

How to select areas that complement local strategies and organisational capacity?

What do the regulations say?

The EFF Regulation states that:

- The “areas must be limited in size and, as a general rule smaller than NUTS 3” (Article 43.3)
- “The priority areas should *either* have a low population density *or* fishing in decline *or* small fisheries communities” (Article 43.4)
- The Regulation adds later that “The area must also be sufficiently *coherent and*
- have sufficient *critical mass* in terms of human, financial and economic resources to support a viable local development strategy” (Article 45.3)

The Implementing Regulation states that:

- “The operational programme shall specify the procedures and the criteria for selecting the fisheries areas. Member States shall decide how they will apply articles 43.3 (referring to size) and 43.4 of the Regulation” (referring to population density, fishing decline or population size) mentioned in the first two bullet points above (IR Article 22.1).
- “The fisheries areas selected do not necessarily have to coincide with a national administrative area or with zones established for the purposes of eligibility under the objectives established by the Structural Funds.” (IR Article 22.2). In other words they do not have fall within the Convergence or Competitiveness and Employment Objectives.

What to look for to define appropriate areas?

- What are the territorial priorities of the MS in the Operational Programme and how do these relate to the selection procedure and criteria (open call for tender, one phase, two phases, restricted eligibility, all fishing areas, the most innovatory areas, the most deprived....)
- How many areas will be chosen and what will be their size? Will they have sufficient critical mass in terms of their population and their resources? Is there a risk that they are too large in terms of their population and/or geographical size for the strategy and budget proposed?
- What will be the main characteristics of the fishing areas selected? How are they affected by fishing decline? Are they especially low density areas? Are they made up of small fisheries communities? Do they have other special characteristics?
- Are the areas sufficiently coherent in terms of identity, geography or economic activities?
- Do they fit with existing administrative boundaries?
- Are the areas dominated by a large centre of population or one activity? What is the weight of fishing activities within them?
- Are the areas continuous? If so are they sufficiently compact and homogeneous for organising a coherent strategy and involving the population?

- If the areas are not continuous, do they have enough points in common for implementing a bottom-up and effective development strategy

What to avoid?

- A dispersal of resources which prevents Axis 4 having a leverage effect - either because there are too many areas, these areas are too small or because the areas are too big.
- A lack of transparency in the selection criteria of the areas. Distribution of funds on political grounds.
- The spending priorities do not reflect the needs and potential of fishing areas as described in the strategy. The budget is simply divided up mechanically
- The areas are too diverse in social, economic or geographical terms to organise a common strategy.
- There is a mismatch with administrative boundaries which complicates the involvement of local authorities and effective management of the strategy. At the other extreme, when the boundaries coincide exactly, there can be a risk that the group is just absorbed within one administrative structure.
- Fishing communities are in a very small minority within the area.
- The strategy and budget is dominated by one large centre of activity within the area.
- The areas are not continuous and have little in common other than the fact that there is some fishing in them.

Advice given in the official working document prepared for the conference on the implementation of Axis 4, "The sustainable Development of Fisheries Areas", held on 25-27 January 2007 in Seville, Spain. Full document:

http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/meetings_events/events/archives/events_2007/250107/working_doc_en.pdf