



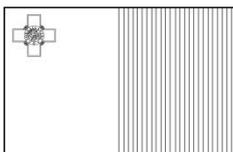
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER  
MINISTRY FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT  
FOR THE EU PRESIDENCY 2017 AND EU FUNDS

# EVALUATION PLAN

IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 10  
OF THE EMFF OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME 2014-2020  
(CCI No: 2014MT14MFOP001)

Version 1



Maritime and Fisheries Operational Programme 2014-2020

Part-financed by the European Union  
European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF)  
Co-financing rate: 75% EU Funds; 25% National Funds



*Investing in sustainable fisheries and aquaculture*

## CHAPTER ONE: OBJECTIVES, COVERAGE AND COORDINATION

The purpose of this document is to lay out in more detail the framework to be followed by Malta for the Evaluation Plan of the EMFF Programme in Malta in accordance with the plan set out in Section 10 of the EMFF Operational Programme adopted in March 2015. This evaluation plan aims to fulfil the requirements set in Article 56 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 and those set in Article 5 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 771/2014 of 14 July 2014.

As described in Section 10 of the EMFF OP<sup>1</sup>, the overall aim of the Evaluation Plan is to “assess the effectiveness of the EMFF OP in line with the strengthened results-focus of the policy as per Article 56 (3) of the CPR.”

This Evaluation Plan shall serve to outline how the objectives identified in the said EMFF OP Section will be reached by the Managing Authority, which is responsible for the management of the OP and thus responsible for the functioning and governance of the monitoring and evaluation system and the quality, timeliness and communication of results. For the sake of clarity and ease of reference the main objectives in terms of targeted outcomes of the Evaluation Plan are also being listed hereunder:

- ❖ To provide evidence on the contribution of each Union Priority to its objectives and the assessment of the impact of the programme in relation to set targets
- ❖ To enable informed programme management and policy decision on the basis of evaluation findings
- ❖ To facilitate the synthesis of findings and the exchange of available evidence

The Evaluation Framework set out in this document aims to build on the work conducted in the ex-ante evaluation carried out for the EMFF OP which served to assess the adequacy of the programme strategy, the corresponding objectives, indicators, targets and the allocation of budgetary resources.

In this regard, the evaluation activities implemented will help to assess whether the 2014-2020 implementation of the overall strategy of the EMFF Operational Programme was effective in terms of results achieved in the over-arching context of the **Europe 2020 strategy** for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (and thus the objectives of the Common Strategic Framework, CSF), the policy intentions of the reformed **Common Fisheries Policy**, the **national development priorities** as defined

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<sup>1</sup>[http://eufunds.gov.mt/en/EU%20Funds%20Programmes/Agricultural%20Fisheries%20Fund/Documents/EMFF%202014-2020/Adopted%20OP%20\(EMFF\)\(f\).pdf](http://eufunds.gov.mt/en/EU%20Funds%20Programmes/Agricultural%20Fisheries%20Fund/Documents/EMFF%202014-2020/Adopted%20OP%20(EMFF)(f).pdf)

by the Maltese Government and finally **sectorial ambitions** as voiced by industry participants and other key stakeholders and the Barcelona Convention as implemented by the EMFF Programme in Malta between 2014-2020. More specifically, evaluation activities will appraise whether the objectives of the EMFF Operational Programme Strategy for Malta as identified under the four pillars for the EMFF funding (Section 3 of the EMFF OP refers) have been reached.

The development of the evaluation plan and the strategy set forth in the evaluation framework is based on lessons learnt in previous programming periods, on evaluations conducted for the EFF Operational Programme, more specifically the **EFF 2007-2013 Interim Evaluation Report** (June 2011) and the **Ex-ante evaluation and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund for the programming period 2014-2020** (Ex-ante Evaluation Report; December 2014). For instance, due significance shall be given to needs assessment and the changing context as experienced during the EFF programming period and as documented in the EFF Interim Evaluation Report since significant changes in the socio-economic context within which the OP is implemented may lead to the implementation of measures not having the desired effect if the state of affairs is not reviewed accordingly. The evaluation framework is thus aimed at assisting the review of progress and achievements of EMFF implemented measures in relation to the address of needs identified in the SWOT analysis conducted as part of the Ex-ante Evaluation for the Operational Programme (Section 2 of the EMFF OP refers). To this end, results of the evaluation activities conducted will need to be thoroughly examined by the Monitoring Committee in order to assess whether a revision of the EMFF Operational Programme for Malta and its accompanying measures is required.

## **CHAPTER TWO: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK**

As mentioned above and as outlined in the EMFF OP with reference to governance, coordination and evaluation function, the Funds and Programmes Division as the Managing Authority, within the Ministry for European Affairs and the Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto, shall lead the evaluation process and assume the responsibility for the coordination of the monitoring and evaluation process of the EMFF Operational Programme 2014-2020, including the drawing up of this Evaluation Plan.-

The MA shall be responsible for ensuring that sufficient resources are available for carrying out evaluations whilst also ensuring that procedures are in place to produce and collect the necessary data for evaluations, including data related to common and where appropriate programme specific indicators.

In line with Article 54 (3) of the Regulation (EU) 1303/2013, evaluations shall be carried out by internal or external experts that are functionally independent of the Managing Authority. Independent evaluators will thus undertake all evaluation activities identified in this Evaluation Plan and will provide support to the MA for the enhanced Annual Implementation Reports. The plan set out in this

document foresees the use of mixed evaluation expertise whereby evaluations can be conducted by external or internal independent evaluators depending on the evaluation task to be implemented and on estimated resources required. The activities undertaken for evaluation will be supported through Technical Assistance (TA) of the EMFF OP with a planned overall estimated budget of €100,000 which amounts to about 6% of the TA budgetary allocation.

The role and responsibilities of the Monitoring Committee in the Evaluation Framework as identified in Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 have been summarised hereunder:

- It shall review the implementation of the EMFF Programme, its progress towards its objectives, principally through the use of indicators;
- It shall consider and approve the Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) prior to their submission to the European Commission;
- It shall monitor all evaluation activities and results and may issue recommendations to the MA regarding programme implementation and evaluation. It shall also monitor actions taken as a result of its recommendations.

The Monitoring Committee shall serve to ensure the involvement and participation in evaluation of all relevant partners and stakeholders who can significantly influence or be significantly affected by implementation of the EMFF Programme. In this regard, representatives involved in the process relate not only to public authorities, economic and social partners and bodies representing civil society, but also environmental partners, community-based and voluntary organisations in addition to representatives from the fishers and aquaculture sector, fisheries control, inspection and enforcement, IMP and data collection.

As described above, the first phase of evaluation for the EMFF Operational Programme has already been implemented by the MA through the ***Ex-ante evaluation and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund for the programming period 2014-2020*** (Ex-ante Evaluation Report; December 2014) in preparation of the 2014-2020 EMFF programming period. This evaluation was carried out in line with the requirements set out in Article 55 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council with the overall aim of improving the quality of the design of the EMFF OP and verifying whether its objectives and targets can be reached. The report can be accessed here<sup>2</sup>.

EMFF Programme implementation shall set in motion the second phase of evaluation which will be based on data collected through monitoring activities implemented by the MA. Further detail on data sources, data collection, recording and monitoring is provided in the following section in this regard.

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<sup>2</sup>[http://eufunds.gov.mt/en/EU%20Funds%20Programmes/Agricultural%20Fisheries%20Fund/Documents/EMFF%202014-2020/Final%20Environmental%20Report\\_.pdf](http://eufunds.gov.mt/en/EU%20Funds%20Programmes/Agricultural%20Fisheries%20Fund/Documents/EMFF%202014-2020/Final%20Environmental%20Report_.pdf)

## ***Data and Information Strategy***

In order to obtain and collect the necessary data for evaluation, the MA shall ensure that the procedures for monitoring and the recording of data outlined in Section 11 of the EMFF OP are effectively followed and implemented by all stakeholders involved namely Beneficiaries, Line Ministries, the Managing Authority, Treasury, the Certifying Authority and the Audit Authority.

