



Meeting for Fisheries Community-Led Local Development Managing Authorities and National Networks Brussels, 14-15 October 2019

Participants: around 32 people from 18 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)

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

State of play of CLLD Implementation

With around 1 000 additional projects since the last MA meeting in June 2019, CLLD implementation is now progressing at full speed reaching a total of around 5 500 projects by October 2019.

The level of committed funds ranges between 10% and 93% of the total UP4 budget. However, some Member States still have to select their first projects.

In half of the MS, preparations for post-2020 have already started. This is done in different ways, sometimes on an informal level or in more formal ways through the setup of working groups involving different stakeholders. This preparatory work is mainly done to prepare the next generation of programmes, with specific emphasis on preparing the SWOT analysis.

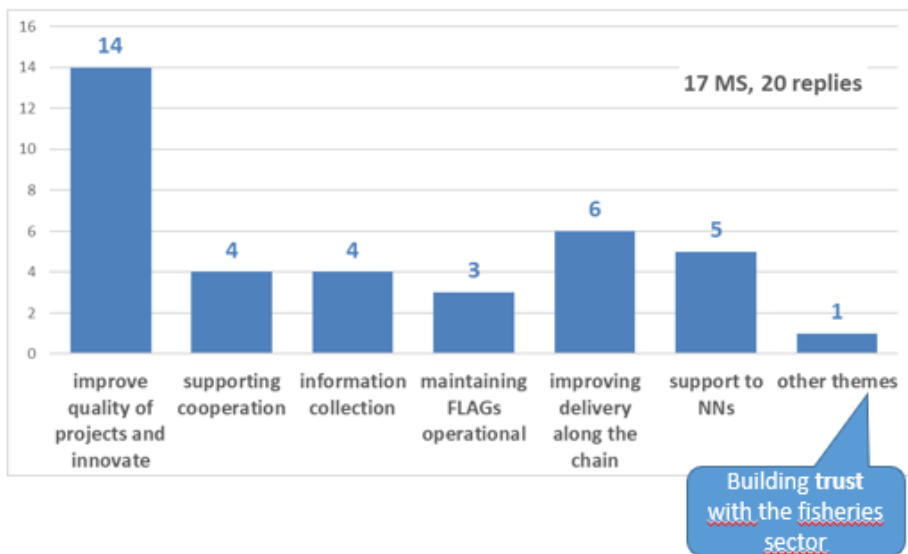
Improvement of delivery: what have we achieved so far?

The aim of this session was to identify the progress made in improving delivery of UP4 since the start of the programme. Based on the replies received in the preparation of the meeting, the work carried out on improving the quality of local projects and on generating innovation were identified as the most useful for Managing Authorities so far.

The French national network gave a presentation on how it contributed to the improvement of delivery in France. In a continuous effort, the national network has helped address different weaknesses in the system which were often linked to deficient communication processes between the different stakeholders. By bringing them together in meetings and through other tools, problems regarding the application of legislation and procedures were solved. Also, the presentation of good practices helped to pass on positive messages and create a more favourable atmosphere along the delivery chain.

How networking (at EU or national level) can help improve delivery further was discussed in small groups. While in some countries the network support unit is involved in the support of delivery to a high degree, other network units mostly focus on thematic work. Some of the recommendations mentioned by participants in this respect were that networks should act as platforms for exchange between the different people/structures involved in the delivery chain, with the aim to reach a high degree of interaction between MAs, IBs and FLAGS. Some participants also suggested intensifying the exchange between MAs at EU level.

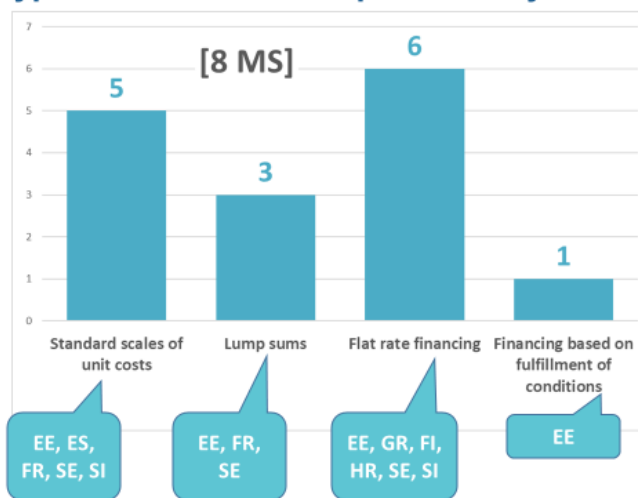
Useful topics of previous MA meetings



The FSU introduced the structure of the FARNET guide “Delivering CLLD Effectively” which will be finalised by the end of the year. In five working groups, selected sections of the guide were presented and commented on (Well-designed vs Dysfunctional Systems; FLAGS as IBs: Umbrella Projects; User-friendly IT systems; and How to Speed up the Process of Making FLAGS Operational). The FSU will use these comments and suggestions to improve the various sections.

Simplified Cost Options (SCOs)

Types of SCOs used or planned in your MS?

