



EUROPEAN MARITIME AND FISHERIES FUND POST-2020: INFORMATION ON THE CURRENT EUROPEAN DEBATE

The European Commission should publish its proposals for the post-2020 European financial framework in May 2018. The current reflection phase gives Member States, Regions and European institutions the opportunity to draw up a mid-term review of the implementation of all European policies and of the effectiveness of their respective financial instruments.

In 2014, the European Union introduced a new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and a new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). In this respect, the European Commission's future proposals for post-2020 will focus on the EMFF. A new revision of the Common Fisheries Policy is expected around 2022.

This document provides up to date information on the latest developments in the debate on the future of the EMFF. In accordance with the key principles outlined in the policy position approved in Gozo (MT) in March 2017, it provides some options to consider regarding the legislative framework of the post-2020 EMFF, while ensuring a broader reflection on the very future of the CFP.

This autumn, the CPMR will intensify its actions on the CFP and the EMFF through the actions undertaken by its Fisheries and Aquaculture Working Group. The CPMR will be represented at the conference on the future of the EMFF in Tallinn on 12-13 October 2017. The CPMR plans to participate and contribute to other key events over the coming months.

Review of the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) 2007-2013. What can be learnt?

Last July, the European Commission (EC) published the results of the ex-post evaluation of the EFF 2007-2013. The main focus of this document is the Community contribution of €4.3 billion allocated to Member States within the framework of their operational programmes. The evaluation showed that the EFF objectives have, to a large extent, been met. Nevertheless, the European Commission stresses the need for improvement, in particular with regard to the effectiveness, sustainability and the implementation system of the fund.

Below is a list of the main points raised by the European Commission in this document:

- From a financial point of view, in December 2015, payments from the Member States had reached 90% of the scheduled amounts. Nevertheless, the European Commission noted that the final amount of EU funds allocated reached around €4 million, amounting to 94% of the amount of funding initially planned, due to the automatic decommitment rule (the N+2 rule);
- The administrative burden and payment deadlines have a deterrent effect on potential beneficiaries;
- Between 2007 and 2015, the capacity of the EU's fishing fleet decreased by 17.5% (gross tonnage), more than half of which was scrapped with the support of the EFF. European subsidies have also resulted in a 9% decrease in the engine power of the EU fishing fleet;
- The EFF has helped to modernise the remaining fishing fleet, to improve fishing ports and landing sites and to increase the added value of fishery products by participating in investments in marketing and processing;
- In the aquaculture sector, the Commission notes that the results are below the anticipated targets. However, it indicates an increase in the EU's aquaculture production over the period;
- The sustainable development of coastal areas (priority axis 4) was an important source of investment to improve the quality of life in areas dependant on fishing;
- The necessity to improve links between European intervention (EFF) and the sustainable exploitation of fisheries, even though the European Commission considers that the subject has been extensively addressed by the 2014-2020 EMFF;
- It is estimated that the EFF has created around 17,000 jobs (including 10,000 in the processing sector alone) and has maintained a much higher number throughout the programming period;
- Complementarities and synergies between the EFF and other funds (ERDF, ESF, EAFRD) or with other EU funding instruments (LIFE) have remained very limited.

Regarding these conclusions, the CPMR underlines:

- **The fund and the sectors have performed well in terms of job creation.** These performances are particularly significant in the context of the tightening of access to bank credits following the 2008 financial crisis. It should also be stressed that these impacts hit during a sensitive time for fisheries and aquaculture production companies;
- **The European Union’s clear commitment to aquaculture development.** The CPMR welcomes the specific attention given to aquaculture. However, it questions the growth target set by the EC (evolution of global aquaculture production), in a context of significant sectoral difficulties (e.g. shellfish mortality). The CPMR points out that this was not such a clear priority when the national EFF programmes were developed. All these observations underline that the results must not be under-estimated;
- **The extent of the restructuring process for fishing fleets.** The CPMR points out that 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%. These results, in terms of reducing fishing effort, must be considered in conjunction with the progress made in the sustainable management of stocks. **These results demonstrate the scale of the efforts made in the coastal regions and the sector;**
- **The importance of marketing in the development of the sector.** The EFF’s performance in terms of enhancing the value of products is largely due to fish markets, which ensure that small-scale fisheries are defended, greater transparency in the market, and guarantee the traceability of products. **The CPMR would like to see their role in marketing better identified, alongside producer organisations;**
- ● **The positive roll-out of the “local development” approach.** The CPMR highlights the strategic role that it played in the introduction of a “territorial focus” in the EFF. The CPMR also stresses that the added value of this approach is not so much to deliver significant investment programmes, but to build **conditions for the integrated development of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors**, by using existing financial instruments;
- **The need** to qualify the European Commission’s observations on the weak complementarities and synergies of the EFF and other structural funds, considering this is the reason for the EMFF’s specialisation.