To this end, the web-enabled information management and monitoring system (EMFF Database) developed for the EMFF Programme in Malta, its regular update by respective stakeholders, and the monitoring and verification checks undertaken to validate the recorded project results by end beneficiaries are key to the reliability of recorded data on each operation. One should note that administrative and management verification checks conducted by the MA, CA and AA as outlined in the Manual of Procedures for the EMFF Operational Programme serve to ensure the reliability of recorded data. Further details on the functions of the EMFF Database and recorded data can be viewed in the said EMFF OP section.

Data on operations and progress on results and indicators of each project shall be collected and monitored mainly through the EMFF Database, the Project Progress Reports and the Bilateral Meetings as described in section 7 of the EMFF Programme 2014-2020 Manual of Procedures. However, additional surveys and / or research activities may be undertaken (by beneficiaries and / or the MA) in the case of certain result indicators.

Beneficiaries and project leaders will be responsible for collecting, and verifying the data with regard to data on operations and the indicators set out in the grant agreement. Monitoring of indicators is a condition of the grant and failure to attain the agreed targets could lead to recovery of funds on the project and loss of funds for Malta.

With reference to regular/day-to-day monitoring, the MA is in touch with project leaders almost on a daily basis, however most of the effective monitoring is done from information uploaded or inputted into the management information system (EMFF Database) by all stakeholders, including beneficiaries as well as horizontal stakeholders.

Data on each operation is collected, recorded and reported by beneficiaries through the following reporting requirements as also set out in grant agreements:

- Project Progress Reports prepared by beneficiaries once every six months and input (by beneficiary) to the Annual (and Final) Implementation Report prepared by the MA<sup>3</sup>;

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<sup>3</sup> Beneficiaries /project leaders may be requested to submit ad hoc progress reports for internal use of the MA or by any of the monitoring structures.

- Bilateral Briefs prepared by beneficiaries to serve as a basis for discussion at bilateral meetings;
- Regular updates through the EMFF Database;
- Project Closure Report which is prepared by beneficiaries at the end of the project and confirmed by the MA.

In case where additional/external information is required for evaluation purposes, additional data sources such as data provided by the National Statistics Office and Eurostat, Joint Research Centre and STECF Reports, and data provided by other stakeholders e.g. the Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change and the Malta Environmental and Planning Authority, may also be used by the MA for the implementation of monitoring and evaluation activities as mentioned in Section 10 of the EMFF OP.

### ***Evaluation Topics and Activities***

In line with the result-oriented approach introduced in the CPR and taking into consideration the SWOT analysis and the needs identified as part of the Ex-ante Evaluation for the EMFF OP Strategy, result and output indicators were subsequently identified for each of the proposed measures in Section 3 of the EMFF OP. Result indicators aim to capture the immediate and direct effects of the EMFF programme on the beneficiaries and target audience/s.

Monitoring and evaluation of result indicators can reflect whether the specific objectives under which the measures fall will be met. On the other hand output indicators relate to the direct deliverables of the programme and measure the outcomes of the actions, which will be supported by the EMFF OP. In this regards, monitoring and evaluation of these indicators and comparisons over time can set the basis for evaluation activities.

Monitoring and evaluation of the EMFF Operational Programme in terms of assessing the progress of operations shall also take into consideration financial progress, more specifically financial indicators, milestone set for 2018 and targets for 2023 as identified in Section 7 of the EMFF OP.

To this end, for evaluation purposes, it is important that in addition to data and information on the operations (provided through the monitoring systems described in the previous section), data and progress on the indicators, milestones and targets is also collected and monitored. As explained in the EMFF OP, this will be implemented through monitoring of the EMFF Database, project progress reports, updates during Bilateral Meetings and management verifications.

Details on Planned Evaluation Activities are outlined in Chapter Three of this document.

## **Overall Timeline**

As mentioned in Section 10 of the EMFF OP, evaluations shall be “available on time to inform the different reports on results that Malta will have to deliver from 2016 onwards”. In this regard, the section hereunder aims to identify the reporting obligations which need to be met for the EMFF OP 2014-2020 in line with the relevant regulations and present an overall timeline showing how the evaluations will feed not only in the various reports of the programme but also into the implementation of the EMFF OP.

## **Planned Evaluations & Timings**

The EMFF OP for Malta identifies two evaluations to be conducted by the Commission in accordance with Regulation (EU) 508/2014 and Regulation (EU) 1303/2013, an interim evaluation (due 31 March 2017) and an ex-post evaluation, with the latter being conducted in close cooperation with Member States in accordance to Article 57 of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013.

Appropriate timing of evaluations is critical for evaluations to be considered effective especially when it comes to impact evaluations. Due time should be given for expected results to appear and for such findings to feed into the policy process. In this regard, the evaluation activities proposed in this Evaluation Plan take into consideration the current state-of-play of the implementation of the EMFF OP in order to ensure the effectiveness of the evaluation activity/-ies conducted.

## **Current State-of-Play of the Implementation of the EMFF OP**

Subsequent to the Ex-ante Evaluation conducted in 2014 for the EMFF OP 2014-2020 and the adoption of said OP in March 2015, one should note that the EMFF OP was in its earliest implementation stages in 2015. Tasks carried out in 2015 by the MA, apart from the closure of the EFF programme, focused on other EMFF prerequisites necessary in preparation for the issuing of calls such as the development of the EMFF database, the establishment of an EMFF Monitoring Committee and the drafting of its Terms of Reference, the adoption by the MC of the EMFF OP 2014-2020 Admissibility and Selection Criteria, drafting of the EMFF OP Manual of Procedures and the related DMCS, National Eligibility Rules and other tasks carried out in relation to the Designation of the MA. In this regard, calls under the EMFF OP were not issued between 2014 and 2015 and are instead to be launched from 2016 onwards.

This Evaluation Plan also observes that the Interim Evaluation obligation as set out in Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 relates to a requirement for the Commission (CION) and not for Member States. Essentially the CION Interim Evaluation Plan is expected to be based on information and data submitted by MS in the Annual Implementation Report covering the period between 2014 and 2015 (submitted in May 2016). It is still to be determined/ communicated by EC, whether information/data

in relation to programme implementation results achieved in 2016 will be requested from MS and in case of provision of information such as evaluation reports whether these will be taken into consideration by EC. It is foreseen that this will depend on the timeframes of information provided by the MS, for which latest date for forwarding (if applicable) is still to be communicated.

As described above, the information to be presented in the first AIR on the implementation of the EMFF OP between 2014 and 2015, to be submitted by Malta in May 2016, will be very limited as no operations were launched during the said timeframe. Furthermore, whereas Calls under the EMFF OP are due to be launched from 2016 onwards, results of the calls are expected to appear as early as 2017 or 2018 and as late as 2023. Due to this and in order to ensure the effectiveness of the interim evaluation to be conducted and also to ensure good use of resources available, this evaluation plan recommends that the first evaluation of the implementation of the EMFF OP is postponed from March 2017 and is instead conducted in Q1 2019 (deadline for submission to the Monitoring Committee mid-April 2019 together with the submission of the AIR) to take into consideration results achieved in 2017 and 2018.

Details on the proposed interim Evaluation to be examined by the MC and reported in the AIR (submission due May 2019) are outlined in the following chapter of this document.

### **Annual Implementation Reports**

In line with Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, annual implementation reports shall provide key information on the implementation of the EMFF OP and its priorities by reference to the financial data, common and programme-specific indicators and quantified target values, including changes in the value of result indicators where appropriate, and, beginning from the annual implementation report to be submitted in 2017, the milestones defined in the performance framework.

The content of the AIR shall be based on the format and presentation guidelines given in Article 2 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1362/2014 of 18 December 2014<sup>4</sup> which provides a Model template in this regard. Part A of the AIR relates to information to be submitted by MS on a yearly basis from 2016 till 2024<sup>5</sup> whereas Part B and C relate to reporting requirements for AIRs due in 2017 and 2019 (next section refers).

