



Board of Director's Meeting

**Held at the Institute of Cultural Affairs Belgium (ICAB),
Rue Amedée Lynen, 1210 Brussels**

28 of June 2024 (9:00-15:00). Face to face and online

Interpretation into: German, French, Spanish, English

Minutes- English version

Present:

Life BOD Members: Bengt Larsson, Gwen Pennarun, Katarzyna Stepanowska, Bally Philp, Luis Rodriguez. On-line: Seamus Bonner, Wolfgang Albrecht, Jeremy Percy

Other members (observers): Macarena Molina

LIFE Staff: Marta Cavallé, Christian Tsangarides; Brian O'Riordan, Claudia Orlandini

Apologies: Christian Decugis, Federico Gelmi

Agenda

- Opening and welcome by Luis Rodriguez, Secretary of LIFE (substitute for Christian Decugis, President of LIFE (absent))
- Main issues of discussion, presented by LIFE secretariat
 - o Brief update by LIFE Directors
 - o Brief update of the work being done by the Secretariat
 - o Approval of 2023 financial report
 - o Small-scale fisheries and offshore wind farms
 - o SSF on the Advisory Councils (ACs)
 - o Reflection on what is SSF and Low Impact- towards a LIFE's working definition.
- Any other business

Meeting

1. Agenda and Minutes of the last meeting

Luis Rodriguez (LR) introduced the 2T meeting of the Board, Agenda and Minutes. They were all unanimously approved by a show of hands

2. Brief update



Marta Cavallé (MC) welcomed everyone. Mentioned the passing of John Walsh, from Bere Island, and member of IIMRO. Welcomes Claudia. No observers from the Membership were joining as observers to the meeting.

Luis Rodriguez (LR) described the difficult situation that Pescartes is working under (no shore side infrastructure, new Government, new officials to deal with, fuel diesel issue), but highlighted progress on several fronts (outreach in schools, direct sales, tourism, using the Moruna (fixed tuna gear) out of the tuna season).

Gwen Pennarun (GP) mentioned the project with Bloom to campaign against very large fishing vessels, and results with former Fisheries Minister blocking entry of non-French vessels to French waters. Dutch companies are buying French vessels.

Bally Philp (BP) mentioned the upcoming UK elections – a relatively quiet time. There is an on-going Judicial Review of fishing licenses, but not clear what changes may come out.

Bengt Larsson (BL) noted little has changed in the fishery for him/ SSF in Sweden over the last 5 years, since the Cod ban. This means that the main winter fishery has disappeared, and all that remains are short and less productive spring and summer fisheries, that creates difficulties in maintaining an income all year round. And of course, not forgetting seals and cormorants!

Wolfgang Albrecht (WA) echoed Bengt's observations. Mentioned 9 point plan. Highlighted off-shore wind development. Low future expectations.

Kasia Stepanowska (KS) highlighted lack of quotas, lack of cos[??], lack of herring quota; destruction of gears by marine mammals; parasites in fish; Article 17 (as solution); climate change and warmer waters (flat fish migrate into deeper waters); fishers need to fish deeper waters (from 20 m to 30 m).

Seamus Bonner (SB) currently in Portugal for Fish-X AGM; visited by film makers (Oceana/ LIFE project); local elections so briefing new Councillors; Pollack closure; fuel is an on-going issue – no fuel support in Ireland; new EMFAF programme opened for new fishing boats; working with Abalobi; engaged in off-shore renewable working group – much movement behind off shore wind (not encouraging); decarbonisation project – looking at more fuel efficient “panga” vessel design from Mexico; trying to get allocation of additional mackerel quota; worried about Icelandic access to Irish waters (Ireland has no capacity to monitor or control such vessels); national action plans for Nature Restoration.

Jeremy Percy (JP) said that it was a continuing disaster in the UK. No fish/ shellfish/ fin fish/ few fishable stocks on the inshore grounds. Even so, some crab vessels fishing 10.000 pots. In the new Government, policy a key issue is how to deal with flyshooters/ seiners; how to deal with climate change; not optimistic; but working with Universities.



