

Evaluation of the implementation of the Mar2020 Operational Programme

Executive Summary

12 March 2020



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Promoter



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Executive Summary

1. Introduction

This “Evaluation of the implementation of the Mar2020 Operational Programme (OP Mar2020)” has been prepared under the framework of the Programme Evaluation

Plan, part of Portugal2020 Global Evaluation Plan approved under article 56(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December.

This document constitutes the Executive Summary (ES) of the “Evaluation of the implementation of the Mar2020 Operational Programme (OP Mar2020)”, prepared by EY under the service agreement with the OP Mar2020 Managing Authority (MA). The ES briefly presents the topics developed in the study including the evaluation objectives and scope, as well as the adopted methodology, key conclusions from evaluation matters and recommendations.

2. Background and scope of the evaluation

The OP Mar2020 substantiates the support and use of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) in Portugal. The EMFF intervention is based on the principles of smart (knowledge and innovation), sustainable (efficient use of resources and biodiversity) and inclusive (creation and diversification of employment in coastal regions) growth. The EMFF also supports the dynamization of the remaining components of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP).

The OP Mar2020 aims at implementing in Portugal EMFF measures to promote competitiveness based on innovation and knowledge; support the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the fisheries and aquaculture sector; promote the Integrated Maritime Policy and development of

coastal regions, foster employment and qualification of sector professionals and promote territorial cohesion.

In line with European objectives, the OP Mar2020 is structured around seven Investment Priorities (IP) which aggregate a total of 29 measures:

- ▶ IP1 - Promote fishery that is environmentally sustainable, resource-efficient, innovative, competitive and knowledge based, aimed at balancing the fishing capacity and the resources available, promoting more selective fisheries and reducing undesired captures;
- ▶ IP2 - Promote aquaculture that is environmentally sustainable, resource-efficient, innovative, competitive and knowledge based, aimed at making the sector more competitive and successful, quality centred, health safety and environment-friendly production, and also at providing high-quality, high nutritional value and reliable products to consumers;
- ▶ IP3 - Foster the CFP execution, improving data collection, scientific knowledge, control and enforcement of fisheries legislation;
- ▶ IP4 - Increase employment and territorial cohesion, supporting fishing and aquaculture coastal and inland communities to obtain more value for their products and diversify their economy, opening it to other maritime opportunities such as tourism and direct sales;
- ▶ IP5 - Promote the commercialization and transformation of fisheries and aquaculture products, improving market organization, disclosure of market information and consumers' access to information on the largest world market of fisheries products;
- ▶ IP6 - Implementation of the IMP, improving knowledge about the sea, better planning of sea-related activities, promoting cooperation on maritime surveillance and managing maritime basins according to the respective specific needs;
- ▶ IP7 - Technical assistance.

The indicative financial programming for the set of Mar2020 IP and Measures for the period 2014-2020 amounts to 392,5 million Euros of EMFF financing, including the performance reserve (around 23,5 million Euros).

The approval of OP Mar2020 occurred approximately one year later than most Portugal 2020 Operational Programmes. This has led to a significant lag on the Programme kick-off and, therefore, on its effective operationalization and implementation.

Financial data reported until 31 December 2018 indicated that about 60% of the financial programming (approximately 235,2 million Euros) was allocated to the support of 2.564 projects. On that date, the amount effectively paid represented nearly 24% (94 million Euros) and certified expenditure amounted to 17% (68,1 million Euros) of total financial programming, respectively.

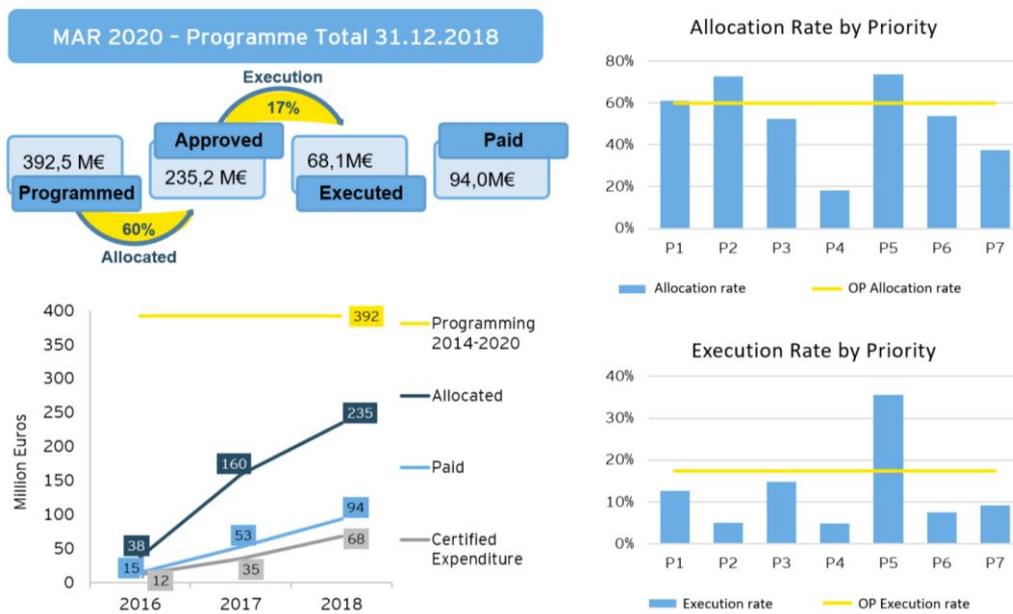
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MAR 2020 - Execution | 31.12.2018



