



PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT
FOR EUROPEAN FUNDS AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Annex

Annual Implementation Report

European Maritime and Fisheries Fund 2014-2020

4th May 2018

Funds and Programmes Division, MEAE, Malta



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

Citizen's Summary

1 Introduction

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund OP [EMFF OP] for the 2014-2020 programming period, formally adopted on 3rd March 2015 and as amended in October 2017 (version 3.2) is based on the following Union Priorities [UPs] and Specific Objectives:

UP1: Promoting environmentally sustainable, resource-efficient, innovative, competitive and knowledge-based fisheries

- **Specific Objective 1** - Reduction of the impact of fisheries on the marine environment, including the avoidance and reduction, as far as possible, of unwanted catches [public eligible allocation €200,000];
- **Specific Objective 4** - Enhancement of the competitiveness and viability of fisheries enterprises, including of small-scale coastal fleet, and the improvement of safety and working conditions [public eligible allocation €10,730,572];
- **Specific Objective 5** - Provision of support to strengthen technological development and innovation, including increasing energy efficiency, and knowledge transfer [public eligible allocation €146,666];
- **Specific Objective 6** - Development of professional training, new professional skills and lifelong learning [public eligible allocation €500,000].

UP 2: Fostering environmentally sustainable, resource-efficient, innovative, and competitive and knowledge-based aquaculture

- **Specific Objective 2** – Enhancement of the competitiveness and viability of aquaculture enterprises, including improvement of safety or working conditions, in particular of SMEs [public eligible allocation €1,000,000]
- **Specific Objective 3** - Protection and restoration of aquatic biodiversity and the enhancement of ecosystems related to aquaculture and the promotion of resource-efficient aquaculture [public eligible allocation €2,306,822]

UP3: Fostering the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy

- **Specific Objective 1** - Improvement and supply of scientific knowledge as well as the improvement of the collection and management of data [public eligible allocation €4,426,910];
- **Specific Objective 2** - Provision of support to monitoring, control and enforcement, thereby enhancing institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration, without increasing the administrative burden [public eligible allocation €5,489,026].

UP5: Fostering marketing and processing

- **Specific Objective 1** - Improvement of market organisation for fishery and aquaculture products [public eligible allocation €469,771].

UP6: Fostering the implementation of the IMP.

- **Specific Objective 1** – Development and implementation of the Integrated Maritime Policy [public eligible allocation €1,600,000].

UP7: Technical Assistance [public eligible allocation €1,733,940].**2 Calls launched during 2017 & State-of Implementation in 2017***[i]* Union Priority 1:

A total of five (5) calls were issued during 2017, four of which were directly related and targeted to help local fishers.

The first call issued in 2017 under this UP related to **Article 39 of Reg.(EU) No. 508/2014 on Innovation linked to the conservation of marine biological resources**, which project proposal submitted by the DFA was awarded and at time of reporting is under implementation. This operation includes a desktop study, marine surveys and analysis of data with the aim to improve the gear selectivity of the 40mm square mesh size currently in use by the Maltese otter board trawling fleet so as to reduce discards of *Merluccius merluccius* (European hake) and *Parapenaeus longirostris* (Deep-water rose shrimp).

The second call issued under this UP targeted the **Promotion of human capital, job creation and social dialogue** under **Article 29[1][2] and Article 44[1][a] of Reg (EU) No. 508/2014**. The awarded project proposal submitted by the DFA named **Training of Fishers** was developed taking into consideration the needs of the fishing community and in this regard, a number of high standard training courses shall be provided to all interested registered fishers. The courses are aimed at improving the knowledge and skill of local fishers with the intention to increase the overall standard of the local fishing industry.

Three calls for projects were launched as aid schemes aimed to promote on energy efficient practices through investments in equipment or on board and studies to assess the contribution of alternative propulsion systems and hull designs; energy efficient practices relating to engine replacement and also to promote diversification of the fishing industry through new forms of income. These three (3) aid schemes were launched toward in October 2017.

These calls were promoted through adverts published on the Government Gazette and on all local Sunday printed newspapers. A pre-launch press conference and informal meetings were also held in January 2017 to prepare fishermen accordingly. Two information sessions were also held, one in Gozo on the 26th October 2017 and another one in Malta on the 31st October 2017. Guidance to fishermen and detailed presentations on the calls issued were given to those attending the information sessions.