Marta Cavallé (MC) highlighted some key issues: Results of European Elections and next steps to be happening the following weeks. Nature Restoration Law was recently approved which can be potentially good but need to evaluate the details once it is published. Last week the Commission published a call for evidence for the evaluation of the CFP which has 6th of September as a deadline and LIFE will work over the summer on a reply, any member can also send their own feedback. LIFE was busy following and participating in several Commission led initiatives, naming the Energy transition Partnership, Fishers of the Future, the Special Group of the Marine Action Plan, EU Maritime Day and European Blue Forum or (a stakeholder forum on the Blue Economy on which LIFE has been main speaker in their main events). The Commission also launched a consultation on a potential Vademecum on Article 17 (which we responded to). LIFE also joined several campaigns: make fishing fair, joined Oceana and Client Earth around the issue of energy transition, video project on Article 17 with Oceana; joined meetings of the European Food Coalition and their focus group on Fisheries and Aquaculture, which could be an interesting lobby group that follows processes external to the PECH committee. Upcoming there is an event on October 1st of Brussels NGOs called "Ocean's week" (once there is a concrete programme agreed we will circulate it) which is endorsed by Patagonia. However, the first half of the year has been especially busy starting 4 new projects: Rethinking Fisheries, Round Goby, SeaGlow, Fish-X (explained in the main content)

Claudia Orlandini (CO) happy to be back in LIFE, feels very much at home. Noted that: Newsletter is being published in 11 languages; the website content has been reorganised; several campaigns are underway (decarbonisation, fair fishing, food imperialism, nature restoration law. She has also been occupied with Oceana on a video on Article 17; getting the SeaGlow project underway;

Christian Tsangarides (CT) spent three days in Brussels for the BANS cod event, the ExCom of BSAC, and the BoD meeting. The Round Goby project is underway, and there is ongoing work on gear development with Sweden and Latvia. In the framework of the Velux project, CT has been participating in the ACs, and looking into how misuse of science has undermined SSF coastal fisheries. Science is overpredicting fish biomass and is encouraging mismanagement.

(MC) continued explaining the fundraising opportunities and some internal aspects. LIFE Report 2023 is on the way and will kick off the membership fee. MC asked whether the membership fee should continue the same system as it was now, there were no objections. A new vacancy for an admin/bookkeeping position will be offered very soon as a part-time position in our team (ideally at the Brussels office).

3. Approval of Financial Report

The Financial Report for 2023 was presented by **BOR**. It was unanimously approved by a show of hands, so it will be presented as it is to the Belgian Government System.

4. Small Scale Fisheries and Offshore Windfarms



The agenda item was presented by **MC**. She referred to the uncertainties on the impact, need for independent scientific assessments that look at the environmental, but also social and economic impacts as well. Potential effects on spatial squeezing and displacement. Lack of effective participation of SSF into the MSP processes. There is the MSP Directive (Directive 2014/89/EU) which we need to incorporate in our daily work. She noted a lack of clarity with regard to whether SSF will be allowed or not as there are increasing speeches on multi-use, but unclear if that would be really possible due to danger of navigation and potential environmental impacts.

LIFE has started to prioritise this topic given the increase in concerns from our members and has taken a few actions. Attended the Wind Europe event in Bilbao, as main speaker at the EU Blue Forum, organised a meeting with Felix Leineman DG Mare and joined a Rethink Blue initiative which brings together many academics working on the subject.

The meeting with DGMare highlighted a few things: there is an upcoming ICES evaluation of the environmental, social and economic impact of offshore renewables/ windfarms with results coming in Spring 2025. Another study on the spillover effects in windfarms. On the issue of safety, they are doing some trials in the Netherlands to assess the real risk and potential best practices/solutions. There is an MSP Expert Group where we could try to participate at EU level. Also indicated a portal where many studies, recommendations and guidance are there on the MSP issues, including on multiuse.

SB highlighted potential impact of shoreside infrastructure and cable laying, besides the displacement aspect, which clearly affects spawning grounds (of herring). Important to advocate for tenure rights and use the SSF guidelines as a main tool against privatisation.

WA highlighted that there seems to be a tendency for SSF to be allowed, while trawling sector definitely excluded.