The EMFF now and then: a conference in Tallinn for interested parties

At the time of writing, the Estonian presidency of the Council of the European Union and the European Commission (DG MARE) are organising a conference on the future of the EMFF, which will take place in Tallinn on 12-13 October¹. This event, which comes at a time of deep uncertainty as to the effects of Brexit, represents an important step in the debate on European funding for the CFP and IMP.

¹[Beyond 2020: Supporting Europe’s Coastal Communities](#)

The CPMR will actively contribute to the debates in Tallinn with the aim of promoting and defending its positions² in these policy areas:

A more equal balance of the environmental, economic and social dimensions of the CFP

The CPMR recognises the CFP's strategic role, which ensures a shared and sustainable management of European stocks. It therefore welcomes the EC's observation in its Communication³ of July 2017, which highlights the progress made in the exploitation of fish stocks: in all regions where TACs have been defined, the fishing rate that exceeds the F_{RMD} ⁴ has decreased considerably (99% in 2015 compared to 129% in 2008 and 158% in 2003).

In turn, the CPMR has always stressed the need for a CFP that contributes to the development of a competitive fisheries and aquaculture sector, which is capable of delivering products with a very high nutritional value, and that creates jobs and growth for present and future generations.

In this respect, Articles 38, 39, 40 and 41 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) states that Europe's mission is to ensure a fair standard of living for operators in the fisheries sector (particularly by raising individual incomes), stabilise markets, guarantee security of supplies and ensure reasonable prices for deliveries to consumers.

These commitments must be renewed in Art.2.1 of the EU regulation 1380/2013. It is by pursuing these objectives that Europe will ensure sustainable stock management by promoting a food policy for the EU and ensuring growth and employment.

The CPMR supports the purpose of the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) but draws attention to a number of difficulties. If MSY targets are almost achieved in the North East Atlantic by 2020, in other basins achieving the MSY still requires efforts by fishing enterprises and adjustments in setting targets (multiannual quotas, target ranges). In this respect, **the current situation regarding stocks in the Mediterranean requires balanced political and technical reflection: the sector cannot be the CFP's adjustment variable.**

However, regarding the landing obligation, a major blocking situation is imminent within the EU. This measure has been insufficiently assessed. Implementation objectives, procedures and tools are neither sufficient nor appropriate. **The CPMR wishes to echo the strong fears expressed by the whole sector and the authorities in the States.**

More generally, with the withdrawal of the United Kingdom, the external dimension of the CFP will now affect the bulk of the Community fleets. **It is vital that the environmental, economic and social objectives that guide the Union are shared with our neighbouring states. If they are not shared, there is a risk that seafood imports will be increased and the productive base will be weakened, in contradiction with the Community missions set out in the TFEU. In this context, the CPMR encourages the development and implementation of multiannual management plans that integrate these new neighbourhood issues.**

² CPMR Policy Position approved by the Political Bureau in Gozo in March 2017

³ COM (2017) 368 final, du 5/07/2017

⁴ Fishing efforts with regard to the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)

The maritime regions: backbone of regional growth strategies in the fisheries and aquaculture sector

In its most recent reform, the CFP has adopted a more decentralised governance which provides for a regionalisation of the legislative procedure for the implementation and full technical development of certain standards of Regulations 1380/2013 and 508/2014. Although necessary, these developments are not sufficient.

The Consultative Councils have limited financial and human resources, and their mission is only advisory. Although the CPMR welcomes the creation of the Advisory Councils for Aquaculture and Markets, which have “horizontal” competences, it regrets their late establishment and questions the lack of publicity for their work and their distance from key actors. **For stakeholders, among which the Regions do not formally appear, the Advisory Councils’ contribution to the governance of the CFP remains too limited.**

Considering that stakeholder involvement is a prerequisite for the effectiveness of a public policy, and noting the interest that actors on the ground have for the CFP's guidelines, the **CPMR considers that the EU must implement broad and inclusive structured dialogue with key players:** Members of the European Parliament and States, professionals and their representatives, regions and communities, and NGOs. **Such dialogue could take the form of a European conference for fisheries and seafood products.**

This event could take place at the end of the first six months of each year, after receiving feedback from the Member States' annual reports on the implementation of the EMFF, and when prospects for negotiating TACs and quotas are being drawn up. In this respect, based on the elements that are already known at this stage of the consultation on the revision of the EMFF Regulation, the CPMR is concerned that the process initiated does not meet these requirements.