One should note that data for the result, output and financial indicators including information on milestones and targets for the performance framework is reported in a cumulative manner showing results achieved year after year in Tables 1, 2, 3 of Section 3.2 (Part A) of the said AIR model.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32014R1362&from=EN>

<sup>5</sup> Final Implementation Report

With reference to the closure of the EMFF OP, in accordance with Article 141(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, the last annual implementation report for EMFF shall cover the final accounting year from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

Apart from reporting on the progress of EMFF OP implementation, the AIRs will also report on evaluation activities implemented in the said reporting year in accordance with Section 8 of the model AIR. This section will provide information on the following:

- A summary on activities undertaken in relation to the implementation of the evaluation plan, including follow-up given to the findings of evaluations.
- A synthesis of the findings of all evaluations of the programme that have become available during the previous financial year, with reference of name and reference period of the evaluation reports used.
- Links to the access to evaluations that were made publicly available pursuant to Article 54(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

Due to the cumulative nature of various sections of the AIR and required data/information on follow-up actions taken especially in relation to the findings of evaluation activities, it must be noted that in this regard, AIRs and evaluation activities conducted feed into each other and that data and information given in the AIRs shall be based not solely on data gathered during the programme implementation period of the said reporting year but also on data gathered or information on actions taken in previous calendar years (where applicable).

A critical aspect of the information provided in the AIRs, more specifically with reference to required follow-up in respect of findings of evaluation activities is their continued contribution to the implementation of the EMFF OP in terms of follow-up actions identified and agreed upon by the Monitoring Committee which may result in the revision of the OP, if the need arises.

### **Enhanced Annual Implementation Reports**

In accordance with Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 2 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1362/2014 of 18 December 2014, the reports submitted in 2017 and 2019 shall set out and assess the information provided in Part A of the Model for the Annual Implementation Report and the progress made towards achieving the objectives of the programme, including the contribution of the EMFF Programme to changes in the value of result indicators, when evidence is available from relevant evaluations.

Furthermore, the annual implementation report submitted in 2017 shall set out the actions taken to fulfil the ex-ante conditionalities not fulfilled at the time of adoption of the programme. It shall also

assess the implementation of actions to take into account the principles set out in Articles 7 and 8 of the CPR, the role of the partners referred to in Article 5 in the implementation of the programme and report on support used for climate change objectives.

In line with Article 50(5) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 2 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1362/2014 of 18 December 2014, in addition to Part A & B of the Model for the Annual Implementation Report as described above, the AIR submitted in 2019 shall include information on, and assess progress towards, achieving the objectives of the programme and its contribution to achieving the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (Part C of the Model for the Annual Implementation Report). In terms of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the programme, the information provided in this report will set the basis for the **Performance Review** to be undertaken by the Commission in line with Article 21(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

### **Interim Evaluation of the EMFF Programme**

With reference to mid-term review of the EMFF Programme, Article 125 of Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014, states that by 31 March 2017 the Commission shall submit to the European Parliament and the Council, an interim evaluation report on the results obtained and the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the implementation of the financed operations.

As highlighted above and earlier on, whereas the obligation set out in the said regulation falls under the responsibility of the CION, in Section 11 of the EMFF OP, Malta also planned to conduct an interim evaluation by 31 March 2017. Notwithstanding this taking into consideration the current state-of-play of the EMFF programme implementation in Malta, this evaluation plan highly recommends that in order to effectively address the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the programme, the interim evaluation is postponed and is thus conducted in the first quarter of 2019.

### **Progress Reports on the Implementation of the Partnership Agreement**

By 31 August 2017 and by 31 August 2019, Article 52 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 also requires Member States to submit to the Commission a progress report on the implementation of the Partnership Agreement as at 31 December 2016 and 31 December 2018 respectively.

The progress report referred to in Article 52(1) of the said Regulation shall be drawn up in accordance with the model set out in Annex I to COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EU) 2015/207 of 20 January 2015<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32015R0207&from=EN>

Information to be provided in the said progress report is listed hereunder for ease of reference:

- a) changes in the development needs in Malta since the adoption of the Partnership Agreement;
- b) progress made towards achievement of the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, as well as of the Fund-specific missions referred to in Article 4(1) of the CPR, through the contribution of the ESI Funds to the thematic objectives selected, and in particular with regard to the milestones set out in the performance framework for the EMFF Programme, and to the support used for climate change objectives;
- c) whether the actions taken to fulfil the applicable ex ante conditionalities set out in the Partnership Agreement not fulfilled at the date of adoption of the Partnership Agreement have been implemented in accordance with the timetable established (applicable only to the progress report to be submitted in 2017);
- d) implementation of mechanisms to ensure coordination between the ESI Funds and other Union and national funding instruments and with the EIB;
- e) implementation of the integrated approach to territorial development, or a summary of the implementation of the integrated approaches that are based on the programmes, including progress towards achievement of priority areas established for cooperation;
- f) where appropriate, actions taken to reinforce the capacity of the Member State authorities and beneficiaries to administer and use the ESI Funds;
- g) actions taken, and progress made, with regard to reducing the administrative burden on beneficiaries;
- h) the role of the partners referred to in Article 5 of the CPR in the implementation of the Partnership Agreement;
- i) a summary of the actions taken in relation to the application of the horizontal principles referred to in Articles 5, 7 and 8 of the CPR and policy objectives for the implementation of the ESI Funds.

### **Performance Review**

In line with Article 21 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, in 2019 the Commission shall undertake a performance review based on a performance framework and in cooperation with the Member States. The performance review will examine the achievement of the milestones of the EMFF OP at the level of priorities, on the basis of the information and the assessments presented in the enhanced AIR submitted by Malta in 2019.

In order to properly assess and report on the performance of the implementation of the EMFF Operational Programme in the AIR to be submitted in 2019 and thus also ensuring reliable and sufficient information at EC's disposal for the said performance review, this evaluation plan recommends that the Interim Evaluation Report also takes the performance framework into consideration.

## **Ex-post Evaluation of the EMFF Operational Programme (2014-2020)**

In accordance with Article 117 of Regulation (EU) No. 508/2014, an ex post evaluation report shall be prepared by the Commission in close cooperation with Member States and in line with Article 57 of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013, shall be completed by 31 December 2024. In this regard, Malta will ensure that all the necessary data and information is provided to the Commission for the said evaluation.

Considering that an extensive interim evaluation for the EMFF OP in Malta will be conducted in relation with the performance framework for results achieved by end 2018 and taking into account the principle of proportionality together with the fact that throughout 2020 and 2022 an ex-ante evaluation for the future programming period will be undertaken, and the fact that an ex-post evaluation will be conducted by the CION in close collaboration with Malta (Article 57 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013) as mentioned above, this Evaluation Plan does not foresee the need for an additional ex-post evaluation to be conducted by Malta. In addition, one must note that an assessment of implemented measures and indicators achieved by end 2023 will still be presented in the Final Implementation Report to be submitted in 2024.

However, should programme implementation of the EMFF OP show the need for an ex-post evaluation to be conducted by Malta, an indicative plan for the ex-post evaluation is still being presented in this chapter.

In this regard, should an ex-post evaluation be undertaken by Malta, its aim should be of providing evidence to allow for overall conclusions on the contribution of each Union Priority to its objectives and the assessment of the impact of the EMFF programme in relation to set targets. The evaluation shall ensure that sufficient information is at hand which may be provided to the CION as required under Article 57 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

Due to the fact that the deadline for completion of the ex-post evaluation for the CION is set for 31 December 2024 as per Article 57(2) of the said regulation, and also taking into consideration the fact that the CION may require feedback from Member States in early 2024, indicatively, this evaluation plan recommends that if conducted, the ex-post evaluation of the EMFF OP in Malta should be completed in the first quarter of 2024.

## **Indicative timeline: Reporting Requirements & Planned Evaluation Activities by Malta**

### **1. Ex-ante Evaluation for the EMFF Operational Programme**

- Completed by December 2014
- Taken into consideration for the development of the EMFF 2014-2020 Operational Programme subsequently adopted in March 2015

### **2. The First Annual Implementation Report (Covering 2014 & 2015)**

- Deadline for submission to EC: 31 May 2016
- Indicative timeframe for work on collation: December 2015 till end March 2016
- Indicative timeframe for submission of AIR to the Monitoring Committee (including subsequent revision of AIR and resubmission for MC approval, if necessary): April till mid May 2016

Note: As per previous explanation provided, the information to be presented in the first AIR shall be limited due to the early stages of programme implementation during 2014 and 2015.

