, an integrated maritime policy (including support to sea basin strategies), the transfer and uptake of research, innovation and technology (EMODNET), the development of maritime skills, ocean literacy, socio-economic data (EU4Ocean coalition) and

support to project pipelines through innovative financing instruments. In addition, under Art. 44 (**Maritime Security and Surveillance**), the COM will ensure continued support to data sharing, coastguard and agencies cooperation and the fight against illegal activities at sea, not least through Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) at regional, EU and international level, the CISE and the European Coastguard Functions Forum. The 2021 WP will also boost investment in companies operating in the framework of the Blue Economy Window, mostly by supporting the *BlueInvest* mechanism, as well as promote an Aquaculture Assistance mechanism.

Finally, the COM (DG MARE Unit B1 - Ocean Governance, Law of the Sea, Arctic Policy) illustrated the support under direct management of the future EMFF to a newly added strand on **International Ocean Governance**, aimed at enabling safe, secure and clean seas and oceans while contributing to the achievement of the EU climate mitigation and environmental objectives. In this regard, a number of grants will cover the different possibilities offered by Art. 45, such as voluntary contributions to international organizations (UN and WB), cooperation in the framework of UNCLOS and Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, implementation of ocean partnerships and international agreements (UNFSA), fight against IUU fishing as well as cooperation on ocean research and data.

O&A

BG raised a question concerning the potential complementarities and synergies between the COM action under direct management with respect to International Ocean Governance and MSs' own actions under UP4. The COM clarified in this respect that, since there is no use of the EMFF under shared management for International Ocean Governance purposes, they had put in place a number of grants to cover all the different possibilities aimed at strengthening the EU role in sustainable oceans management, such as via participation in international organizations, cooperation frameworks, partnerships and agreements. Lastly, the COM reminded participants that MSs implement UP4 actions under shared management only for purposes of maritime surveillance and coastguard cooperation.

Overview of the take-up of EMFF measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

The COM (MARE Units D3, C2 and D2) gave an overview of the EMFF measures designed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and their respective take-up by MSs. These measures, introduced in the spring of 2020 through an amendment to the EMFF regulation with a view to facing the impact of the crisis on the fisheries and aquaculture sector concern, in particular:

- temporary cessation;
- support to the aquaculture and processing sectors;
- the introduction of specific compensation schemes in the outermost regions;
- storage aid; and
- production and marketing plans (PMPs).

Based on this brief overview, MSs were asked to share their experience with amending their OPs in order to adopt these measures, which will be available until the end of 2020.

The majority of MSs under Unit C2 remit (namely, DE, EE, FR, SE and UK) submitted their OP amendments under simplified procedure since the changes they had proposed were exclusively targeted to introduce COVID-19 measures, while the rest of the OP amendments received (namely, from LV and ES) were adopted under standard procedure. In addition to amending their OPs, FR also amended the compensation plans for their outermost regions (ORs). Among the most popular measures were temporary cessation, support to aquaculture activities and, to a lesser extent, support to the processing sector. Unit C2 invited MSs to further elaborate on their own experience also in view of the upcoming Annual Review meeting, where the COVID-19 response will be discussed.

Unit D2 reported that 3 out of the 4 landlocked MSs under their remit had opted for not submitting any COVID-19 amendments, while BG, HR, RO and CY had already submitted their amendments under simplified procedure. They informed that CZ, IT, EL and MT were also preparing their amendments. Amongst the measures adopted so far, temporary cessation and support to aquaculture and processing activities feature most prominently. Finally, the amounts devoted to the COVID-19 response were reported to be quite significant in the case of some MSs, while implementation on the ground is still under preparation for most cases.

O&A

RO shared their concerns about having to deal with these kind of unpredictable events while they are still unfolding, while the main concept that OPs are built upon is of allocations, fixed amounts to be devoted to certain measures identified in advance. They explained that they had designed their OP amendment based on consultations with the fisheries sector back in early June, which do not necessarily reflect the needs of key stakeholders further in the year as the pandemic evolves. Recent feedback from the fishing and processing sectors signalled that further amendments to their OP might be needed to introduce new measures (e.g. temporary cessation, support to processing) along with the ones already put in place for aquaculture producers. The COM replied by underlying how these measures should be seen in conjunction with other schemes, such as the **Temporary Framework for State Aid** and **SURE programme**, so to have the largest possible range of emergency initiatives to choose from depending on the needs of the sector.

