

Meeting for Fisheries Community-Led Local Development Managing Authorities and National Networks

Online, 7-8 October 2021

Report

Participants Approximately 45 people from 17 Member States representing Managing Authorities (MAs), Intermediate Bodies (IBs) and National Networks responsible for Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) financed under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF); representatives of a MS not currently implementing CLLD under EMFF but preparing its implementation under EMFAF (Belgium); representatives of DG MARE and the FARNET team (including Geographical Experts).

Organiser FARNET Support Unit (FSU) at the initiative of the European Commission

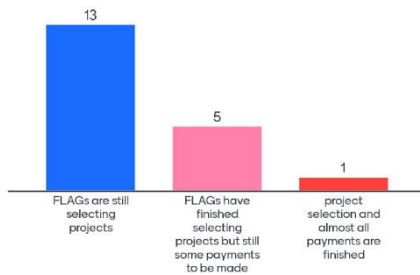
Introductory session

The participants were welcomed by the FSU team leader Monica Veronesi and then by the representative of DG MARE D3 Head of Unit, Valerie Tankink. Valerie stressed the importance of a smooth transition between the funding periods to maintain capacity on the ground, and highlighted the need for effective delivery systems for CLLD. As this was the last FARNET meeting for MAs and NNs, Valerie thanked the FSU as well as MA and NN representatives for their work.



[Niccolo Tognarini](#) from DG MARE Communications Unit described the enhanced possibilities to communicate EU funding opportunities and success stories in the 2021-2027 period under the INFORM EU network, in particular within the team focusing on the EMFAF, INFORM MARITIME. [Gilles van de Walle](#) from the FAO presented the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) which will take place in 2022. Both speakers stressed that FLAGs can play an important role in these initiatives, by involving fisheries communities in a two-way communication about their challenges and successes.

How are you progressing with CLLD (2014-2020):

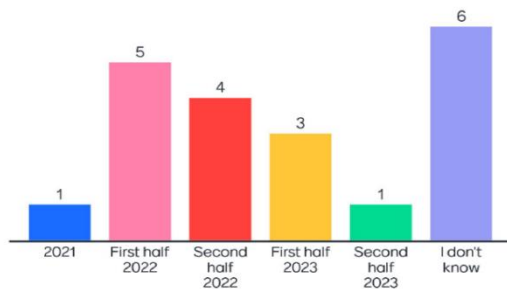


A quick Mentimeter poll on the state of play of CLLD implementation showed that in most MS, FLAGS are still selecting projects, and the majority of MAs are planning to launch their call for new FLAGS in 2022.

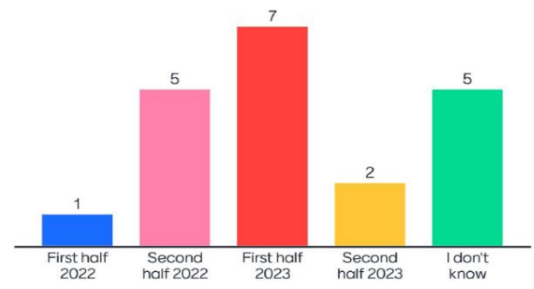
It is expected that most FLAGS will be selected in early 2023, but a significant proportion of MAs still

don't know when the selection of FLAGS will take place.

When do you expect to launch the call for FLAGS ?



When do you expect to have your FLAGS selected ?



Strategic framework for CLLD

[Susana Sainz Trapaga](#) from the regional government of Catalonia (Spain) presented the Catalan Maritime Strategy for 2030, in which CLLD and FLAGS will play a crucial role. The Maritime Strategy has 4 strands: sustainability, blue economy, governance and wellbeing of the people. FLAGS have proven to be the best vehicle for territorial implementation of the Strategy by boosting the local economy through joint projects among different players from the fishing and maritime territory. The MA shows recognition (diplomas) to FLAG projects that are best aligned with the Maritime Strategy. This will continue in EMFAF period. In the 2014-2020 period there were two FLAGS in Catalonia, but the plan is to increase the number to 4 FLAGS in the EMFAF in order to cover the whole Catalan coast.

In the absence of the Finnish MA, [Janne Posti](#) from the FSU presented the Finnish government's programme to promote domestic fish, in line with the EU Green Deal and "From Farm to Fork" strategies. Finland recognises increasing consumption/production of domestic fish will have many benefits e.g. increased employment, increased export of domestic fish, health benefits, lower environmental impact than meat production, etc. It is therefore planning to double the domestic fish consumption in Finland by 2035 and significantly increase exports. EMFAF will play a key role in funding the programme. FLAGS were involved in the design of the programme and their strategies should contribute to its objectives. Besides funding projects, FLAGS will have an even more important role than before in creating synergies and linkages between local producers and supply chain companies, enhancing cooperation of different fisheries areas, participating in working groups, local food clusters, etc.