### **3. Second Annual Implementation Report (Covering 2016)**

- Deadline for submission to EC: 31 May 2017
- Indicative timeframe for work on collation: December 2016 till end March 2017
- Indicative timeframe for submission of AIR to the Monitoring Committee (including subsequent revision of AIR and resubmission for MC approval, if necessary): April till mid May 2017

### **4. Progress Report on the Implementation of the Partnership Agreement (as at end 2016)**

- Deadline for submission to EC: 31 August 2017
- Indicative timeframe for work on collation: December 2016 till end July 2017

### **5. Third Annual Implementation Report (Covering 2017)**

- Deadline for submission to EC: 31 May 2018
- Indicative timeframe for work on collation: December 2017 till end March 2018
- Indicative timeframe for submission of AIR to the Monitoring Committee (including subsequent revision of AIR and resubmission for MC approval, if necessary): April till mid May 2018

### **6. Interim Evaluation of the EMFF Operational Programme Implementation in Malta (Covering 2014-2018)**

- Deadline for submission to EC: 31 May 2019 (together with the 4th AIR)

- Indicative timeframe for works on collation and completed evaluation: December 2018 till mid March 2019
- Indicative timeframe for submission of Interim Evaluation Report to the Monitoring Committee for examination and feedback (including submission of 4th AIR: point 6 below refers, subsequent revision of AIR and resubmission for MC approval, if necessary): April till mid May 2019

#### **7. Fourth Annual Implementation Report (Covering 2018)**

- Deadline for submission to EC: 31 May 2019
- Indicative timeframe for work on collation: December 2018 till end March 2019
- Indicative timeframe for submission of AIR to the Monitoring Committee (including subsequent revision of AIR and resubmission for MC approval, if necessary): April till mid May 2019
- Information provided in this report will set the basis for the **Performance Review** to be undertaken by the Commission in line with Article 21(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

#### **8. Progress Report on the Implementation of the Partnership Agreement (as at end 2018)**

- Deadline for submission to EC: 31 August 2019
- Indicative timeframe for work on collation: December 2018 till end July 2019

#### **9. Fifth Annual Implementation Report (Covering 2019)**

- Deadline for submission to EC: 31 May 2020
- Indicative timeframe for work on collation: December 2019 till end March 2020
- Indicative timeframe for submission of AIR to the Monitoring Committee (including subsequent revision of AIR and resubmission for MC approval, if necessary): April till mid May 2020

#### **10. Sixth Annual Implementation Report (Covering 2020)**

- Deadline for submission to EC: 31 May 2021
- Indicative timeframe for work on collation: December 2020 till end March 2021
- Indicative timeframe for submission of AIR to the Monitoring Committee (including subsequent revision of AIR and resubmission for MC approval, if necessary): April till mid May 2021

#### **11. Seventh Annual Implementation Report (Covering 2021):**

- Deadline for submission to EC: 31 May 2022
- Indicative timeframe for work on collation: December 2021 till end March 2022

- Indicative timeframe for submission of AIR to the Monitoring Committee (including subsequent revision of AIR and resubmission for MC approval, if necessary): April till mid May 2022

## **12. Eight Annual Implementation Report (Covering 2022)**

- Deadline for submission to EC: 31 May 2023
- Indicative timeframe for work on collation: December 2022 till end March 2023
- Indicative timeframe for submission of AIR to the Monitoring Committee (including subsequent revision of AIR and resubmission for MC approval, if necessary): April till mid May 2017

## **13. EMFF Operational Programme Implementation: Ex-Post Evaluation by Malta (2014-2020)**

Note: Only if undertaken by Malta as described in the previous section describing Ex-post Evaluation.

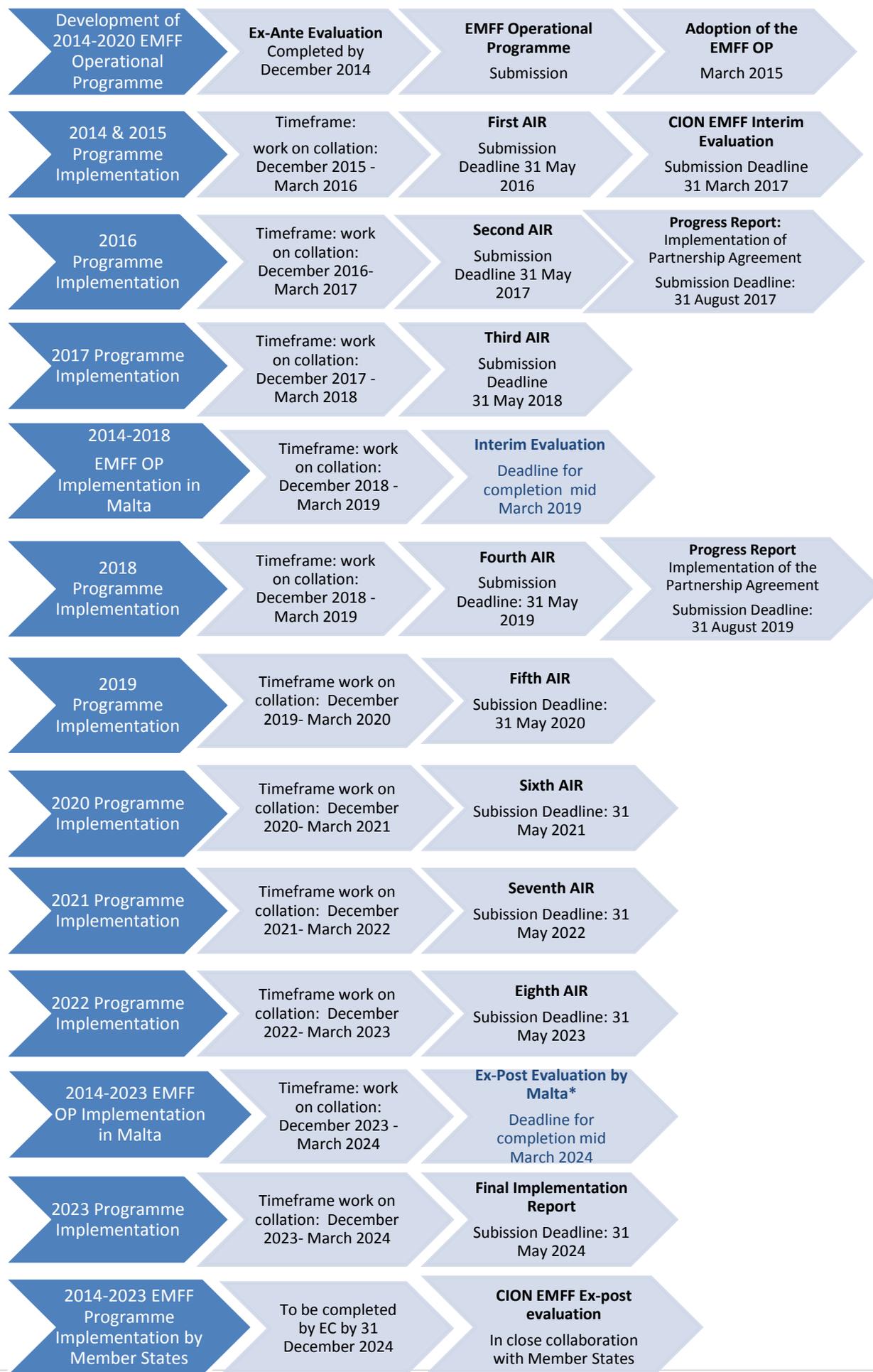
- a. Deadline for submission to EC: 31 May 2024 (together with the Final Implementation Report)
- b. Indicative timeframe for works on collation and completed evaluation: December 2023 till mid March 2024
- c. Indicative timeframe for submission of Ex-Post Evaluation Report to the Monitoring Committee for examination and feedback (including submission of Final Implementation Report [FIR]: point 13 below refers, subsequent revision of FIR and resubmission for MC approval, if necessary): April till mid May 2024

## **14. Final Annual Implementation Report (Covering 2023)**

- Deadline for submission to EC: 31 May 2024
- Indicative timeframe for work on collation: December 2023 till end March 2024
- Indicative timeframe for submission of FIR to the Monitoring Committee (including subsequent revision of AIR and resubmission for MC approval, if necessary): April till mid May 2024

Figure 1 below summarises the process and timeline to be followed by Malta for the preparation of the reporting obligations falling under Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 taking also into consideration the Planned Evaluation Activities outlined in this document. In addition one should note that the figure also illustrates how the respective activities implemented by Malta feed into each other and also contribute to reporting activities and evaluations conducted by the CION.

