EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Brussels, 2.10.2020
SWD(2020) 222 final

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION

Interim Evaluation of the direct management component of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

{SWD(2020) 221 final}

Contents

1 The Fund 3
2 EU action taken 3
3 The evaluation 4
3.1 Relevance 4
3.2 Efficiency 4
3.3 Effectiveness 5
3.4 EU added value 6
3.5 Coherence 6
4 Lessons learned 7

1 THE FUND

The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) aims to ensure that fishing and aquaculture activities is environmentally sustainable over the long-term and 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[1]. The Integrated Maritime Policy is based on the recognition that all matters relating to oceans and seas are interlinked, and that sea-related policies must develop in a joined-up way if they are to achieve the desired results[2].

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)[3] supports both these policies. National authorities implement 90% of the Fund. Just over 10% (a total of €647,275,400 over the seven-year funding period 2014-2020) has been earmarked for measures that are implemented directly by the European Commission, including the Executive Agency for Small and Medium Enterprises. The split between maritime policy and fisheries is roughly 50:50, with slightly more on fisheries in the first three years of the programme and slightly more on maritime policy afterwards. Between 200 and 300 contracts under this direct management part of the programme are signed each year. This evaluation covers those contracts programmed between 2014-2018.

2 EU ACTION TAKEN

The long-term future of fisheries relies on protecting the stocks from over-exploitation through measures imposing how the fish can be caught, how many can be caught, by whom they can be caught and how they are marketed. Given the complex and connected way that ecosystems and markets work, framing the rules requires considerable data, sound science and expert advice. Monitoring and enforcing the rules requires timely information built up from multiple sources in national administrations and from the supply chain. This is not only for European waters. Vessels from EU countries fish in nearly all oceans and the EU is committed to international ocean governance. The direct management component of EMFF finances measures and structures to deliver the data, advice, organisational structures, information systems and intelligence needed to implement the EU's fisheries policy effectively.

Maritime policy is constructed on the understanding that the viability of the blue economy and the health of the marine environment require coherence between different policy areas and different countries, including those without a coastline and those not in the EU; particularly neighbours sharing the same sea basin. The direct management component of the EMFF supports measures to bring these stakeholders together, to unify and disseminate their holdings of marine data, to agree on common ways of measuring the status of the marine environment, to improve communication between authorities responsible for preventing illegal or dangerous activities at

---

1 Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy.

2 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union {COM(2007) 574 final).

3 Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2328/2003, (EC) No 861/2006, (EC) No 1198/2006 and (EC) No 791/2007 and Regulation (EU) No 1255/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

sea, to take into account neighbours when planning what is allowed and what is forbidden in their waters and to stimulate the blue economy.

3 THE EVALUATION

The conclusions presented here are drawn from several sources:

- an external study into measures taken from 2014 to 2016, (largely through interviews conducted with those involved in the measures),
- a public consultation in 2018, which elicited 200 replies from a sample of public authorities, businesses, civil society and researchers,
- separate analyses of specific measures, and
- insights from Commission departments and the Executive Agency for Small and Medium Enterprises.

3.1 Relevance

The study found almost universal agreement from stakeholders that action under the EMFF did contribute to meeting the objectives of both maritime and fisheries policies. EMFF action aided maritime policy through a more integrated governance, joined-up data, spatial plans that take into account neighbours' needs, communication between maritime authorities with different responsibilities, business support for emerging industries and sound criteria for assessing the state of the marine environment. Fisheries policy was supported through scientific advice, improved enforcement, structured stakeholder involvement, enhanced ocean governance and market intelligence.

3.2 Efficiency

Nearly all the budget was consumed as planned with the exception of a contribution to joint chartering of patrol vessels. Member States did not take up this option due to uncertainty as to how to combine it with national resources.

Respondents to the survey considered that the measures could not have been carried out at a lower cost. Time-critical deliverables, especially scientific advice, reached the recipients on schedule.

Nevertheless, beneficiaries of grants and contracts did report that some of the procedures were administratively heavy. The time to grant or contract signature are similar to those in other Commission programmes and the use of e-grants as of 2017 did reduce the paperwork. But there is considerable scope for improvement. Further simplification, a more risk-based approach to compliance and a better alignment with other programmes could considerably reduce the workload for beneficiaries and the contracting authority alike and speed up the process without compromising sound budgetary management.

3.3 Effectiveness

There is consensus that all actions were effective in building a stronger maritime economy, improving the protection of marine resources or in developing a more joined-up approach to maritime policies.