Facilitating innovation in fisheries CLLD

Four FLAG representatives presented examples of innovative projects:

- [Turning Shellfish by-products into Energy](#) by [Cécile Devins](#) from the Côte d’Emeraude – Rance – Baie du Mont Saint-Michel FLAG (France)
- [Eco-diversifying the local economy](#) by [Alicja Skoczke](#) from the North Kaszuby FLAG (Poland)
- [A coastal management plan by local fishers and fish farmers](#) by [Angela Nazzaruolo](#) from the Emilia-Romagna Coast FLAG (Italy)
- [Fishers campaigning for reducing plastic in ports](#) by [Igor Komadina](#) from the Istria FLAG (Slovenia)

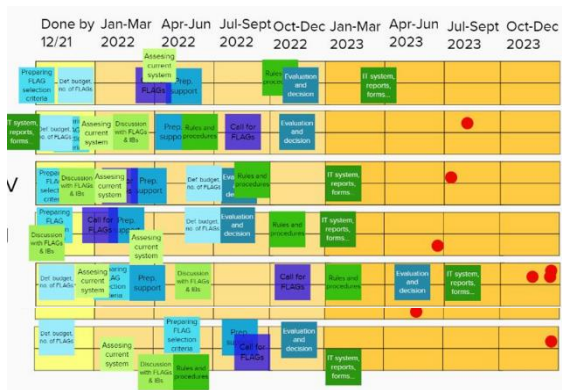
In the following discussion representatives of MAs and FLAGs debated what can be done to facilitate innovation in fisheries CLLD. Esko Taanila, a retired FLAG manager from Finland, said that genuine innovation needs special attention and cooperation between different actors. He also stressed that it is very difficult to estimate in advance the “return on investment” of innovation and that financing such projects always involves **risk**. Only a small percentage may be successful, but their results can compensate for those projects that failed. Thus, to support innovation FLAGs and MAs must learn to accept risk. Paul Downes from BIM (Ireland) said that actors in charge of public funding often have a very conservative mindset and prefer to finance things that are already tested and proven. To address this, the BIM prepared a number of tools that help to assess the risk involved in innovative projects, including a booklet on “[The Mindset of Innovation](#)”.

Setting up the system for CLLD implementation

[Urszula Budzich-Tabor](#) reminded the participants that in the 2021-2027 period FLAGs have to be selected and operational within 12 months of the adoption of the relevant programme. Therefore, MAs will have to work in parallel on the process of selecting FLAGs and their strategies, and on designing the delivery systems that would enable FLAGs to launch calls and start selecting projects.

Two MA representatives shared their experience in this respect. [Veronique Salzac](#) from Normandy (France) explained her region’s plans to select FLAGs and prepare their operations. The call for FLAGs has already been launched, even though the EMFAF programme has not been adopted yet. Normandy is planning to simplify CLLD delivery system by reducing the number of steps in project selection. Further ways of simplification include the introduction of a single SCO for FLAG running costs and a new IT system covering all implementation steps.

[Oleg Epner](#) from Estonia presented a system of simplified cost options for FLAG running costs which will help reduce the amount of paperwork and greatly simplify audits and controls. The amount of funding the FLAGs will get for their operations will depend on the total budget and the number of projects selected. The Estonian MA is also planning to use unit costs based on the number of participants for events such as seminars and trainings. Involving auditors in the design of the SCOs from an early stage is very important.



Participants in working groups discussed in more detail the steps they need to follow in order to set up the new FLAGs and avoid a gap in their operation. It seems that most MAs are hoping to complete the process of FLAG selection and designing delivery rules before the running costs of the 2014-2020 FLAGs are used up; however, in some MS these costs are already coming to an end.

Planning for FLAG cooperation and capacity building

[Marta Edreira Garcia](#) from the FSU presented key lessons for addressing cooperation in the 2021-2027 period and examples of successful cooperation projects. In the discussion, participants stressed the importance of study visits as a first step to facilitate partners' learning about each other. Also, some activities are not formally "cooperation projects" (for example, they are financed by FLAG running costs) but they still contribute to creating linkages between FLAGs. Everyone was reminded that FLAGs can cooperate with any other CLLD groups, including CLLD-type groups outside the EU.

In a Mentimeter question on the key barriers to FLAG cooperation, the following issues were raised:

- differences in administrative rules (including timing of calls)
- additional workload for the FLAGs
- lack of acceptance of objectives by beneficiaries
- the need to pre-finance projects and long waiting time to be reimbursed (if advance payments are not available)
- the fact that in some MS the whole budget of a cooperation project is held by the lead partner (a good practice system of financing cooperation projects has been developed in Croatia, first for LEADER LAGs and starting from 2021-2027 also for FLAGs)
- differences between the EMFF rules and those of other Funds (in case of cooperation with LAGs financed by other EU Funds).

[Jose-Maria Solano López](#) presented the Spanish National Network plans of a needs-oriented system for FLAG capacity building. The funding of the Spanish network is assured in a continuous way (no funding gap between periods), and the network will be able to take up new types of activities, for example new training activities, communication between FLAGs in different regions to facilitate cooperation, an improved website, increased visibility through quarterly newsletters and increased number of visits in FLAG areas. In the discussion it was stressed that even in countries with few FLAGs, it is important to envisage a systematic capacity building and transfer of knowledge.

Concluding session

Monica Veronesi wrapped up the meeting by reminding participants that still a lot needs to be done, both in terms of finalising the 2014-2020 period and preparing for 2021-2027 period. She stressed the importance of communications, including cooperation with INFORM MARITIME, where FLAG networks can be an important tool both for collecting stories from the ground and promoting the work that fisheries communities are doing with EU funds. In this last FARNET MA and NN meeting, she thanked all the participants for their contributions, sharing practices and open discussion of both positive and negative experiences.



In a Mentimeter question on the usefulness of the different FARNET activities/tools, the MAs and NNs indicated that they found most useful the following: Good Practices, MA and NN meetings and FARNET Guides.

