



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND CO-ORDINATION

Brussels,

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Subject: **Minutes of the 9th meeting of the Expert group on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. Brussels, 27 June 2016, 12:00 – 18:30**

Attendance

Chairman

Frangiscos NIKOLIAN, Head of Unit MARE A3, "Structural policy and economic analysis".

Member States

With the exception of AT, CY, GR, IT and LU all the MS' delegations were present at the meeting.

COMMISSION

DG MARE Units F1, C3, A3, B2 and EASME were represented at the meeting.

DG REGIO

Secretariat:

S. Efentzoglou, S. Lamprianidou (MARE A3).

1. Adoption of the agenda.

The agenda was adopted.

2. Public Procurement. A study on administrative capacity in the fields of ESIF. Presentation by DG REGIO.

COM (AL Zademach-Schwierz, DG REGIO) gave a comprehensive presentation on the main findings of the study including examples of guidance tools and good practice in different Member States as well as information on how the COM will follow-up general recommendations. The study shows the way forward to ensure the compliance and quality of public procurement involving European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). It includes a set of interesting country profiles (annex).

FR thanked the COM for the study. The current programming period aims at simplification of rules for public procurement. However there are three relevant directives and a set of national rules. This is difficult for stakeholders to understand and MS do not always have the means for training.

NL and DE supported FR comments. DE, speaking also on behalf of AT, requested a German version of the executive summary of the study. Rules on public procurement are often a burden for beneficiaries; there is big interest in simplification.

COM (F Nikolian) stressed the need to work on consistency across the board. Ex ante conditionalities on public procurement are difficult to comply with. COM is working with the MS to help overcome such difficulties.

COM (AL Zademach-Schwierz) stressed that the aim of the new Directive was simplification and the encodement of the case law from the last 10 years. COM helped MS to simplify national rules and participated in meetings to avoid gold-plating. COM will consider translating the executive summary of the study into German.

3. Report by CAPGEMINI on the economic importance of the activities ancillary to fishing in the European Union: main findings.

COM (M Peña) presented the main findings of the study. The aim of the study is to have a better understanding of the socioeconomic dimension of ancillary activities. The ancillary sector is about one third of the size of the primary sector in terms of income as well as employment.

FR said that ancillary activities had not been sufficiently considered. In the past they were mostly linked to shipbuilding. However in the current period these activities offer possibilities for investment in different areas complementary to fishing and aquaculture. They contribute to growth and jobs and are open to multi-funding.

COM (F Nikolian) requested all participants to distribute widely the findings of the study as it could be useful for the managing authorities in the preparation of national strategies.

4. UK online EMFF application system.

The UK Managing Authority (G Daines, M Smith and A Matson) presented the EMFF online application system. The system: a) reduced burden and improved timescales for applicants; b)

improved quality and workflow management for Intermediate Bodies; c) and it ensured transparency for auditors.

The UK put much time and effort to develop this system, including broad consultation and meetings with suppliers and intermediate bodies. The result is a user friendly tool that helps reduce error rates and supports both managing authorities and beneficiaries with the applications.

The live demonstration by the UK showed how to fill in application forms online. Applicants can contact a 'help desk' to ask questions before submitting the questionnaire which is very useful for less IT literate users such as fishermen. The system proved to be useful, user friendly, comprehensive and helpful for beneficiaries. The feed-back received from intermediate bodies and beneficiaries is very good.

COM (F Nikolian) asked the MS if they had developed similar systems.

HR developed a system for the EFF; for the EMFF they will only have it for certain measures. The paper format will be kept for fishermen.

In PT the system ORACLE worked well for the EFF. The system is being adapted to the EMFF with new modules. The system is not designed for payments.

FR has a system online for beneficiaries (application requesting support, templates for measures) but it does not include payments. Unlike the UK, in FR the system is not integrated.