- The many events organised, whether at European or sea-basin level, encouraged interactions that enabled participants to see how others in different industries, different countries or different government departments tackle similar challenges.
- Business and public authorities are already using the digital maps developed under the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet) initiatives to improve productivity and reduce risk. For instance, they have greatly reduced uncertainty in storm surge forecasts in the North Sea. A separate evaluation of EMODnet is underway.
- Practitioners of spatial planning reported that participating in cross-border planning projects had improved their awareness of what is being done in other countries and how it might affect their own waters in a way that could not have been achieved by browsing plans online.
- The scope for more effective awareness of what is happening in European waters through better communication between authorities responsible for monitoring different activities such as navigational safety, fisheries inspection, border control or customs checks has been amply demonstrated in pilot projects for the Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE). This is now moving to an operational phase under the auspices of the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), which already works closely with the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and the European Borders and Coastguard Agency (FRONTEX).
- Studies and targeted fora have shown the promise of emerging technologies in areas such as ocean energy, algae processing, electric propulsion or waste recycling to transform the blue economy and at the same time contribute to EU goals on greenhouse gas emissions or the circular economy. Having a full pipeline of projects was instrumental in attracting guarantees from the European Fund for Structural Investment for an equity fund for the blue economy.
- The provision of scientific advice, financed under the EMFF, is fundamental for all proposals and decisions on major fisheries management tools, such as total allowable catch, quotas, gear restrictions and landing obligations. The advice provided over the period of the evaluation was delivered on time and formed the main basis for Commission proposals for fisheries management. Well-established arrangements for the delivery of scientific advice, and the collection of the data on which it is based, ensure that advice and data are effective and relevant in informing CFP objectives. There is scope for clarifying the division of roles between the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, on scientific advice in the Mediterranean.
- After the plan for purchasing joint patrol vessels was scrapped, most of the budget allocated for fisheries control was spent on information technology to enable data exchange within the EU (from national authorities to each other, the Commission, the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), to third countries under bilateral arrangements or with regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs). Progress has been slower than planned, partially due to sub-optimal implementation, the inherent complexity of the programme and the multitude of stakeholders. The development is due to be completed in 2020, when MARE will carry out a thorough review and investigate the best way to move forward.

- Subscriptions from members of regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) are, in many cases, not sufficient for them to implement the rules they set. Top-up grants from the EMFF strengthened their organisational capacity and paid for underpinning research. These regional management organisations are crucial partners and helping them do their job has had significant benefits for the EU's ocean governance strategy.
- The Advisory Councils are the EU's mechanism for fishers and other stakeholders to talk to each other on a regional or thematic basis and deliver their opinions and advice to the Commission. 40% of the councils' membership is made up of representatives of groups outside the fishing industry so it is not always possible to reach consensus. So far, the councils have not managed to propose simplifying any measures but they have identified current measures that are not working optimally, such as technical measures, control and implementing the landing obligation. The Commission has noted these issues.
- The project to develop an EU market intelligence tool, EUMOFA, began in 2010 following a request from the European Parliament. It has now developed into an operational tool that has supported business decisions and policy-making through increased market transparency and analysis of EU market dynamics. An independent evaluator reported that EUMOFA worked better than agriculture market counterparts in terms of timeliness and standardisation of data provided.
- 328 Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) - partnerships of private sector, local authorities and civil society organisations who fund local projects - appreciate the support that the FARNET support unit provides in capacity building, dissemination of information and in exchanging good practices. Some asked for more frequent newsletters.
- Workshops and dedicated monitoring and evaluation training sessions organised by the FAME support unit for managing authorities for the shared management part of the EMFF have improved comparability between interventions from different Member States.

3.4 EU added value

Stakeholders agreed that none of the measures would have happened without financial support from the EMFF. In many cases, continuity makes the difference. Very few partnerships, information systems or stakeholder platforms developed in research or structural projects survive beyond the end of funding. There was consensus that the EMFF measures were needed and need to be sustained, but without EU support they would not have happened.

3.5 Coherence

The extent to which maritime and fisheries policy goals are achieved depends strongly on how measures in other policy areas – energy, transport, environment etc. – are implemented. Accordingly, there is close cooperation between the Commission departments for maritime affairs and fisheries and the departments responsible for these other policy areas. For instance, communication with the departments responsible for environment policy happens on a daily basis. Work on maritime surveillance under both maritime policies and fisheries policies is increasingly integrated with the work of the European Maritime and Safety Agency the European Borders and Coastguard Agency (FRONTEX), the Fisheries Control Agency and the Copernicus security service. A memorandum of understanding has been signed between the Commission

department responsible for maritime policy and the department responsible for the Copernicus space programme on collaboration between EMODnet and the Copernicus marine service. The EU's research programme covers projects on fundamental long-term scientific questions whereas the EMFF covers studies into issues where answers are needed faster.

Nevertheless, whilst most stakeholders agreed that the fisheries and maritime policy actions were coherent with those implemented under other EU policy areas, they felt that coordination could be improved. This may be a matter of perception but in the future more work is needed to show how maritime and fisheries policy action fit into the broader EU policy framework. This includes connecting maritime and fisheries policies more closely.

4 LESSONS LEARNED

Overall, the direct management part of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund is relevant to meeting the objectives of the EU's maritime and fisheries policies. It is effective. It is efficient in that the results could not have been achieved at a lower cost and would not have happened without EU financial support. The actions are coherent with other EU initiatives. Nevertheless, demonstrating this would have been easier if the results and impacts had been made available in a more structured way. Based on lessons learned with this evaluation, the Commission is considering taking remedial action as part of the EMFF follow-up in 2021. This will include analysing the longer-term impact, which was not possible here due to the short time that the fund has been operational.