



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

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# Overview of the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) and the proposed European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

## 1 The European Fisheries Fund (EFF)

Since its formal creation in 1983, the Common Fisheries Policy has included the provision of a grants scheme to enable the fishing industry across the EU to be more efficient and sustainable.

The European Commission has introduced a series of schemes as a way to support the fisheries sector. At present the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) is running from 2007-2013 with a total budget of €3.8bn. That scheme was preceded by the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG).

The current EFF scheme requires national governments to draw up a national plan setting out how they plan to develop their fisheries (inland and sea) over the period of 2007-2013.

Each national plan needs to set priorities as well as commit matching government funding to what is available from the EU. At present the EFF has 5 priority areas as follows:

- **Adjustment of the fleet (axis 1)** – can mean aid for decommissioning on a temporary or permanent basis or measures to improve efficiency and safety of active vessels;
- **Aquaculture, processing and marketing, inland fishing (axis 2)** – funding available for diversification into new species, environmentally friendly aquaculture, public and animal health measures and lifelong learning;
- **Measures of common interest (axis 3)** – support can be given to activities such as the protection of aquatic flora and fauna, ports, shelters and landing sites, pilot projects and the development of new marketing and promotional campaigns;
- **Sustainable development of fisheries (axis 4)** – aims to help local communities reduce their dependency on fish catches. Coastal communities with a significant level of employment in the fisheries sector can access funds to strengthen their general competitiveness, develop tourism infrastructure and services, protect the environment and encourage inter-regional and transnational co-operation; and
- **Technical assistance (axis 5)** – covers items including studies, reports, information activities and other actions relating to the implementation of the operational programmes.

The EFF within Northern Ireland has been allocated a total of €18.1 million for the 2007-2013 period. This figure which is matched by DARD means that fishermen and fishing communities in Northern Ireland potentially have access to grants worth a total of €36 million.

Table 1 below provides an overview of both the breakdown and spend of DARD administered EFF money up until the end of the March 2013.

| AXIS/ Measure                              | Draft Investment Plan Allocation     | Approved Measure Business Case | Committed to 31 March 2013 | Spend to 31 March 2013 |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1.3 - Investments on board and selectivity | Not known at time plan was published | £2,500,000                     | £629,330.16                | £452,965.09            |
| 1.4 - Small Scale and Coastal              | £1,000,000                           | £600,000                       | £30,000.00                 | £10,374.00             |
| 2.1 - Aquaculture                          | £1,600,000                           | £1,600,000                     | £411,114.00                | £320,961.60            |
| 2.3 – Processing & Marketing               | £2,400,000                           | £2,400,000                     | £1,524,279.31              | £1,023,631.47          |

|                                                       |                    |                         |                       |                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>3.1 - Collective Actions</b>                       | £2,800,000         | £2,416,000              | £2,684,732.91         | £1,199,716.38        |
| <b>3.3 - Ports, Landing Sites and Shelters</b>        | £3,520,000         | £3,500,000              | £3,233,817.85         | £2,903,517.66        |
| <b>3.2 - Flora &amp; Fauna</b>                        | £1,600,000         | £1,500,000              | £1,500,000.00         | £732,904.09          |
| <b>4 – Sustainable development of fisheries areas</b> | £2,400,000         | Not approved by DFP yet | £0.00                 | £0.00                |
| <b>5 – Technical assistance</b>                       | £800,000           | £800,000                | £217,310              | £161,661             |
| <b>Total</b>                                          | <b>£16,120,000</b> | <b>£15,316,000</b>      | <b>£10,230,584.23</b> | <b>£6,805,731.29</b> |

## 2 The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) is effectively the replacement for the existing EFF.

The EMFF is an integral part of the ongoing Common Fisheries Policy reform process, being one of the 3 regulations the European Commission brought forward on the 13th July 2011. The Commission envisages that the EMFF budget for the 2014-2020 period will be €6.5 billion.

The main objectives that the Commission envisages for the EMFF are as follows:

- promotion of sustainable and competitive fisheries and aquaculture;
- fostering the development and implementation of the Union's Integrated Maritime Policy, in a complementary manner to cohesion policy and to CFP;
- promotion of balanced and inclusive territorial development of fisheries areas (including aquaculture and inland fishing);
- contribution to the implementation of the CFP.

The current CFP reform process is the first to be subject to co-decision, as a result of the Lisbon Treaty coming into force in 2009.

This co-decision requirement effectively means that the final CFP reform package implemented by the Commission needs to have the agreement and endorsement of the EU Council and Parliament.

Since the publication of the proposals in July 2011 the European Parliament and Council have been seeking to clarify and define their positions in response to the Commission proposals.

The Parliament has yet to adopt a final position through plenary vote on the EMFF. This vote is scheduled to occur in September 2013. Prior to the adoption of this position, trilogues with the Council and Commission on the EMFF regulation cannot commence.

It does need to be stated that there is potentially a long way to go in terms of agreement on the EMFF regulation and negotiations are likely to be protracted.

As an added complication, there is yet to be a formalised agreement on the size of the EU's Multi Annual Financial Framework (MFF) for the 2014-20 time period. Whilst agreement was reached by Council Ministers on the 8th February 2013 on an overall budget for the 2014-2020 of €960billion, the Parliament may yet reject these proposals, which would throw into doubt the levels of funding available for the all EU programmes including the EMFF.

Whilst the process in relation to progressing the EMFF regulation is stalled, the Council has, since the 23rd October 2012, reached agreement on a so called 'partial general approach' to the EMFF proposals, which whilst not binding or final, gives an indication of the Council negotiating position in the eventual trilogue meetings between Commission, Council and Parliament.

Some of the areas of apparent agreement between the European Commission's proposals for the new EMFF and the European Council's potential negotiating position on the EMFF are as follows:

- Proposal to phase out storage subsidies by 2020;
- Strengthened funding for aquaculture;
- Access to EMFF monies will be conditional: you may not receive money if you have broken the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

In terms of differences between the positions of the Commission and the Council on the EMFF a major division exists over Commission proposals to stop financial support for the scrapping of vessels.

The Council's 'partial general approach' proposes that 15% of the EMFF, i.e. € 975 million, may be used for engine replacement, scrapping and temporary cessation. Engine replacement is limited to 3% of the fund, and can be used for vessels up to 24 meters.

In light of the lack of a finalised and approved EMFF package and with the European Parliament still to decide on whether to reject or endorse the MFF, the conditions do not currently exist for DARD to accurately plan for the types of measures that will make up the EMFF within Northern Ireland, nor how much money will be allocated to the programme.