5. UK EMFF Communication Strategy

The Head of the UK Managing Authority (M Smith) presented the UK communication strategy for the EMFF. The aim of the strategy is to ensure a joined up and strategically managed approach to EMFF communication activity underpinning the UK scheme - one Managing Authority and four devolved Intermediate Bodies. The strategy takes into account the different sectorial needs across the UK. The objectives of the strategy are: a) to inform and educate potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities; b) to maximize applications; c) to generate public awareness as to the outcomes of the scheme; d) to support compliance with EMFF Article 119. It can be consulted at the website.

BE stressed that the different stages in the programme need to be communicated to different stakeholders. BE made a big effort in the pre-launch phase and therefore there is no need for extra-communication. In their view, the launch phase was too short.

6. Ireland's approach to the collection of marine knowledge and data under the EMFF.

IE (Marine Institute) (L O'Dowd, J O'Leary) explained how data are collected in IE through different schemes of the EMFF OP: DCF data under the Data Collection Scheme (UP3) and other data under the Marine Biodiversity scheme (Art 40 UP1) and Blue Growth & Marine Spatial Planning (UP6), as part of an integrated strategy to gather data and information. The Marine Institute highlighted the benefits and the value added of the multi-purpose collection and usage of data. Using the existing infrastructure to maximize synergies, to create linkages and complementarities was the guiding ideas of this integrated strategy.

COM (F Nikolian) pointed out that linking data collection with the EMFF was a good example of integration.

COM (I Garzon) stressed the importance of having a National platform for data and information and the opportunity offered by the EMFF to improve national platforms at national level. The platform helps maximise synergies as data collected could be used for different purposes and public data are made available at National level. At EU level the COM is trying to move in a similar direction; at present there are 27 different national schemes for fisheries data.

7. State of play of CLLD programming in ESI funds.

COM (JP Vercruyssen) gave an overview of the implementation of CLLD comparing the situation in the different funds and providing detailed information on the number of FLAGs per MS. All MS are planning to implement CLLD through EAFRD (with the biggest budget) and 20 MS through the EMFF. He provided examples of MS planning to support multi-funded strategies (financing local strategies through different funds) and presented some national specificities. CLLD implementation is making good progress across the board.

8. Interim assessment of the implementation of Production and Marketing Plans to the Common Market Organisation.

COM (C Vande Weyer) presented the context and the state of play of the interim assessment of the implementation of Production and Marketing Plans (PMPs) (EMFF Article 66).

Two months ago the external consultant sent a questionnaire to all producer organisations (POs) and to the MS.

By 24 June 2016 the following MS with POs had not sent the reply to the questionnaire: BE, GR, IT, PT, UK.

The following MS without POs have not replied: BG, CZ, FI, HR, HU, SK.

PT has not replied due to delays in collecting the documentation which should accompany the reply to the questionnaire. They will reply in September when information is available.

FR 2014-2015 is difficult to manage. EU rules are clear but National legislation is sometimes problematic and sometimes not suitable to the situation.

COM (C Vande Weyer) invited MS to send the reply to the questionnaire and all available information to the consultant as soon as possible so that they can proceed with their analysis. The remaining documents can be sent at a later stage when information becomes available.

9. AOB

- COM (F Nikolian) expressed concern on MS delay in designating the managing and certifying authorities as the bodies responsible for implementing ESIF programmes. He recalled that the designation process must be completed and notified to the COM before interim payment claims can be submitted and invited MS to finalise designations without further delays. In reply to questions on indicators he added that the COM is finalising the set of definitions of indicators; and a workshop will be organised after the summer.

- EE and NL enquired about the point on CPR corrigenda in the first draft agenda of the EMFF EG. COM (F Nikolian) replied that the EP legal advisors rejected the corrigenda. The Commissioner would provide explanations in the Council of Ministers on 28 June; this is the reason why the point was removed from the agenda.
- UK enquired about eligibility in DA (EU) 531/2015, which includes a list of items for public support. In the UK there is a lobby to support certain items that are not in the list. COM (F Nikolian) recalled that COM had replied in writing to the UK saying there are no plans to modify the DA.
- The next EMFF EG meeting will take place on 16 November. COM, together with the Institute of Public Administration, is planning a training course for authorities on 17-18 November similar to the one organised by REGIO.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Penas Lado', with a stylized flourish above it.

Ernesto PENAS LADO
Director