\*Ex-post evaluation by Malta: Please refer to note above



## CHAPTER THREE: PLANNED EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

As described in the previous chapter, the evaluation activities to be implemented for the EMFF Operational Programme shall provide the following outputs:

1. Ex-ante Evaluation *and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund for the programming period 2014-2020* (Ex-ante Evaluation Report; December 2014) which served to assess the adequacy of the programme strategy, the corresponding objectives, indicators, targets and the allocation of budgetary resources
2. Interim Evaluation of the EMFF Operational Programme Implementation (Covering 2014-2018) which shall be submitted to EC by 31 May 2019 (together with the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Implementation Report)
3. As also mentioned in Chapter 2 of this document, Malta also commits to collaborating with the CION in its Ex-Post Evaluation of the EMFF Programme and throughout the implementation of the OP shall assess whether the need arises for an ex-post evaluation to be undertaken directly by Malta on its Operational Programme Implementation (Covering 2014-2023) which shall be submitted to EC by 31 May 2024 (together with the Final Implementation Report)

The aim of this chapter is to provide details, as specified in Section 10 of the EMFF OP, on the evaluation activities still to be implemented, namely the Interim and Ex-Post Evaluation.

### ***Interim Evaluation of the EMFF Operational Programme Implementation***

#### **Subject and rationale**

The main objective of the Interim Evaluation shall be to assess the performance and the first impact of EMFF measures implemented under the EMFF OP in the Malta by end 2018. The interim evaluation may be based on the existing guidelines developed by the European Commission, if available, details presented in this evaluation plan and terms of references issued (where applicable).

The Interim Evaluation shall cover the EMFF programme implementation in Malta between 2014 and 2018 and as per recommendations made in the previous chapter of this document shall also take the performance framework into consideration in order to set the basis for the proper assessment and reporting on the performance of the implementation of the EMFF Operational Programme in the AIR to be submitted to EC by 31 May 2019.

In view of the above, the objectives of the Interim Evaluation shall therefore be:

- to provide the MA and the Monitoring Committee with an evaluation of the implementation of the EMFF as at end 2018 taking into consideration the performance framework;
- to assess the uptake and impact of EMFF measures implemented in Malta in relation to the evolving national socio-economic context and needs in comparison to those identified in the EMFF OP
- to evaluate the level of achievement, by each Union Priority (and measure when possible), of the specific objectives defined in the Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
- to evaluate results and identify actions that may be taken by Malta to address findings especially in terms of the relevance of the EMFF OP strategy and the identified EMFF OP targets to be achieved by 2023
- to propose follow-up evaluation activities that may be undertaken in light of resulting findings especially in view of future ex-ante evaluation activities to be undertaken in preparation for the future financial instrument for fisheries;

One should note that the proposed evaluation above takes into account both implementation and impact evaluation of the EMFF Programme in Malta. The approach to be followed is based on that followed for the EFF Interim Evaluation whose methodology was guided by the European Commission's methodological framework document issued on the 18<sup>th</sup> August 2010. This approach was considered relevant since it is based on similar objectives as those described above.

Unless otherwise indicated in guidance notes or terms of reference, the Interim Evaluation shall take into consideration the evaluation topics and guiding evaluation questions listed hereunder. The evaluation aims to address two main evaluation criteria (quality of implementation and effectiveness of the measures applied under all Union Priorities) and shall be based on the following structure:

- 1. The context and objectives of the evaluation**
- 2. Methodology**
- 3. Limitations of the Evaluation**
- 4. The relevance of the Operational Programme's Objectives**
  - **EQ1:** Have there been changes in the regulatory, socio-economic and political context during the implementation of the programme? Have new needs emerged? Have these changes impacted the implementation of the EMFF OP?
  - **EQ2:** Were amendments made to the Operational Programme in light of the evolving context? Did these amendments address the issues encountered? If not, why?

- **EQ3:** Considering the evolving context, to what extent does the latest Operational Programme address the current needs?
- **Conclusions and recommendations** on the relevance of the Operational Programme's Objectives in light of the Evolving National Context
- **Lessons learnt and Best Practices**

## 5. Effectiveness of the EMFF Programme Implementation and Management

- **EQ4:** How effectively is the principle of partnership applied in the EMFF Programme Implementation? Are stakeholders effectively involved in the EMFF implementation? Is EMFF implementation well coordinated? Are stakeholders, such as (in particular) women's organisations/organisations promoting equal opportunity and environmental stakeholders/NGOs involved in the EMFF implementation?
- **EQ5:** To what extent do the management processes in place, from project application to payments, enable the effective implementation of projects that best achieve the programme's objectives?
- **EQ6:** How effective is the programme monitoring system?
- **Conclusions and recommendations** on the effectiveness of the implementation
- **Lessons learnt and Best Practices**

## 6. Effectiveness, progress and impact (where applicable) of applied EMFF measures till end 2018

- **EQ7:** What is the EMFF Programme's state of play at the end of 2018?
- **EQ8:** What output and financial indicators were achieved under UP1 taking into consideration performance framework targets (milestones for 2018) as set out in the EMFF OP?
- **EQ9:** In case of milestones or financial indicators<sup>7</sup> not achieved by end 2018, what are the reasons for not reaching the targets and what is the current state of play of these measures?
- **EQ10:** *Note: Applicable only in case of completed EMFF operations by end 2018 (taking into consideration the milestones meant to be achieved by end 2018 in accordance with Section 7 of the EMFF OP.* What is the impact of **completed** UP1 measures in terms of

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<sup>7</sup> financial indicator relates to the total amount of eligible expenditure entered into the accounting system of the certifying authority and certified by the authority in line with Article 126 of the CPR (Regulation EU 1303/2013)

result indicators achieved? Were result indicators as identified in Section 3.2 of the EMFF OP achieved<sup>8</sup>? If not, why and what action is being taken in this regard?

- **EQ11:** What output and financial indicators were achieved under UP2 taking into consideration performance framework targets (milestones for 2018) as set out in the EMFF OP?
- **EQ12:** In case of milestones or financial indicators not achieved by end 2018, what are the reasons for not reaching the targets and what is the current state of play of these measures?
- **EQ13:** *Note: Applicable only in case of completed EMFF operations by end 2018 (taking into consideration the milestones meant to be achieved by end 2018 in accordance with Section 7 of the EMFF OP.* What is the impact of **completed** UP2 measures in terms of result indicators achieved? Were result indicators as identified in Section 3.2 of the EMFF OP achieved? If not, why and what action is being taken in this regard?
- **EQ14:** What output and financial indicators were achieved under UP3 taking into consideration performance framework targets (milestones for 2018) as set out in the EMFF OP?
- **EQ15:** In case of milestones or financial indicators not achieved by end 2018, what are the reasons for not reaching the targets and what is the current state of play of these measures?
- **EQ16:** *Note: Applicable only in case of completed EMFF operations by end 2018 (taking into consideration the milestones meant to be achieved by end 2018 in accordance with Section 7 of the EMFF OP.* What is the impact of **completed** UP3 measures in terms of result indicators achieved? Were result indicators as identified in Section 3.2 of the EMFF OP achieved? If not, why and what action is being taken in this regard?
- **EQ17:** What output and financial indicators were achieved under UP5 taking into consideration performance framework targets (milestones for 2018) as set out in the EMFF OP?
- **EQ18:** In case of milestones or financial indicators not achieved by end 2018, what are the reasons for not reaching the targets and what is the current state of play of these measures?
- **EQ19:** *Note: Applicable only in case of completed EMFF operations by end 2018 (taking into consideration the milestones meant to be achieved by end 2018 in accordance with Section 7 of the EMFF OP.* What is the impact of **completed** UP5 measures in terms of result indicators achieved? Were result indicators as identified in Section 3.2 of the EMFF OP achieved? If not, why and what action is being taken in this regard?