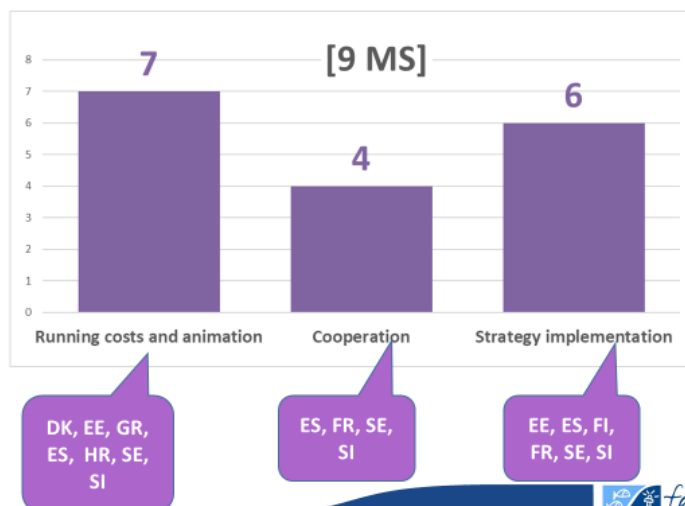


Simplified Cost Options was one of the main topics of this MA meeting. The Commission has extended the possibilities of using Simplified Costs in the ESIF in order to help simplify their implementation. Indeed, SCOs reduce the likelihood of errors and, once set up, lower the administrative burden and can shorten the time in granting the subsidy and the payment to applicants. MAs can foresee calculating certain eligible expenditure of grants and repayable assistance on the basis of Flat Rate Financing, Standard Scales of Unit Costs and Lump Sums.



In the European Social Fund the use of SCOs has become an integral part of a simplified delivery. Around 30% of the total ESF budget is now delivered using SCOs. There is relatively little experience with these instruments under the EMFF but some Member States are already making use of SCOs or planning to use them in the future as shown in these two graphs.

Which measure are the SCOs used for?



Experts from DG EMPL and DG AGRI gave presentations on the conditions and experience with SCO in the ESF and the EAFRD (especially for LEADER). The Greek MA shared its experience of using one of the ESIF “off the shelf” instruments consisting in the provision of lump sums for indirect staff costs for part of the FLAG’s running costs. A representative of the Austrian LEADER network presented information on the more widespread use of SCOs in LEADER/ CLLD.

When establishing simplified costs, the MA must define up-front how much funding can be granted for certain types of operations or costs, and during implementation project and/or reached specific outputs or results.



When to use SCOs

- *If you want to focus on results and outputs*
- *Real costs are difficult to demonstrate or verify*
- *Reliable data on financial and quantitative implementation is available*
- *Risk that documents are not properly kept*
- *Standardised operations*
- *SCO methodology already exist*

And if the operation is not fully procured

Source: DG EMPL



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Working Groups

Assisted by the experts, participants split into working groups to discuss the following:

1. Ideas where SCOs can be used under CLLD, such as:

- Flat rate of 40% of direct staff costs for all non-staff running and animation costs (it would be important to define conditions when the FLAGs are entitled to payment, for example the payment of running costs could be linked to commitment rates)..
- Animation costs (e.g. unit costs for a board meeting, selection, project visits etc.).
- Draft budget for projects (MS should carefully consider where it is useful to apply; in some cases, the amount of work to check the draft could be equivalent to the work of checking the real costs ex-post).
- Lump sums for small business start-ups.
- Costs of developing a new product, e.g. certification, getting an export permit etc.
- Purchase of services, studies etc. to improve quality of an LDS.

2. Key concerns, barriers to using SCOs:

Risk of financial corrections. This can be mitigated by:

- Designing a sound methodology and maintaining the audit trail.
- Involving the national auditors from an early stage.
- Exchange of good practices on what constitutes an acceptable audit trail.
- Experience from other DGs shows that SCOs reduce rather than increase error rates and the risk of financial corrections; this is one of the reasons why the European Commission (and Court of Auditors) strongly support SCOs.

Mentality barriers among programme authorities and auditors (including external ones)

- One way to address this would be to organise training for auditors.
- Experience shows that once the SCOs are in place and everyone becomes familiar with the system, things will become easier and nobody wants to go back to cost-based financing.

Risk for project promoters (especially small ones) in case of issues with implementation. This can be addressed through:

- Defining project outputs carefully (not to tie payment to something that may be hard to achieve).
- Making payments in stages, based on milestones reached (and not at the end of the project).

If SCOs are to be included in an annex to the national programme, is it too late to start now?

- According to the experts, the sooner you start the better, but is not too late even for the current funding period.

Good practices. There was a general consensus that good practices are needed.

- What works / what doesn't.
- Lessons learnt / things to avoid.

3. Ideas about what MAs can do to move forward with SCOs:

- Explore further the possibility of draft budget for CLLD projects.
- Discuss with FLAGS if they would be interested in SCOs for animation costs.
- Analyse the possibilities of reconciling SCOs with the national legislation in a way that would reduce, and not increase, administrative burden.

FLAG Cooperation around the EU

In a session on cooperation the FSU presented an overview of the state of play of interterritorial and transnational cooperation in the 20 MS implementing fisheries CLLD. Over 100 cooperation projects were reported to have been approved and/or implemented, including the seals and cormorants in the Baltic coast; a Mediterranean working group on MPAs and the promotion of fisheries areas as culinary destinations. However, the number of individual cooperation projects is actually lower, as some MS report the same cooperation project separately for each participating FLAG. The potential to start new projects in the remaining phase of the programming period, or to draw lessons from projects already under way, can still be further explored.

The Latvian MA then gave a presentation of a specific project to assess and potential and conditions for sustainably harvesting seaweed along the Latvian coast. This was followed by a presentation of three cooperation projects in Catalunya (Spain): cooperation at a regional level to federate women linked to fisheries; cooperation among fishermen in the region taken to the Basque country to see the benefits of setting up a Producers Organisation for small-scale pelagic fishermen; and cooperation with France and Italy to promote Mediterranean seafood gastronomy.



In the following discussion participants agreed on the need to promote the achievements of cooperation and ensure relevant support to MAs and FLAGS.