3. Evaluation objectives, scope and methodology

This evaluation's main objective is appraising how the OP Mar2020 has been implemented, assessing its effectiveness and expected impacts and in this way contributing to improving its execution. A set of key aspects have oriented the development of the evaluation, and these translate into the following specific objectives:

- ▶ Assess the OP Mar2020 implementation process, the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance model adopted, and the instruments created to achieve the desired objectives;
- ▶ Identify dimensions within the OP Mar2020 implementation process that require adjustments and improvements;
- ▶ Assess how initial results may anticipate the achievement of the set objectives and goals.

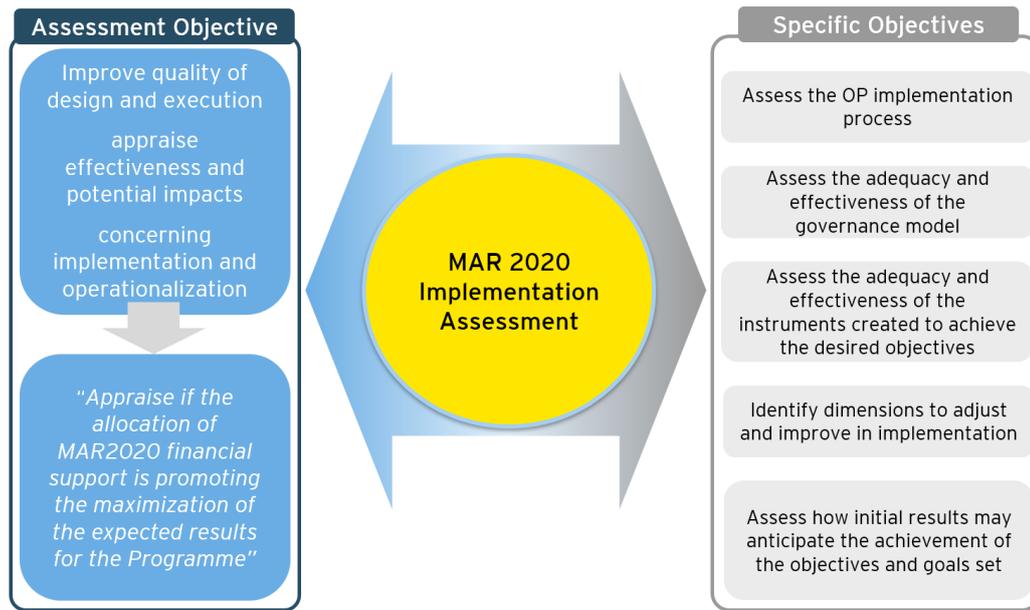
This evaluation has been performed in an intermediate stage of the Programme's execution, in which there is already a considerable degree of allocation and a volume of projects in execution that allows the drawing of preliminary conclusions regarding the Programme's performance, compared to what was expected at the time of its inception.

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MAR 2020 - Assessment Objectives



Global methodological approach

As the evaluation has been performed during an intermediate stage of execution of the OP, the focus of the study is not on appraising the effective results of interventions, but rather on appraising the predictability of the supported projects (having in consideration its features) being capable of leading to the expected results.

The scope of the evaluation includes different units of analysis: the project (or application) and the promoters (which may develop several projects and applications), including both public and private entities. This requires a characterization of the evaluation scope in its widest configuration of "potential demand" (the universe of potential applicants based on eligibility criteria) and the "effective demand" (applications); and in a more "restrict" configuration of "attainments" (approved projects).

By being an operational evaluation, the scope of analysis also includes the action of entities responsible for the management of the OP, whether in roles of dynamization and response to demand or in roles of control and management of selection and execution processes. The evaluation thus covers the operationalization of the OP throughout the entire lifecycle of operations.

Intervention Logic and Theory of Change

Considering the global objective of this evaluation and the prime focus of analysis on the operationalization of interventions, the use of evaluation approaches based on the Theory of Change is particularly relevant.

The Theory of Change was structured respecting the assumptions and rationale behind the programming. As such, the analysis of programming documents and the auscultation of entities responsible for the programming became fundamental. The Theory of Change was built following 5 steps: a) identifying long-term objectives; b) mapping the chain of results; c) identifying Theory assumptions and rationale; d) identifying Programme activities and respective attainments; and e) identifying deployed resources (financial, human and organizational).

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In addition to testing the chain of activities-attainments-results-impacts (and specific risks) related to the domains of intervention of the OP, the evaluation was also concerned with testing the set of underlying assumptions, i.e., the necessary conditions to ensure the sequence implicit in the chain of results.