The weaknesses of the governance process resulting from the last revision of the CFP relate to the national nature of the EMFF OP, regardless of which territorial organisation prevails in the Member States. Therefore, ironically fishing activities that are very closely linked to the territory are supported by European funds and strategies that are furthest from the territories. In most Member States, this situation has resulted in considerable delays in the adoption of EMFF OP. In this context, at the beginning of this programming period, the maritime Regions had to respond to the need for structural measures in the fisheries sector, faced with the legislative changes imposed by the renewed CFP without the added value of EU funds.

The EMFF is the only fund that has such a general delay in programming. This is not only a result of insufficient governance at national level, but first and foremost of all the requirements laid down in the regulations, and, in particular, in the overly binding EMFF Regulation 508/2014, which undermines the achievement of the CFP objectives and leads to discrepancies with the needs shared by the sector and the Regions.

The transition to more sustainable fisheries and aquaculture from an environmental, economic and social perspective depends on the EU's ability to find effective solutions and tools in line with the structuring and specialisation dynamics of the sector. **The post-2020 EMFF should therefore introduce innovative governance mechanisms in order to significantly reduce the distances between the world of management and implementation of the fund, and the final recipients of European financial support.**

In this respect, **the role played by the Maritime Regions deserves to be expanded.** Indeed, they prove to be "front-line" players, who have the necessary legislative and strategic skills for the development of the fisheries sector.

Consequently, **the new EMFF should provide a broader decision-making margin for regional governments to co-finance projects with high added value, through specific actions and by providing place-based responses. Compliance with ex-ante conditionalities imposed by the CFP should not prevent Regions from benefiting from the important elements of flexibility and simplification.**

To achieve this, the CPMR believes that the European Union should rely on existing governance tools, such as the Local Development led by Local Actors (DLAL). The DLAL has demonstrated its ability to mobilise key players in the fisheries sector with regard to an investment roadmap.

The EC should capitalise on the success factors of the DLAL approach and put forward legislative proposals that allow for the DLAL model to be rolled-out at regional level. Thus, the DLAL will undergo a new testing phase aimed at establishing, in each Maritime Region, a sustainable development strategy for the fisheries sector co-financed by the EU.

Amongst other things, this strategy should:

- **provide a broader decision-making margin for regional governments** to co-finance projects with high added value for the sector;
- **address both the environmental priorities of the CFP and a logic of strengthening the value chain, creating economies of scale and improving the marketing of fisheries and aquaculture products;**
- **support the strengthening of regional and local segments of fisheries markets** and thereby contribute to reducing national markets' dependence on non-EU imports;
- **provide clear points of convergence between national strategies** (data collection control, etc.) **as well as with the intervention priorities identified by the FLAGS.**

ACTIVITY TIMETABLE FOR THE CPMR FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE GROUP

All the technical elements addressed in this paper will be verified over the coming months as part of the official work of the CPMR Fisheries and Aquaculture Working Group. Below is a non-exhaustive list of FIG events and actions:

- Participation in the conference Beyond 2020: Supporting Europe's Coastal Communities organised by DG MARE under the Estonian Presidency, in Tallinn on 12-13 October 2017;
- Organisation of a Fisheries and Aquaculture Working Group meeting on 14 November. This meeting will enable the CPMR Member Regions to discuss the results of the conference in Tallinn and plan future actions to undertake. It will also provide an opportunity for debate on the progress made in the implementation of the obligation to land all catches, in preparation for the conference organised by DG MARE on 15 November in Brussels;
- Contribution (on-going) to the CPMR work on the multi-annual strategic framework in order to defend a budget for the post-2020 EMFF that is equal to the challenges affecting the CFP and the IMP;
- Contribution (on-going) to the CPMR work on the follow-up of the Brexit negotiations;
- Analysis of the EMFF implementation in preparation for the public hearing in the European Parliament's Fisheries Committee, to be held in the first half of 2018 (October 2017 - February 2018).



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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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