

Area Selection Criteria

The EMFF Regulation (art. 18 (g)) requires that the Operational Programme should contain “a list of criteria applied for selecting the fisheries and aquaculture areas” (section 5.1.2 of the OP Template). The purpose of this requirement is to explain the main focus of Union Priority 4 by indicating which areas Managing Authority envisages as most appropriate for the application of CLLD and why.

This set of questions is intended to help the MA in defining this focus and describing it in the OP. The following questions are addressed:

- 1. What should I write in the OP about criteria for selecting the fisheries and aquaculture areas?**
- 2. What kind of criteria could I use?**
- 3. Why can I not provide a fixed list of areas in the OP?**
- 4. Can large ports (over 150 000 inhabitants) be considered eligible?**
- 5. How can I take regional differences into account?**
- 6. What considerations should guide the definition of criteria for designating fisheries areas?**

1. What should I write in the OP about criteria for selecting the fisheries and aquaculture areas?

According to the EMFF Regulation (Art. 3.2.5), a fisheries and aquaculture area is “an area with a sea, river or lake shore, including ponds or a river basin, with a significant level of employment in fisheries or aquaculture, that is functionally coherent in geographical, economic and social terms and is designated as such by a Member State”.

The MA could in principle designate all the fisheries and aquaculture areas as eligible for CLLD, but most MAs would focus EMFF funding on those areas where the application of CLLD would bring greatest benefits for fisheries communities, in relation to the challenges these areas face and their potential for growth and creation of jobs. In the OP the MA will have to specify which criteria it will use to make this policy choice. The intention is not to present a list of areas in the OP, since the definition of precise boundaries should be left to the local level (see below), but to explain what factors would be taken into account in determining whether a given area is eligible for CLLD or not.

2. What kind of criteria could I use?

Area selection criteria could include:

- › Criteria describing the size and importance of the fishing and aquaculture sector (employment, numbers and size of boats or ponds, nature and type of fishing, landings/production size, value...);
- › Criteria describing the character of the area: coastal, estuary, river or lake, protected areas, maximum and minimum population sizes, population density, population decline, remote areas;
- › Criteria related to the coherence of the area of intervention – the possibility of having areas separated by lakes or dotted along a coast, the coverage of larger ports and settlements (see below).

In formulating these criteria the MA should use the information provided in the context indicators (required for section 2.2 of the OP Template).

Example: UK area selection criteria (2007-2013) include:

- › Low population density
- › Fisheries in decline
- › Small fishing communities
- › At least one active fishing port (England)

3. Why can I not provide a fixed list of areas in the OP?

The guidance to EMFF OP Template, provided by the Commission to complement the Implementing Regulation 771/2014, makes it clear that Managing Authorities should not present a closed list of areas in their OP. The list of criteria should be used to identify the types of areas that are eligible for support, but not the exact areas themselves.

By definition, Community-Led Local Development is a bottom-up process, whose success depends upon being able to forge effective alliances between local actors who share a set of common goals. This requires negotiations at local level to secure the real commitment of key organisations and stakeholders spread across the territory. The definition of the exact boundaries of the area will be the outcome of these negotiations. The criteria for designating eligible areas should not try to predetermine this or impose artificial solutions that may turn to be unworkable on the ground.

4. Can large ports (over 150 000 inhabitants) be considered eligible for CLLD?

In some countries most fishing employment and most job losses in fisheries occurs in large ports. If the MA considers that CLLD could be an effective tool to deal with the challenges in those areas, then this could be allowed. However, this exception must be accepted by the Commission in the Partnership agreement and must be justified in the Operational Programme, including an explanation from the MA on the method that will be used to avoid the dispersion of funds if such a large area becomes eligible.

5. How can I take regional differences into account when drawing out the criteria for identifying fisheries areas in my OP?

The challenges facing fishing and fishing areas can vary enormously within a single country. As a result, each region in a regionalised country may decide to use different criteria. In principle this is possible, as long as this approach is justified in the OP and the whole section does not exceed 7 000 characters. A possible solution would be to present (in an annex to the OP) a table setting out the general criteria and the specific regional ones, if needed.

6. What considerations should guide the definition of criteria for designating fisheries areas?

When developing criteria for identifying eligible fisheries areas, the MAs need to bear in mind the following points:

- › What am I trying to achieve with CLLD in fisheries areas and who am I trying to support? For example, are fishing communities the main target, or just an important part of broader coastal development? Do I want to support the whole fishing community or only those facing the most difficulties?
- › How many resources are available for UP4 and how many FLAGs can be financed? Countries with limited resources in relation to the potential areas may wish to establish more focused area selection criteria.
- › What impacts will the criteria have on different parts of the fishing community or activity of the FLAG? For example, criteria based on the number of boats may favour small scale fishing; those based on landings may favour larger scale fishing; population limits may exclude large ports with the most fishing employment or crucial markets for fisheries products.

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