With the aim of assisting fishers, the respective application forms, annexes (where applicable) and Admissibility & Selection Criteria were also translated to Maltese and Fact Files in Maltese bearing Frequently Asked Questions were also developed. The calls together with their relevant documentation were also uploaded on the MA's website for potential applicants.

Potential applicants were also notified of the issuance of the calls and of the information session being held via SMS notification. Throughout the open call period, information and guidance was provided by MA officials on a daily basis through the use of phone calls, email messaging and meetings held to assist prospective applicants with their queries.

Unfortunately notwithstanding the MA's efforts in providing guidance and assistance, a small number of applications were received for the calls issued for fishers in 2017. In total, 8 (eight) applications were received, one of which was not received within the deadline. In addition, no applications were received for the calls issued under Article 30 and Article 41.2.

[ii] Union Priority 2:

Following the approval by the Monitoring Committee (MC) of the OP amendment to introduce Article 48.1.(a-d, f-h) on Productive Investments in Aquaculture, OP amendments were proposed to the European Commission and subsequently adopted in early October. The relevant Admissibility and Selection Criteria were also adopted by the MC in September 2017 following a written consultation.

Preparations in terms of the drafting of applications and undertaking the necessary processes for the issuance of open calls to the public under Article 48.1 (a-d, f-h) and (e, i,j), were in force between October and November 2017. The relevant call for proposals were issued on the 24th November 2017 with a closing date for the 12th January 2018. At the time of writing of this report two applications have been received.

Similarly to other open calls, the call was promoted in the Government Gazette and on all Sunday newspapers with the aim of ensuring wide coverage. Information on the call and the relevant documentation including the application in e-form was uploaded on the MA's webpage for ease of access by beneficiaries. An SMS notification was also sent to all aquaculture operators to inform them also of the information session scheduled on 4th December 2017.

[iii] Union Priority 3:

A restricted call for proposals with the DFA as the competent authority for the implementation of Article 77 Data Collection covering the 2017 - 2019 period was launched on 3rd March 2017. This operation has been awarded and is currently under implementation.

Between January and April 2017, discussions were held between the MA and the DFA as the competent authority on Control & Enforcement in light of OP amendments required in terms of budgetary shifts between Article 76(2)(a) to (d) and (f) to (l) and Article 76(2)(e) of the EMFF Regulation. The budgetary shift was approved by EC in early October 2017.

The first restricted call for applications under Article 76, targeting all the operations adopted in Section 12.4 of the OP, was issued on 11th August which was subsequently followed by another call on 9th October 2017.

With reference to ongoing projects, the implementation and all necessary payments falling under the *Data Collection Framework Multiannual Programme 2014-2016*, have been successfully concluded by the beneficiary with reimbursements for eligible costs being currently processed by DFA and the respective stakeholders.

In 2017, a total of €179,429.86 (total public eligible excluding VAT) were processed and certified by end 2017, which payment claims were also declared as expenditure to the European Commission by end of year. In this regard, 2017 saw the first OTS checks conducted by the MA on this operation whereby expenditures claimed were verified and whereby an irregular amount totalling €9,000 was deducted by the MA prior to certification. This project is expected to be complete by end 2018.

[iv] Union Priority 5:

An open call for project proposals was launched by the MA on 25th July 2017 under Article 68 of Regulation (EU) No. 508/2014: *Fostering marketing and processing*. The public eligible amount allocated for this call totals €250,000 – 75% of which will be the EMFF contribution [€187,500]. One application was submitted by the DFA whose aim is to launch a promotional campaign with the main objectives being that of [i] increasing awareness of the state of local fish stocks [ii] promote sustainable fish consumption and [iii] increasing importance of each citizen's role in assisting in conservation efforts. As at time of reporting this operation is under implementation.

[v] Union Priority 6:

A call for proposals under UP 6 Article 80.1.c – Improving the knowledge on the state of the marine environment was issued in March 2016. The project contributes to the effective management and sustainable use of marine resources, through sustained environmental monitoring in marine waters

with the aim to assess the state of Malta's marine waters on a continuous basis and address current knowledge gaps. Concrete data will be used to develop better management practices to address these pressures.

2017 saw the continued implementation of this project by the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA) with a launch event being held on 31st July 2017 whereby the aims of the project and its expected results were presented by ERA representatives and the service provider to involved/interested stakeholders.

