



Minutes

Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, 12th of March 2024

(17:00-20:00 in the afternoon)

Online session

Meeting was held in English, French, German, Polish and Spanish

Attendants:

LIFE BOD Members: Christian Decugis, Luis Rodriguez, Federico Gelmi, Wolfgang Albrech, Gwen Pennarun, Kasia Stepanowska, Bally Philp, Seamus Bonner

Other LIFE members (as observers): Macarena Molina, Kazimir.

LIFE Staff: Christian Tsangarides, Annya Crane, Brian O’Riordan, Marta Cavallé (MC)

Agenda:

- Opening and welcome by Christian Decugis, President of LIFE
- Main issues of discussion by LIFE secretariat
 - General plan for 2024 and budget
 - Introduction of new projects: Rethinking Fisheries, Seaglow, Round Goby & Fish X
 - STECF Report and new consultation on Vademecum
 - Open letter Article 17
 - Rules of procedure on Advisory Councils, the case of the Baltic as a potential precedent
 - Appeal on the *Seine coulissante*
 - Bluefin Tuna case in France
- Any other business

Development of the Meeting

Christian welcomes everyone for the first meeting of the year 2024.

Marta welcomes everyone, including the observers of the meeting (Kazimir and Macarena) and congratulates Bally Philp again to become elected on the last General Assembly and his incorporation in the Board.

MC updates everyone with latest developments. New members in the Black Sea have been approved online, which means we have a new country in our network. We also received an application from Mulleres Salgadas, which she will share soon.

MC presents LIFE's **General Plan for 2024** through a power point presentation (see attached as supporting documents). As main issues this year there are the elections of a new European Parliament on the 6-9th of June. A new Commissioner will be appointed, probably in October. Everything is accelerating before the new commissioner comes in, even though the big "dossiers" might be put on hold.

Main Dossiers keeping us busy this year:

- Fishers of the future - a consultant and several events will be organised; a survey was sent out. There's a meeting next week you can all attend online.
- Special group Marine Action Plan (MAP). The MAP was launched last Feb with lots of controversy. Special group with member states, and stakeholders like us. Next meeting in April.
- Vademecum (which will be explained in a separate point)
- Other: Offshore windfarms. Marta will be attending an event in Bilbao next week on this topic and presumably will gain importance during the year.

Other issues to work on:

- It's been 5 years since Cod fishery was closed, it has been a disaster. We're organising an event on this topic in June. Goal: Raise our influence in scientific bodies such as ICES.
- Other regions: our capacities are more limited right now. We are now members of the MEDAC, few members have also attended the meetings (Federico). We are still members of Friends of SSF. We hope to increase our work in the Med and Atlantic soon.

This year we see the start of 4 new projects.

- Fish X, to advance in the digitalisation of SSF.
Seamus shares that IMRO will be a partner in the project as well, and will be testing the NEMO device, a gear marking, to track position of fishing gear. We have already done a pilot with some boats but we hope to extend it to 20 boats as soon as we get the partnership confirmed. There's also a policy component in this project which is important too.
MC: For us the importance is to be ahead of the implementation of the Control Regulation, be able to test the functioning of those devices to avoid problems in the future and be able to co-develop these technological solutions fit to our needs. Also, gain power and visibility of SSF in future negotiations of the Sea Space.
- Rethinking fisheries. Currently drafting a vision on the future of fisheries. Hope to share in our next meeting and approve it.
- Round Goby. Continuation of a first round. Christian T. adds: First phase is gear development, avoid eel bycatch mostly. We have some partners that will look at processing the catches too. There's some scientific testing and then pilot project for test fishing in different countries.

- Seaglow. Its aim is to advance in the energy transition for the small-scale fisheries fleet in the Baltic and North Sea. Big project that will start soon. FSK PO are also partners. Project will allow the communication officer to be full time which is good news.
- Other project happening on the side. In terms of the strategy of LIFE we are working on analysing the past LIFE's strategy, to be discussed in the next meeting BOD

Seamus: The ACs – its important work. Pollack closure will have a big impact for example, we are keen on helping out there if we can. We are members of the north west waters AC - would be good to coordinate across AC. We have elections of new chair coming. New parliament mandate will be important.

Marta gives update on financials and **presents the Budget 2024** (see attached supporting document)

We are no longer in a critical financial position thanks to the new projects. Although we continuously work on fundraising as we need to grow our capacity on the Mediterranean and Atlantic and make sure we will have a continuation after those years. Core funding is the key.

There is a carry forward from 2023 from unspent - around 30.000 euros - will be unrestricted money that we like to keep as emergency fund. Brian adds that this emergency fund is crucial to the sustainability of LIFE in the future and needs to be grown to face unforeseen issues.

Seamus: the reserve funds are important. For any NGO it's key. For match funding too. Jerry ads can we add a line for Senior Advisor? :)

The Budget is Approved by the Board

Brian takes over and explains about the new STECF Report (sent attached). There are 2 big questions to reflect on:

- They produce the annual report - state of play in the Fishing Fleet. Usually mainly economic data. They have been asked to look at which indicators they should develop. How they should go about developing and analysing information. They are asking 7 member states to look at national fishery profiles (set of information about member state fisheries - how they are managed, fishing allocation etc.) First profile will be published later this year. Will be one way to look and see how fishing is performed in Europe. Public consultation will happen to review indicators. Second part of consultations is the Vademecum on Art.17., commission has asked STECF help to do a vademecum on art 17 but also how you define a fishing opportunity. One of the sticking points of art 17. is on what constitutes a fishing opportunity.
- Vademecum will have 5 main areas: history, legal requirements, illustration of how you define or meaning of fishing opportunities, section on existing practices of fishing

opportunities based on social, economic criteria, existing practices of fishing opportunities based on environmental criteria.