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<sup>8</sup> Section 3 of the EMFF OP defines result indicators values as being targeted for 2023 and not 2018. This is due to the fact that some operations may not be fully implemented by 2018 and that even if implemented actual results might not appear till 2023. In this regard, this should be given due consideration in the analysis of result indicators.

- **EQ20:** What output and financial indicators were achieved under UP6 taking into consideration performance framework targets (milestones for 2018) as set out in the EMFF OP?
- **EQ21:** In case of milestones or financial indicators not achieved by end 2018, what are the reasons for not reaching the targets and what is the current state of play of these measures?
- **EQ22:** *Note: Applicable only in case of completed EMFF operations by end 2018 (taking into consideration the milestones meant to be achieved by end 2018 in accordance with Section 7 of the EMFF OP.* What is the impact of **completed** UP6 measures in terms of result indicators achieved? Were result indicators as identified in Section 3.2 of the EMFF OP achieved? If not, why and what action is being taken in this regard?
- **EQ23:** What outputs and results were achieved under UP7 by end 2018?
- **Conclusions and recommendations** on the effectiveness and progress to date
- **Lessons learnt and Best Practices**

#### **7. EMFF OP 2023 Targets: Way forward**

- **EQ 24:** Considering the results achieved as at end 2018, the current context and the EMFF OP 2023 Targets, can these targets be achieved?
- **EQ25:** How will or how can 2023 targets be achieved?
- In case of issues identified as affecting the performance of the programme (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013:
  - EQ26:** What actions are being or can be implemented, by which stakeholder(s) and by when to increase the success rate of the measures (to be) applied and the effectiveness of the Operational Programme?

#### **8. Conclusions and recommendations on Follow-up Actions that can be taken in relation to the:**

- a. Relevance of the latest EMFF Operational Programme and its strategy
- b. EMFF Programme Management and Implementation
- c. Assessment of the likelihood that the targets set for 2023 are met
- d. Identification of recommended future evaluation activities
- e. Future Funding Programme

The evaluation topics and questions listed above are not exhaustive and may be amended/further defined if deemed necessary.

One must note that although the performance framework in accordance with Section 7 of the EMFF OP does not include an assessment of the progress of result indicators, for the purpose of this evaluation in case where outputs are meant to be achieved (fully implemented by end 2018 not partial implementation), the progress of these result indicators can be evaluated. The benefits of evaluating

result indicators (where applicable) is that these go beyond output indicators as they aim to capture a change in the situation, in most cases related to supported entities or participants, e.g. in their employment situation. For instance, under Union Priority 1 Specific Objective 5- Provision of support to strengthen technological development and innovation, including increasing energy efficiency, and knowledge transfer, 4 projects on replacement or modernisation of engines are expected to be fully implemented as milestone values for end 2018. Their expected result indicator should result in a change in net profits (target value of €2,000 by 2023).

Guidance notes/fiches such as that on the Performance Framework Review and Reserve in 2014-2020<sup>9</sup> (May 2014) can be consulted for guidance.

### **Methods to be used and their data requirements**

The main methods to be used for data collection for this evaluation activity shall depend on the evaluation topic and questions at hand. Different methods may be applied including:

- documentation review and data analysis (especially with reference to data recorded in the EMFF database including operation data and indicators, annual implementation reports, review of the Operational Programme and its amendments, review of other relevant documents such as admissibility and selection criteria, Ex-ante Evaluation and Strategic Environmental Assessment, other relevant (evaluation/research) studies or plans, relevant EU and National Regulations);
- interviews and/or surveys may be used with major stakeholders

As mentioned earlier on, the EMFF database records data on operations in accordance with the data requirements identified in Annexes I and II of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1243/2014 and other relevant regulations as applicable.

### **Availability of Data: Timeframes & commitments for data sets required**

In terms of quantitative data to be collected and evaluated for the Interim Evaluation, one should note that this shall mostly be based on the following data sets:

- Financial Indicators (milestone values for 2018)
- Output Indicators (milestone values for 2018)

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<sup>9</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/pdf/guidance\\_performance\\_framework.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/pdf/guidance_performance_framework.pdf)

- Result indicators (where applicable in case of achieved output indicators by 2018)

With reference to the data sets required above, all relevant stakeholders must ensure that the data recorded on the EMFF database is up-to-date and reliable in this regard. The availability of data is an obligation on Malta imposed by Article 54(2) Regulation (EU) 1303/2013.

Guidance fiche **Performance Framework Review and Reserve in 2014-2020**<sup>10</sup> (May 2014) defines milestone and target values for output indicators as **fully implemented operations**<sup>11</sup>.

In addition as per guidance fiche mentioned above and as also identified in the EMFF OP, due to the fact that reporting on the achievement of financial indicators is to be based on the **total amount of eligible expenditure entered into the accounting system of the certifying authority and certified by the authority in line with Article 126 of the CPR (Regulation EU 1303/2013)** by end 2018, this means that the necessary MA and CA checks need also to be completed by the time which may thus impinge on the timeframes given to beneficiaries to complete operations/activities and process payments.

In this regard, the MA and the relevant stakeholders need to ensure that data pertaining to the data sets identified above are appropriately recorded in line with the respective state-of-play of the operation in the EMFF database by end 2018. This data can be made available for evaluation purposes in January 2019.

The following table illustrates the EMFF OP's commitment with reference to milestone values to be achieved for the performance framework as identified in Section 7 of the EMFF OP. For ease of reference a description of the Specific Objective, under which the Measures to be applied fall, has also been included.

Union Priority	1. Promoting environmentally sustainable, resource efficient, innovative, competitive and knowledge based fisheries		
Specific Objective	Indicator and measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Targets for 2023
Description	Financial indicator	€ 2,000,000.00	€ 11,630,572.00
4 - Enhancement of the competitiveness and viability of fisheries enterprises, including of small scale coastal fleet, and the improvement of safety or working conditions	1.3 - No. of projects on added value, quality, use of unwanted catches and fishing ports, landing sites, auction halls and shelters.	1.00	4.00
1 - Reduction of the impact of fisheries on the marine environment, including	1.4 – No. of projects on conservation measures,	1.00	1.00

<sup>10</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/pdf/guidance\\_performance\\_framework.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/pdf/guidance_performance_framework.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> A fully implemented operation is an operation, in which actions leading to outputs and results have been implemented in full, but for which not necessarily all the related payments have been made

the avoidance and reduction, as far as possible, of unwanted catches	reduction of the fishing impact on the marine environment and fishing adaptation to the protection of species		
5 - Provision of support to strengthen technological development and innovation, including increasing energy efficiency, and knowledge transfer	1.8 – No. of projects on replacement or modernisation of engines	4.00	4.00
4 - Enhancement of the competitiveness and viability of fisheries enterprises, including of small scale coastal fleet, and the improvement of safety or working conditions	1.9 – No. of projects on promotion of human capital and social dialogue, diversification and new forms of income, start-ups for fishermen and health/safety.	6.00	6.00

Union Priority	2. Fostering environmentally sustainable, resource efficient, innovative, competitive and knowledge based aquaculture		
Specific Objective	Indicator and measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Targets for 2023
<b>Description</b>	<b>Financial indicator</b>	<b>€ 500,000.00</b>	<b>€ 3,306,822.00</b>
3 - Protection and restoration of aquatic biodiversity and enhancement of ecosystems related to aquaculture and promotion of resource efficient aquaculture	2.2 - No. of projects on productive investments in aquaculture	2.00	2.00