In 2017, a total of €320,000 (total public eligible excluding VAT) were processed and certified by end 2017, which payment claims were also declared as expenditure to the European Commission. In this regard, the first OTS check conducted by the MA was held in November through which the expenditure claimed was verified and the transactions were deemed as regular.

[vi] Union Priority 7:

As in previous years, Technical Assistance (TA) during 2017 was used mainly to support the implementation of the EMFF OP. In 2017, a total of €266,999.46 worth of payment claims (total public eligible excluding VAT) were processed by the MA relating to various operations under this UP. TA expenditure was mainly related to salaries, promotional activities and material, Monitoring Committee meeting logistical expenses and other IT related payment claims.

3 Evaluation Activities

In line with the Evaluation Plan adopted in March 2016, evaluation activities in terms of the Interim Evaluation for the EMFF OP in Malta were not implemented in 2017 since in order to effectively address the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the EMFF Operational Programme, the interim evaluation is planned to be conducted in the first quarter of 2019. However, other monitoring and evaluation activities were undertaken in 2017 which may impact the interim evaluation to be implemented in 2019.

In 2017, the MA compiled and issued its first enhanced Annual Implementation Report covering the 2016 period, 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, whereby the report submitted in 2017 set out and assessed 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.

In September 2017, the MA attended the Annual Stakeholder meeting organised by the Fisheries and Aquaculture Monitoring & Evaluation Support Unit (FAME SU) whose aim is to ensure a strengthened communication among the stakeholders involved in Monitoring and Evaluation of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. Through this meeting, i) EMFF stakeholders were informed on the structure and state-

of-play of FAME SU's Common Monitoring and Evaluation System (CMES) report and working paper on EMFF evaluation; ii) views on the implementation of the CMES and the EMFF evaluation were exchanged between stakeholders and evaluators; and iii) priorities for the FAME SU Annual Work Programme 2018 were identified. The MA plans to put to use the guidance provided by FAME on the EMFF evaluation working paper as required during the interim evaluation.

It is foreseen that preparatory activities for the interim evaluation including the drafting of the tender document including the terms of reference for the Interim Evaluation to be conducted by external evaluators will commence in 2018.

4 Information and Publicity

The MA online EMFF webpage¹ includes information ranging from regulations, publications, reports, EMFF supporting documentation, list of selected operations² as laid down in Article 119 of Regulation [EU] No.508/2014 and other, miscellaneous documents pertaining to EMFF upcoming calls. The MA website was constantly updated in 2017 to ensure that the latest information is given to all stakeholders involved including potential applicants. Documentation and information on all open calls for proposals was uploaded on the MA website to ensure ease of access for all.

Information sessions and/or meetings were held accordingly as described in previous sections of this report. Open calls were promoted in the Government Gazette and on all Sunday newspapers, where applicable with the aim of ensuring wide coverage. SMS notifications were sent to beneficiaries of open calls for Productive Investments in Aquaculture and Fishermen calls under UP1. This innovative means of communication aimed to ensure that all potential beneficiaries were informed of the issuance of calls and the respective information sessions. Advertising costs incurred for the publishing of various adverts in order to promote the calls being launched during 2017 were covered by Technical Assistance.

In 2017, the MA also hosted the 4th EMFF MA Workshop. During this workshop a total of 16 MS [with more than one participant per MS] participated whereby a number of important issues were discussed, namely: [i] the Status of the EMFF Implementation in the respective MS, challenges faced and applied measures by MS including Data Collection, Control and Enforcement and Integrated Maritime Policy [ii] Simplification [iii] EMFF Post-2020 and [iv] the Performance Framework.

Moreover, 2017 also saw the implementation of preparatory activities undertaken by the Funds and Programmes Division which led to the implementation in 2018 of a responsive website whereby information on EU funding opportunities including EMFF could also be accessed by stakeholders through a mobile application.

¹ <http://eufunds.gov.mt/en/EU%20Funds%20Programmes/Agricultural%20Fisheries%20Fund/Pages/EMFF-2014-2020.aspx>

² <https://eufunds.gov.mt/en/EU%20Funds%20Programmes/Agricultural%20Fisheries%20Fund/Documents/EMFF%20links%20and%20downloads/Information%20and%20Publicity/List%20of%20Operations%2010.01.2018.pdf>