MC highlights that the report show Spain or Ireland as best practice cases. She knows Spain is not a particular successful case and asks to Seamus his views on it and what does this Committee really consist on. Seamus mentions the de facto privatisation issue. The way the committees are structured is the problem, they are concentrated on a few big boats. He mentions as the best practice that the STECF mentions is called "Court of Managed advisory committee" - IIMRO has representation on it. Even if you propose anything it's voted down.

Jerry: We have been working on a social science paper on the vulnerability of fishers in the UK. It will be published soon; it will be an important paper. In partnership with a university to have 2 workshops over the summer, Brian should attend! It could be helpful.

Marta brings the next issue on the agenda about a **Joint letter from several NGOs to ask for fair fisheries and being Article 17** at the core of it. The NGOs agree that is signed and promoted from SSF and supported by them. The letter was reworked quite a lot by few members of LIFE staff, including Jerry. It was sent and it is presented now in the meeting.

Seamus: Could not access the letter in the member's area. He has a comment on the issue of fuel subsidies, which he would like to nuance. Jerry adds that he mentioned this issue when we went over this letter. Have to be careful that the big scale guys don't kick off immediately.

MC suggest we send over again the letter, make comments online in the next two days and approve it online. Everybody agrees.

Rules of Procedure on Advisory Council

Christian T: In 2023 the EC adopted a delegated act that is the structure of the Advisory councils. In its Art 4.7 mentions that the proportion of members in Advisory Council should reflect each member's fleet. However, there is the problem on defining SSF. In 2027, new delegated act, added the possibility for Acs to have 25 to 30 members in the ExCom if members belong to SSF organisation. Advisory Council had to update rules to comply with legislation. On hold for 1 year. We've been involved in several focus groups on this, including Wolfgang. We have agreed to write to MS, and ask them to look at their fishing organisation and look at their definition of what is Small Scale. 18 industry seats, LIFE members have 4 seats. The problem is that everyone says they are Small Scale.

Brian - we discussed amongst staff and directors online, on how we should take this forward. Various issues. AC are a construction of DGMare They can't wash their hands of responsibility, in seeing that governance is properly put in place. We all agree that unless small scale has a dedicated voice it will be lost.

Where we are now: We will send a letter setting LIFE's position and would like a meeting with the commission on how to take this forward.

Wolfgang - It is absolutely unthinkable that the Commission created an Act - It is a hot potato, people are nervous in the fishery mafia, Small Scale Fishers are 10 times stronger. But we need clear definitions. We absolutely need a meeting with DGMARE.

Seamus - Members of North west water AC. Geared towards Larger scale. And they say they will represent small scale too. I would be careful with the statement a 100% small scale. We have 1 member over 12m, and this issue could make that we exclude ourselves. We should maybe have a range. Another issue is that the chair in the AC is a paid position. Depending on who chairs they set the agenda too. DGMARE can't just wash their hands. There's a new PO in Ireland who is a member of the AC. All others are large scale.

Bengt: We are represented at 18% only we should increase it at 80% - Some use towed gear on a seasonal basis.

Marta - One thing I would suggest. If we go with 100%, there's a problem. But we should set a range that we are comfortable with and is high enough. Maybe we should send a survey to our members to understand what % of under 12m non towed gears they have so we set it with more information.

Wolfgang - I don't think we need a survey. If there are 10 times more fisher than the big scale. How about: one small scale fisher should be on the advisory board instead.

Christian - Commission have made some proposals on indicators. If we do a %, it's a dangerous game. Or we should look at landings more than the number of boats. Looking at the volume than number of boats. If we ask organisation who they are representing.

On the election of the chair, it is a good way to causing difficulty. If the seats have increased to 30 it is clear that these are for Small Scale.

Seamus: Another issue – there is a lack of SSF organisation that can apply. Most fishermen in Ireland are not members of a PO.

MC will circulate again the position and will inform when we would have a meeting with the DG Mare

Seine Coulissante Appeal

Gwenn explains what happened last year. After catching 137 tonnes. Which is the quarter of the annual quota. These boats and gears are for Sardines or Anchovies. The appeal is to avoid them from fishing within the 6nm zone.

Seamus: in Ireland we have a 6nm ban for trawling, or trying at least. What legal measures do we use for this?

Brian: In the case of Seine Coulissante. In some seasons you have these species within the 6 nm zone. Which is the argument.

Marta will send to everyone the concrete appeal document, which states all the legal framework.

Bluefin tuna case update.

Brian shared the history of the court case. The president of the organisation has removed it's case (probably bought by the organisation that owns 95% of the Tuna quote in the Mediterranean).

Gwenn adds. To clarify, 95% of the quota is owned by 1 OP in the Mediterranean (SATHOAN).

We are Waiting for the Judge's decision in 1 month. With this court case - we are questioning THE French government allocation of quotas of Tuna in France but could be a precedent for other species too. LIFE will follow closely.

Gwen adds that it's frustrating, because the Tuna are very abundant. We are seeing them as soon as January in our waters... frustrating to see them and not being able to fish them.

Any other business

Marta adds an additional topic, on the Communications officer. Thanks to Seaglow we can make the position a full time one, which LIFE really needs. We offered the position to Annya but she refused as she wants to continue and grow her work at sea. Therefore, we jointly agreed to incorporate a new person before the Seaglow project starts in May. MC explains that before opening a new process again we decided to approach Claudia Orlandini as we really liked how she worked in the past. Happily, she is willing to come back and although we are still in conversations about salary it seems its going on the right direction to incorporate her soon. MC thanks publicly Annya's work and hope we can count on her in the future. Everybody is happy with the news and thank Annya's work.

The meeting finishes on time and thank all the attendants and interpreters.