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## EMFF post-2020: reinforce the partnership with the Regions to increase the effectiveness of action at EU level

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1. The CPMR calls on the European Commission to take the principles expressed in this Policy Position into consideration in its proposals for the Multiannual Financial Framework of the European Union (EU), expected in May 2018, and then in its proposals concerning the MEFF post-2020.
2. These principles are as follows:
  - Maintain the EMFF as a specific fund to support the Common Fisheries Policy as a priority;
  - Support Integrated Maritime Policy;
  - Simplify the EMFF to increase its effectiveness for professionals;
  - Reinforce the partnership with the Regions at regional, sea-basin and European level;
  - Provide the EMFF with a budget commensurate with the needs of the actors and the ambitions of the European Union.
3. At this stage, the CPMR is very surprised by the lack of reference to issues related to fisheries, aquaculture and blue growth and the EMFF in the Communication "[A new, modern Multiannual Financial Framework for a European Union that delivers efficiently on its priorities post-2020](#)" published by the European Commission on 14 February 2018. These issues must receive full attention in future proposals from the European Commission.

## 1. Maintain the EMFF as a specific fund to support the Common Fisheries Policy as a priority

The CPMR:

4. Stresses the increasingly cross-cutting nature of maritime issues in European policies and programmes. The ever-increasing importance of geo-political, economic, environmental and social issues relating to the Seas and Oceans, means it is necessary for the EU to have a cross-cutting maritime strategy and to define the specific role of the various European funds that can contribute to the implementation of this strategy.
5. Recalls that the core missions and the added value of the EMFF are intrinsically linked to the support that it gives to the implementation of the CFP. For the EU, having a specific fund in support of the CFP is even more important as it is a common policy, in the framework of which it exercises exclusive jurisdiction.
6. Recalls that the objectives of the CFP, as defined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) in Articles 38, 39, 40 and 41, is to ensure a fair standard of living for operators in the fisheries sector, particularly by raising individual earnings, stabilising markets, guaranteeing security of supplies and ensuring reasonable prices for deliveries to consumers. In addition, as stated in the CFP Regulation 1380/2013, the CFP shall *“ensure that fishing and aquaculture activities are environmentally sustainable in the long-term and are managed in a way that is consistent with the objectives of achieving economic, social and employment benefits and of contributing to the availability of food supplies”*.
7. Underlines that through these objectives, the CFP plays a fundamental role in the implementation of the EU sustainable development model and is a food policy that enables European citizens and consumers to have access to products conforming to high environmental, social and public health standards. Securing the EU’s food supply is an important dimension of the CFP in the global geopolitical context. The CFP is therefore a central component of the EU's action to implement the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Objectives 2, 8, 12 and 14.
8. Underlines that fisheries and aquaculture are very important sectors of the maritime economy, which significantly contribute to the opportunities associated with blue growth in Europe. Indeed, as the European Commission indicates in its document ["Facts and figures of the Common Fisheries Policy"](#), fisheries and aquaculture account for a significant share of employment in many coastal regions. These sectors also represent a sector with a future offering significant social prospects in EU coastal and peripheral territories. In addition, they provide a skills base and a resource for essential raw materials for the development of new sectors of the maritime economy such as blue biotechnologies.
9. Stresses the significant and positive results of the CFP and the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) in recent years. These positive results have been highlighted by the European Commission in the ex-post evaluation report published in July 2017.

This report provided an opportunity to highlight:

- The efforts made by professionals in the exploitation of fish stocks. In all regions where Total Allowable Catches (TACs) have been defined, the fishing rate that exceeds the fishing efforts with regard to the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) has decreased considerably. This rate was 99% in 2015 compared to 129% in 2008 and 158% in 2003;
- The scale of the efforts made in all coastal regions to restructure fishing fleets. Between 2007 and 2015, thanks to the economic support of the EFF, the number of fishing vessels decreased by 6%, engine power by 14% and tonnage by 24%. The support of the EFF to improve safety conditions on board and the energy efficiency of ships should also be emphasised;
- Significant EU support for aquaculture;
- The success of support for marketing in the development of the sectors, and the importance of investments for the competitiveness of port cities;
- The coexistence of fishing and aquaculture activities with other activities, in a context of increasing competition for the occupation of maritime space;
- The success of initiating a local approach with the implementation of Axis 4.

These results are very positive and are an indication of the results that the EMFF should achieve in the implementation of the CFP.

**10.** Stresses that the fisheries and aquaculture sectors are facing serious challenges for the future, and in light of these, EMFF support after 2020 will be essential. These issues are in particular related to:

- Continued implementation of the changes introduced by the CFP reform in 2013, including the landing obligation, which requires adapting fishing gear, vessels and onshore infrastructure;
- The potential impact of climate change on the movement of fish stocks as well as on aquaculture and particularly shellfish farming;
- Issues relating to the knowledge of the environment and resources, and the necessity to ensure an adequate level of control of fishing activities;
- The need for fisheries and aquaculture sectors to constantly innovate in a context of heightened international competition, in order to implement the EU's objectives in areas such as tackling emissions and climate change, and improving safety and working conditions at sea;
- The attractiveness of careers, generation renewal and encouraging young people to enter the sector;
- The modernisation and renewal of fleets in a context of international competition;
- Co-existence with other maritime activities, in a context of increasing competition for the use of maritime space;
- The likely consequences of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU.