IE also shared their own experience with the introduction of COVID-19 measures, highlighting in particular that they had already set EUR 1.7 million under the Temporary Framework scheme and were likely to introduce additional aid in support of the sector via an imminent amendment of their OP.

PT asked for clarifications regarding measures under temporary cessation. The COM underlined that this kind of emergency support had been specifically envisaged for fisheries closed at the peak of the lockdown and suggested that other schemes might have been more appropriate to support the longer-term recovery of the sector.

BE informed that they had had temporary cessations of fishing activities from May to end of August due to a drastic drop in market prices that made those activities not profitable. As regards their OP amendment, they also stressed that it is particularly difficult to be able to design effective

measures while the crisis is still unfolding, making reference for e.g. to the support granted to the aquaculture and processing sectors, on which they were currently working.

BG raised a question on whether the COM was considering a possible extension of the COVID-19 crisis into the new programming period and to what extent it expected the MSs to anticipate actions to address its consequences in the new programmes. The COM confirmed that the new programming period, via for e.g. Next Generation EU, should contribute to building the sustainability and resilience of the sector to future crises in combination with more specific measures and schemes already embedded in the legislation (e.g. production and marketing plans).

EMFF Post-2020 Sea-basin Analyses

The COM (DG MARE Unit D3 – CFP and Structural support, Policy development and coordination) presented the recently published Sea basin Analyses, a Staff Working Document (SWD) meant to provide a regionalized perspective to guide the post-2020 programming period for the future EMFF. By accompanying the EMFF post-2020 proposal, the Analyses aim to identify key common challenges at sea basin level and focus on how the future EMFF under shared management can help MSs achieve the main objectives under the CFP.

Based on the most recent economic, social and environmental data, this SWD is intended to complement MSs' own programming process as additional background and guide both MSs and the COM in negotiating each national programme during the bilateral discussions of the coming months. As for their content, the Analyses are divided into **three main sections**:

- an introduction, which gives an **overview of the main CFP challenges** identified at EU level;
- 7 regional chapters, which present **the analyses of sea basin** with reference to the trends and challenges common to all those MSs that share the same sea basin and therefore depend on the same resources and ecosystems; and
- an annex, which contains an **'EMFF toolbox'** aimed at providing MSs with indicative guidance on the potential EMFF areas of support corresponding to the main CFP challenges identified in the regional chapters.

Building on the 7 main CFP objectives, the regional chapters feature several sub-sections providing for a specific assessment of the main strengths and weaknesses at sea basin level under the geographical areas of **the Baltic Sea, North Sea, Western Waters, Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, Outermost Regions and Inland Areas**. An 'EMFF toolbox' complements the main body of the document and provides MSs with practical indications, ideas and suggestions on possible actions under the broad scope of support of the new EMFF in order to help them devise flexible support systems in their programmes to best achieve the main CFP objectives identified at sea basin level.

Further to illustrating the content of three main sections, the COM recalled that the Analyses are not to be considered neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, but rather have to be read along with the

other EU post-2020 priorities relating to the objectives and targets set out for e.g. in the European Green Deal and the Biodiversity and Farm to Fork strategies. Finally, in the context of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, MSs were also encouraged to take advantage of the possibility to adopt innovative support initiatives based on the EMFF actions presented in the SDW in order to strengthen the resilience of the sector to future outbreaks and expected crises as well as its long-term sustainability.

O&A

ES made a general comment on the steps ahead in their preparatory process for the next programming period, underling how the Sea Basin Analyses along with other COM strategic documents, such as the European Green Deal and the Biodiversity and Farm to Fork strategies, will help them set out the policy priorities and objectives that will feed into their programme.

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

The next meeting will take place virtually on Wednesday 18 November 2020.

7. List of participants

See annex.