Union Priority	3. Fostering the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy		
Specific Objective	Indicator and measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Targets for 2023
<b>Description</b>	<b>Financial indicator</b>	<b>€ 3,000,000.00</b>	<b>€ 10,157,913.00</b>
2 - Provision of support to monitoring, control and enforcement, enhancing institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration, without increasing the administrative burden	3.1 - No. of projects on implementing the Union's control, inspection and enforcement system	3.00	11.00
1 - Improvement and supply of scientific knowledge and collection and management of data	3.2 - No. of projects on supporting the collection, management and use of data	1.00	2.00

Union Priority	5. Fostering marketing and processing		
Specific Objective	Indicator and measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Targets for 2023
<b>Description</b>	<b>Financial indicator</b>	<b>€ 150,000.00</b>	<b>€ 469,771.00</b>
1 - Improvement of market organisation for fishery and aquaculture products	5.2 - No. of projects on marketing measures and storage aid	1.00	1.00

Union Priority	6. Fostering the implementation of the Integrated Maritime Policy		
Specific Objective	Indicator and measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Targets for 2023
Description	Financial indicator	€ 500,000.00	€ 1,600,000.00
1 - Development and implementation of the Integrated Maritime Policy	6.2 - No. of projects on the protection and improvement of knowledge on marine environment	1.00	1.00

One should note that in accordance with the EMFF OP Section 3.3 under UP 1 Specific Objective 4, Article 33- Temporary cessation of fishing activities is also meant to be implemented with an output value for 2023 of 10 vessels. This however does not form part of the performance framework (Section 7 of the EMFF OP) and thus is not included in the table above.

Qualitative data may be gathered through review/data analysis of annual implementation reports, project descriptions and project progress reports (also recorded on the EMFF database). Project progress reports are due by beneficiaries once every six months in accordance with the conditions set out in their grant agreement and with the procedure described in Section 7.2.1 of the Manual of Procedures for the EMFF OP (2014-2020). In comparison to quantitative data sets, if already available these can be made available by the MA for data collection/evaluation purposes immediately upon signature of contract for service or the latest by January 2019.

Additional qualitative data can be gathered on programme implementation through the use of interviews or surveys. It is recommended that these are undertaken towards the end of January and that interview/survey questions are forwarded to the respective stakeholders at least three weeks in advance for planning and preparation purposes.

### **Duration and tentative dates for the Interim Evaluation**

As described in Chapter 2 of this document, the indicative timeframe for work on collation and completion of the interim evaluation report shall be between December 2018 and mid March 2019 respectively. It is envisaged that the indicative timeframe for the submission of Interim Evaluation Report to the Monitoring Committee for examination and feedback (including the submission of 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Implementation Report) shall be completed between April and mid-May 2019 with a submission deadline (applicable for the EMFF AIR) to EC by 31 May 2019.

## **Estimated budget for the Interim Evaluation of the EMFF OP**

The planned budget takes into consideration the cost of all the required resources employed for the completion of tasks to be undertaken for the Interim Evaluation of the EMFF OP. In this regard, the cost for the contracted services of external evaluators is estimated at €22,500 (excluding VAT). The expected output of the contracted services, namely the Interim Evaluation Report of the EMFF OP, shall be based on the guidelines and requirements set out in this document and the specifications identified in the terms of reference of the contract.

## ***Ex-post Evaluation of the EMFF Operational Programme Implementation***

### **Subject and rationale**

*Note: This evaluation activity outlined hereunder shall only be undertaken directly by Malta if throughout programme implementation, this is deemed necessary. The explanation given in Chapter 3 of this document in this regard refers. In case of the ex-post evaluation to be undertaken by the CION in collaboration by Member States such as Malta, the MA will ensure that all required data and information is provided accordingly.*

The main objective of the Ex-post Evaluation shall be to provide evidence for overall conclusions on the contribution of the EMFF Programme Union Priorities to its specific objectives. It also aims at allowing the EMFF Managing Authority to assess the impact of the EMFF programme in relation to set targets. The ex-post evaluation may be based on existing guidelines developed by the European Commission, if available, details presented in this evaluation plan and terms of references issued (where applicable).

The Ex-post Evaluation shall cover the EMFF programme implementation in Malta between 2014 and 2023 and may serve to set the basis for the proper assessment and reporting to be submitted in the Final Implementation Report to EC by 31 May 2024.

The objectives of the Ex-post Evaluation shall namely be:

- to assess the effectiveness of the EMFF OP in line with the strengthened results-focus of the policy as per Article 56(3) of the Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013
- to assess whether the needs identified for each UP on the basis of the SWOT analysis presented in Section 2 of the EMFF OP were addressed through the implementation of the EMFF measures and result indicators
- to highlight changes in the national socio-economic context, evolving needs and actions taken to address these needs

- to evaluate the level of achievement, by each Union Priority (and measure when possible), of the specific objectives defined in the Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
- to evaluate results and identify actions that may be taken by Malta to address findings especially in relation to the future programming period
- to propose follow-up evaluation activities that may be undertaken in light of resulting findings especially in view of future ex-ante evaluation activities to be undertaken in preparation for the future financial instrument for fisheries;

One should note that the proposed evaluation above takes into account both implementation and impact evaluation of the EMFF Programme in Malta. The approach to be followed is based on that followed for the EMFF Interim Evaluation described previously.

Unless otherwise indicated in guidance notes or terms of reference, the Ex-post Evaluation shall take into consideration the evaluation topics and guiding evaluation questions listed hereunder. The evaluation aims to address two main evaluation criteria (quality of implementation and effectiveness of the measures applied under all Union Priorities) and shall be based on the following structure:

**1. The context and objectives of the evaluation**

**2. Methodology**

**3. Limitations of the Evaluation**

**4. The relevance of the Operational Programme's Objectives**

- **EQ1:** Following the Interim Evaluation conducted for the EMFF OP, have there been changes in the regulatory, socio-economic and political context during the implementation of the programme? Have new needs emerged? Have these changes impacted the implementation of the EMFF OP?
- **EQ2:** Were amendments made to the Operational Programme in light of the evolving context and in light of recommendations made following the Interim Evaluation? Did these amendments address the issues encountered? If not, why?
- **Conclusions and recommendations** on the relevance of the Operational Programme's Objectives in light of the Evolving National Context
- **Lessons learnt and Best Practices**

**5. Effectiveness of the EMFF Programme Implementation and Management**

- **EQ3:** How effective were the programme's monitoring and control systems? To what extent did the management processes, from project application to payments, enable the

effective implementation of projects that best achieve the programme's objectives? Were any changes implemented in the monitoring and control system throughout the programming period and especially following the Interim Evaluation of the EMFF OP? If yes, describe and give reasons

- **EQ4:** How effectively were the principles set out in Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 on partnership and multi-level governance with particular emphasis on the role of partners in the implementation of the programme applied in the EMFF Programme Implementation? Were stakeholders effectively involved in the EMFF implementation and how? Was the EMFF implementation well coordinated?
- **EQ5:** How effectively were the principles set out in Article 7 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 on promotion of equality between men and women and non-discrimination, including accessibility for disabled persons as well as arrangements implemented to ensure the integration of the gender perspective in the OP? Were stakeholders, such as (in particular) women's organisations/organisations promoting equal opportunity and environmental stakeholders/NGOs involved in the EMFF implementation?
- **EQ6:** To what extent did the implemented actions take into account the principles set out in Article 8 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 on sustainable development, including an overview of the actions taken to promote sustainable development?
- **EQ7:** To what extent did the implemented EMFF measures provide support to climate change objectives in view of Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013? Were the EMFF measures contributing to the climate change objectives as identified in Section 9.2 of the EMFF OP fully implemented and achieved in terms of financial, output and result indicators?
- **EQ8:** To what extent did the implemented operations contribute to the achievement of the Objectives of the Union Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth (Article 50(5) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013?
- **Conclusions and recommendations** on the effectiveness of the implementation
- **Lessons learnt and Best Practices**

## 6. Effectiveness, progress and impact (where applicable) of applied EMFF measures till end 2018

- **EQ9:** What output and financial indicators were achieved under UP1 taking into consideration the targets (milestones for 2023) set out in the EMFF OP?
- **EQ10:** What is the impact of **completed** UP1 measures in terms of result indicators achieved? Were result indicators as identified in Section 3.2 of the EMFF OP achieved?
- **EQ11:** In case of indicators (output, financial and results) not achieved by end 2023, what are the reasons for not reaching the targets?