**11.** Also highlights that the hypothesis of a "hard" Brexit associated with restrictions on access to British territorial waters would necessitate the implementation, through the EMFF, of sustainable support for the fisheries sectors in the territories concerned. In fact, such a scenario would breakdown the economic sectors in the long-term, well beyond the short-term impact.

In parallel, and in order to help the EMFF to be effective in this hypothesis, it would be essential to guarantee to EU actors that the environmental, economic and social objectives of the CFP be shared with the United Kingdom and other third countries, through agreements concluded with them. If they are not shared, there is a risk that the EU's trade deficit in seafood will continue to grow at the expense of the productive base and hamper the implementation of a sustainable management of resources for all shared stocks.

## 2. Support Integrated Maritime Policy

The CPMR:

- 12.** Supports the maintenance of a specific budget to support actions relating to the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) within the EMFF, provided however that a sufficient EMFF budget in support of the CFP is secured first and foremost.
- 13.** Calls for the actions funded by the EMFF in support of the IMP to be defined in the framework of a cross-cutting and renewed European maritime strategy. In the scope of this strategy, the specific function of EMFF support for the IMP should be to finance:
  - Pilot initiatives likely to boost the maritime dimension of other EU policies. The contribution of IMP actions, in particular the Blue Careers Calls, to the development of a maritime strand within the European training policy and the European Skills Agenda, as well as to the consideration of the maritime dimension within the Erasmus+ programme, is an example of this;
  - Initiatives in cross-cutting areas such as marine data, maritime spatial planning (MSP), environmental protection in relation to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and tackling climate change. Beyond their interest within the EU, these issues are important in the development of neighbourhood relations with third countries, and will be even more so after Brexit;
  - Measures relating to maritime surveillance and maritime security, in particular to secure fishing zones and the European maritime area.
- 14.** Calls for the use of shared management for actions funded by the EMFF in areas with a significant territorial dimension, such as MSP, education and training, and environmental protection.
- 15.** Calls for the European Commission to rely heavily on the regions in the context of on-going initiatives for the development of maritime investments, in a context where the main sources of funding are implemented at regional level.

### 3. Simplify the EMFF to increase its effectiveness for professionals

The CPMR:

16. Regrets that delays in the negotiations of the EMFF regulations and operational programmes for the 2014-2020 period, as well as the complexity of regulations associated with the EMFF result in a weak absorption rate of EMFF appropriations, estimated at 7% in the autumn of 2017. This weakness directly and seriously harms the fisheries and aquaculture sectors as well as the credibility of the EU's action in a field falling within its exclusive jurisdiction.
17. Is concerned about the possibility of delays in the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework negotiating schedule, which could once more lead to delays in starting the effective implementation of the EMFF Operational Programmes post-2020.
18. Proposes, in parallel, to help simplify and ensure greater coherence:
  - That the number of regulations, decisions and implementing regulations and delegated acts relating to the CFP and the EMFF are significantly reduced in the future as part of the next CFP reform;
  - As the CPMR already proposed in June 2017, that a single set of rules for ESI Funds be defined, including a cost calculation method, an online monitoring system and a uniform method of controlling and auditing the delivery and results of a project, applicable to all programmes;
  - That the future EMFF relies on a results-based approach, rather than on the current logic of defining eligible measures and control procedures. Management by objectives, in the framework of strategies defined by the Regions, as proposed in point 20 of this Policy Position, could provide guidance for the selection processes for operations. In this context, the compliance of the operations supported under the CFP would be controlled against simple requirements defining non-eligible operations;
  - To resolve a set of difficulties in the interpretation of EMFF measures, in particular those identified by the CPMR in its Paper "Elements concerning the current programme and the EMFF post-2020" published in February 2017 and suggests that a greater involvement of stakeholders, such as the Regions, would help solve problems before they emerge during controls;
  - That flexibility should be introduced in State Aids for the sector and for operations co-funded by the EMFF. Currently, State Aid rules that apply to the fisheries sector are more restrictive than those in force for SMEs or farms, but also for actions co-funded by the EMFF.

## 4. Reinforce the partnership with the Regions at regional, sea-basin and European level

The CPMR:

19. Requests that the Regions be involved in the definition of necessary developments in the content of EMFF measures. A set of proposals have been identified by the CPMR in its Paper “Elements concerning the current programme and the EMFF post-2020” published in February 2017. These proposals will be completed in the coming weeks.
20. Considers that the reinforcement of the partnership with the Regions, at regional, sea-basin and European level must be a common thread to increase the effectiveness of the EMFF.