Various concerns were raised about windfarms in a general and wide-ranging discussion. Key issues arising: power of wind energy lobby; lack of concern/ awareness by structures representing fishers, notably in France where the CNPMM just rubber stamped the windfarm proposals without discussion; issue of compensation for displaced SSF when SSF don't show on the map (no vessel tracking system yet); issue of traditional/ legal tenure rights of SSF; issue of displacement of larger vessel fleet into inshore grounds;

Bally Philp (BP) advised that it's going to be very difficult to stop the Windfarm development because there is already a strategy approved and all the political will for it. What we could really do is to make sure there is a proper assessment of impacts and amendments to the design of the project, that SSF are in negotiation at a very early stage, that we are engaged effectively in MSP, that we make sure static gears are allowed, that compensation benefits the fishers and communities not only on their representative bodies, and in general propose a code of conduct and best practices. We suspect the wind industry would be willing to have this



code of conduct. On the issue of environmental effects he mentioned that in the Scottish case there is a big problem with those cables and electromagnetism as the crab migrates and cannot pass the cables, for example.

LR mentioned that in their case, being next to an MPA benefited them as the project of a windfarm was finally stopped, but it displaced the problem somewhere else nearby. LSF will accept negotiations as they have ability to move somewhere else but we don't. In Andalucía there are many windfarms on land that have finalised their service and are now abandoned. We need to raise the voice for this not to happen and when there is a possibility the companies should just reuse and renew an old concession on land and not at sea. We need to follow all this closely, all in all, the fishers' won't benefit from the reduction of the energy invoices.

Gwen Pennarun (GP) we didn't see this coming. This was decided a long time ago (10-15 years ago) but just now we realise we are affected. Now it can be too late to oppose but we need to negotiate for reductions of impact, better technologies and try to influence the process.

BP agreed that we can modify the farm but not take it out, cables in another places. We could use the process to promote a just transition for the industry, push them to fund the decarbonisation of our fleet, etc. We need to pitch much higher and ask for 5% of their profits to be put into a fund for this, for example.

MC proposed to establish a dedicated working group within LIFE (BOD members and volunteer members willing to contribute) to write a statement with all our views and proposals. The proposal was accepted.

5. SSF in the ACs

CT updated the meeting on the situation of SSF in ACs in the BSAC and MC refreshed the earlier discussions held in a meeting and by email.

SB explained the latest developments in the SWWAC, where they have been prevented to be in the EXCOM for the 3rd time. They are valorising leaving the AC. Efforts could be considered to build a SSF Advisory Council instead. Would like to know what other members of LIFE think about this proposal.

General discussion on issues: imbalance of representation, also ENGOs pulling out; is a dedicated SSF AC feasible? desirable? useful? Whose responsibility is it to decide on SSF participation – MS, EC, ACs - careful that this does not fall between stools.

The discussion moved naturally into the next point of the agenda: too many terms – how to define sustainability; need to take care not to reinvent too many terms; length of vessel increasingly inappropriate as a yardstick for fisheries management.

6. Reflection on Defining SSF and Low Impact Fishing



MC introduced the item, noting that there are at least two approaches:

- “narrative” definition based on specific criteria/ characteristics (improve the 12m, non-towed gear definition)
- matrix approach (developed by the FAO through the “Hidden Harvests” project).

MC explained how even though we have publicly always endorsed the EMFAF definition, we have worked internally on a matrix approach in the Foodnected project that could serve as a basis for discussion (together with the FAO model), needs refinement and concretion.

BP highlighted that such a complex issue needs time, more than just one afternoon; we must not fall into the trap of over simplification; need to decide on what indicators to use; confine the definition to Europe; take the time necessary – 8 to 12 months.

SB questioned why we need a new definition. What benefits are there?

GP we need to differentiate what is SSF and what is Low Impact. This matrix approach could do that

JP the perfect is the enemy of the good – existing definition is OK (under 12 metres, non-towed gears, isn’t it? Don’t conflate SSF definition with PGS/ FoodNected criteria/ values [or with low impact, the two are not necessarily the same!]. Matrix approach is useful, but end result is important. It gives the opportunity to use socio-economic criteria as well as technical criteria

Conclusions:

- continue to use the CFP EMFAF definition
- work internally on matrix approach and other ways to define SSF
- keep it simple, don’t overcomplicate it, need a definition fishers can identify with;
- need to include criteria of a social, environmental and economic nature in our definition;
- definition needs to differentiate SSF from others and to highlight benefits

The meeting ended at 15:00h