- **EQ12:** What output and financial indicators were achieved under UP2 taking into consideration the targets (milestones for 2023) set out in the EMFF OP?
- **EQ13:** What is the impact of **completed** UP2 measures in terms of result indicators achieved? Were result indicators as identified in Section 3.2 of the EMFF OP achieved?
- **EQ14:** In case of indicators (output, financial and results) not achieved by end 2023, what are the reasons for not reaching the targets?
- **EQ15:** What output and financial indicators were achieved under UP3 taking into consideration the targets (milestones for 2023) set out in the EMFF OP?
- **EQ16:** What is the impact of **completed** UP3 measures in terms of result indicators achieved? Were result indicators as identified in Section 3.2 of the EMFF OP achieved?
- **EQ17:** In case of indicators (output, financial and results) not achieved by end 2023, what are the reasons for not reaching the targets?
- **EQ18:** What output and financial indicators were achieved under UP5 taking into consideration the targets (milestones for 2023) set out in the EMFF OP?
- **EQ19:** What is the impact of **completed** UP5 measures in terms of result indicators achieved? Were result indicators as identified in Section 3.2 of the EMFF OP achieved?
- **EQ20:** In case of indicators (output, financial and results) not achieved by end 2023, what are the reasons for not reaching the targets?
- **EQ21:** What output and financial indicators were achieved under UP6 taking into consideration the targets (milestones for 2023) set out in the EMFF OP?
- **EQ22:** What is the impact of **completed** UP6 measures in terms of result indicators achieved? Were result indicators as identified in Section 3.2 of the EMFF OP achieved?
- **EQ23:** In case of indicators (output, financial and results) not achieved by end 2023, what are the reasons for not reaching the targets?
- **EQ24:** What outputs and results were achieved under UP7 by end 2023?
- **Conclusions and recommendations** on the effectiveness of the EMFF Programme
- **Lessons learnt and Best Practices**

## **7. Conclusions and recommendations on Follow-up Actions that can be taken in relation to:**

- a. National Context & Identification of Needs
- b. National Plans, Strategies and actions that can be implemented
- c. Future Funding Programme Management and Implementation
- d. Ex-ante Evaluation in preparation for the future OP period
- e. Identification of recommended future evaluation activities

## **Methods to be used and their data requirements**

The main methods to be used for data collection for this evaluation activity shall depend on the evaluation topic and questions at hand. Different methods may be applied including:

- documentation review and data analysis (especially with reference to data recorded in the EMFF database including operation data and indicators, annual implementation reports, review of the Operational Programme and its amendments, review of other relevant documents such as admissibility and selection criteria, Ex-ante Evaluation and Strategic Environmental Assessment, Interim Evaluation of the EMFF OP, other relevant (evaluation/research) studies or plans, relevant EU and National Regulations);
- interviews and/or surveys may be used with major stakeholders

Data on operations in accordance with the data requirements identified in Annexes I and II of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1243/2014 is recorded in the EMFF database.

## **Availability of Data: Timeframes & commitments for data sets required**

Quantitative data to be collected and evaluated for the Ex-post Evaluation shall mostly be based on the following data sets:

- Financial Indicators (milestone values for 2023)
- Output Indicators (milestone values for 2023)
- Result indicators (milestone values for 2023)

Section 3 of the EMFF OP should be consulted for 2023 planned milestone values in respect of the indicators included in the above data sets.

As mentioned previously, with reference to the data sets required above, all relevant stakeholders must ensure that the data recorded on the EMFF database is up-to-date and reliable. The availability of data is an obligation on Malta imposed by Article 54(2) Regulation (EU) 1303/2013.

Taking into account that reporting on the achievement of financial indicators is to be based on the **total amount of eligible expenditure entered into the accounting system of the certifying authority and certified by the authority in line with Article 126 of the CPR (Regulation EU 1303/2013)** by end 2023, this means that the necessary MA and CA checks need also to be completed by the time which

may thus impinge on the timeframes given to beneficiaries to complete operations/activities and process payments.

To this end, the MA and the relevant stakeholders shall ensure that data pertaining to the data sets identified above are appropriately recorded in line with the respective state-of-play of the operations in the EMFF database by end 2023. This data can be made available for evaluation purposes in January 2024.

With respect to qualitative data, this may be gathered through review/data analysis of annual implementation reports, project descriptions and project closure reports (also recorded on the EMFF database). Project closure reports are due by beneficiaries upon completion of their project in accordance with the conditions set out in their grant agreement and with the procedure described in Section 7.2.3 of the Manual of Procedures for the EMFF OP (2014-2020). In comparison to quantitative data sets, if already available these can be made available by the MA for data collection/evaluation purposes immediately upon signature of contract for service or the latest by January 2024.

Additional qualitative data can be gathered on programme implementation through the use of interviews or surveys. It is recommended that these are undertaken towards the end of January and that interview/survey questions are forwarded to the respective stakeholders at least three weeks in advance for planning and preparation purposes.

### **Duration and tentative dates for the Interim Evaluation**

As described in Chapter 2 of this document, the indicative timeframe for work on collation and completion of the ex-post evaluation report shall be between December 2023 and mid-March 2024 respectively. It is envisaged that the indicative timeframe for the submission of Ex-post Evaluation Report to the Monitoring Committee for examination and feedback (including the submission of Final Implementation Report) shall be completed between April and mid-May 2024 with a submission deadline (applicable for the EMFF FIR) to EC by 31 May 2024.

### **Estimated budget for the Ex-Post Evaluation of the EMFF OP**

The planned budget takes into consideration the cost of all the required resources employed for the completion of tasks to be undertaken for the Interim Evaluation of the EMFF OP. In this regard, the cost for the contracted services of external evaluators is estimated at €27,500 (excluding VAT). The expected output of the contracted services, namely the Ex-Post Evaluation Report of the EMFF OP, shall be based on the guidelines and requirements set out in this document and the specifications identified in the terms of reference of the contract.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: COMMUNICATION & RESOURCES**

### ***Resources for the Implementation of the Evaluation Plan***

Key to the availability and reliability of data recorded in the EMFF database and required for evaluation activities, is the recording and monitoring of data by MA staff and stakeholders. In this regard, the MA shall ensure appropriate human resources for the effective monitoring of the required data especially in relation to the gathering and analysis of data to be used for annual implementation reports. As described in the first chapter of this document, the procedures set out in the Manual of Procedures for the EMFF OP serve to ensure the effective functioning of the MA unit and its stakeholders through the implementation of timely and appropriate monitoring and control checks on operations.

Apart from adhering to the obligations and principle set out in Article 54(3) of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013, the engagement of external independent evaluators aims to ensure sufficient and adequate resources and expertise. Whereas the Managing Authority shall ensure sufficient financial resources, the availability of required data, of guidance (where necessary) and of stakeholders whose input is necessary for the successful completion of the evaluation activities, the contracted service providers shall ensure that all necessary resources are also made available for the successful completion of the evaluation activity and expected output.

### ***Dissemination of Evaluation Results to Stakeholders***

Dissemination of evaluation findings will serve to increase the visibility of the EMFF Operational Programme in terms of communicating results and impact of the programme. Data collected and evaluation findings will also provide more value added to policy making and thus set the basis for evidence-based policies and better management of the EMFF Operational Programme.

The Managing Authority shall be responsible for the communication of evaluation results to stakeholders and policymakers, namely the EMFF Monitoring Committee, partners and the European Commission. In this regard, the Monitoring Committee, apart from the examination and approval of Annual Implementation Reports (including enhanced reports) prior to their submission to EC, it will also be responsible for examining the evaluation activities and outputs of the EMFF OP in accordance with Article 113 of Regulation (EU) No. 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

In addition in line with Article 54 (4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, all evaluations shall be made available to the public through the MA's website.

In relation to the follow-up and the use of evaluation results, following appraisal of the evaluation activities and findings, the Monitoring Committee may make recommendations to the Managing Authority for follow-up (where necessary).