### 4.1. In the territories, reinforce the involvement of the Regions and local actors

#### Increasingly involve the Regions in the definition of objectives and the management of EMFF measures

The CPMR:

21. Notes that the national structure of EMFF operational programmes does not allow for sufficient involvement of the Regions, nor recognition of their specific needs or their strategy. This situation makes the EMFF an exception among the European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF). As a result, the EMFF Operational Programmes are managed furthest from fishing activities and regional and local development strategies supported by the EU through its Cohesion Policy. Some Regions have been informed of the EMFF amounts that would be allocated to their territories without any consultation.
22. Therefore considers it necessary for the European Commission and the Member States to involve the Regions more closely in the definition of the EMFF’s objectives and its Operational Programmes.
23. Proposes that, in the future, the EMFF’s Operational Programmes should at least be based on objectives defined in the framework of strategies developed in consultation with the Regions.
24. Calls for the priorities defined with the Regions to be taken into consideration in the definition of the specific needs of the sea basins to which the EMFF could respond. The specific nature of these needs, due to the differences in the economic structure of the sectors and the resources in the different basins, will also be linked to Brexit and the impact of competition from third countries and policies that this leads to. These specific needs are also to be reflected in sea-basin strategies, which the EMFF must continue to support.
25. Proposes facilitating, in the States that so wish, the development of EMFF Operational Programmes at regional level. This proposal is particularly based on the Regions’ successful experiences of managing other funds.

- 26.** Notes that the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) approach has demonstrated its effectiveness in mobilising key actors of the fisheries sector to work on an investment roadmap. It is therefore appropriate that the CLLD approach to fisheries and aquaculture issues continues after 2020.
- 27.** Stresses that the CLLD experience demonstrates it is possible to provide, in the context of EMFF programmes that remain national, a framework allowing recognition of EMFF regional strategies carried out in a specific partnership, under the concept of “Community-Led Local Development”. The development of such strategies would make it possible to define objectives that are consistent with the needs of the sectors in the territories and with the development strategies carried out in other funds. These strategies should implement a partnership approach with all socio-economic actors whose commitment is essential to achieve the CFP objectives.

### **Give flexibility to regional authorities in the use of financial instruments that support fisheries and aquaculture**

The CPMR:

- 28.** Considers that grant funding should remain the foundation for EMFF interventions. Indeed, the EMFF financial instruments for the fishing sector are not widely used in Europe. This is due to the fact that the EMFF budgets available in the Regions are not sufficient to reach the “critical size” needed to implement these instruments, which are ill-adapted to economic structure of the activities concerned. This unsuitability would be intensified in the event of a “hard” Brexit, which would lead to a crisis in the fisheries sector in EU Member States, a decrease in private investment in the field and the need for public intervention to support the economic changes to be made.
- 29.** Considers therefore that simplifying the use of financial instruments in support of fisheries under the EMFF is a perspective to be studied, provided that it is conceived as a possibility that regional authorities should be free to use on their own initiative, depending on the needs of their sector, the circumstances and the budgets available.

### **4.2. At sea-basin level: strengthen the role of Advisory Councils and reinforce synergies between sea basin strategies, the CFP and the IMP**

#### **Strengthen the role of Advisory Councils in the framework of the CFP**

The CPMR:

- 30.** Proposes strengthening the functions and the resources of the Advisory Councils set up, in particular at sea-basin level, during the last reform of the CFP, through the establishment of Advisory Councils at sea-basin level, and that the Regions may become full members.

#### **Reinforce cross-border cooperation opportunities**

- 31.** Stresses the importance of cross-border cooperation in areas covered by the EMFF. It is therefore necessary to:

- Maintain support provided by the EMFF for cross-border cooperation between the FLAGs;
- Respond through cross-border cooperation programmes to cross-border needs related to other strands of the EMFF, that the EMFF is not able to cover.

#### **4.3. At European level: call for an annual fisheries and aquaculture meeting**

**32.** The CPMR proposes the organisation an annual meeting on fisheries and sea products, the objective of which would be to reinforce consultation with key actors: Members of European Parliament and States, professionals and their representatives, Regions and local authorities, and NGOs. This event could be held at the end of the first six months of each year, after the return of annual reports on the EMFF implementation, and when the negotiation prospects on TACs and quotas are being drawn up.

### **5. Provide the EMFF with a budget commensurate with the needs of the actors and the ambitions of the European Union**

**33.** In light of all the factors expressed in this Policy Position, the CPMR considers that fisheries, aquaculture and blue growth needs mean that it is necessary, as a minimum, to maintain the EMFF budget for the post-2020 period.



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**The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) brings together some 160 Regions from 25 States from the European Union and beyond.**

Representing about 200 million people, the CPMR campaigns in favour of a more balanced development of the European territory.

It operates both as a think tank and as a lobby group for Regions. It focuses mainly on social, economic and territorial cohesion, maritime policies and accessibility.

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