To safeguard the attainment of activities within the OP domain of intervention it is essential to ensure two major operational objectives which aggregate the prerequisites needed for such attainment: ensuring that the OP drives qualified demand and enables the selection of the best projects within those that contribute the most to the objectives and goals set [mobilization of demand and selection of projects] and, simultaneously, ensuring that the MA and the Intermediate Entities (IE) have adequate structures and processes for the implementation of the OP [governance model capable of potentiating the effectiveness and efficiency of instruments].

To ensure the achievement of identified activities in the relevant dimensions the following prerequisites were considered under the operational objective “mobilization of demand and selection of projects”:

- a) Instruments are adequate to the needs of potential beneficiaries and flexible in the adaptation to different activities, types of fisheries and regional and local contexts;
- b) Stakeholders are involved in an effective and committed way on the design and implementation of the OP;
- c) Regulations, calls for tenders, selection criteria, application forms and respective guidelines are clear and accessible, contributing to the mobilization of qualified demand;
- d) Tenders' schedule is regular and upheld, promoting predictability of support, planning of investment decisions, efficiency in the allocation of resources in the IE and the management of allocations by the MA;
- e) Promotional actions allow an adequate dissemination of information about instruments to target audiences and capture of qualified demand for them, channels used are adequate to the target audience and to the type of information being promoted, the information shared is clear and objective.

In parallel, the governance model should foster the effectiveness and efficiency of programmed instruments, ensuring the verification of the following prerequisites:

- a) Information requested on applications has in consideration the principles of simplification of access to financing and the reduction of the respective administrative costs (the support provided in the application phase is effective and prompt);
- b) The processes of analysis and decision on applications, contracting of projects and processing of payment requests occur within deadlines and these are feasible based on deployed resources;
- c) Support information systems and communication instruments enable a good management of the project cycle and promote management efficiency, facilitating the compliance with obligations and procedures by candidates and promoters.

Subsequently, so that previously identified attainments drive the expected results, it will be equally necessary the verification of the following prerequisites:

- a) Contracting enables projects to meet results and the indicators established for each type of project are appropriate according to the objectives that are intended to be met with the respective instruments and contribute to/are articulated with performance indicators for the OP;
- b) Projects' monitoring during execution is adequate to bring in a timely manner any eventual adjustments that ensure the effectiveness of interventions and, consequently, the achievement of expected impacts;
- c) Operations supported achieve the planned results and these are aligned with indicators and goals of the OP.

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Lastly, so that identified results generate the desired impacts, the following prerequisites should be met:

- a) Expected quantitative impacts - the set of supported projects is capable of generating relevant quantitative effects;
- b) Expected qualitative impacts - the qualitative relevance of supported projects is capable of contributing to the desired impacts (competitiveness + sustainability);
- c) Effects' compatibility - expected impacts are compatible and have synergic potential;
- d) Relevance of external factors - limit or potentiate the effects arising from projects.

Methodological instruments and methods of information collection and analysis

The methodological approach adopted values the participation of key stakeholders in the evaluation process, being underpinned by a wide range of methods and techniques of data collection, qualitative and quantitative information treatment and analysis. These methods and techniques have been selected following a thorough reading of the methodological and technical implications linked to each evaluation matter.

The methods and techniques used in the collection of information include document collection, data collection and systematisation, interviews/meetings, survey, focus groups and case studies. For data treatment the integrated analysis of both qualitative information and quantitative data was selected.

The methodological approach has favoured, on the one hand, the combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques of data collection, treatment and analysis, and on the other hand, the active participation of relevant stakeholders during the evaluation process to allow data triangulation. The following methods and techniques have been deployed:

- ▶ Document and data collection: conducted with the support of the Cohesion and Development Agency (AD&C), the OP Mar2020 MA and IE;
- ▶ Interviews: seven interviews were conducted with stakeholders with managing responsibilities;
- ▶ Focus groups: six focus groups (FG) occurred, with the participation of entities responsible for the management of the EMFF, companies, organizations and associations from the sector, entities with responsibilities in maritime-port administration and in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, as well as entities from the national scientific and technological system;
- ▶ Case studies: six case studies were conducted;
- ▶ Survey to OP Mar2020 candidates: the survey was launched to the entirety of candidates for which it was possible to obtain an email address. Survey collaboration requests were sent to a total of 480 promoters and a total of 210 responses were obtained (reaching a 44% response rate), which represents a remarkable participation and collaboration effort by (potential) beneficiaries of OP Mar2020.

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MAR 2020 – Methodology and auscultation process

INTERVIEWS	Date
Manager and Deputy Manager	15/07/2019 24/07/2019
IFAP	29/07/2019
DGPM	11/10/2019
DGRM	21/10/2019
Azores Regional Coordinator	23/10/2019
Madeira Regional Coordinator	31/10/2019
AD&C	14/11/2019

FOCUS GROUPS	Date	Participants
FG1: Fisheries	24/07/2019	23
FG2: Transformation and comercialization	24/07/2019	17
FG3: CLLD	03/10/2019	14
FG4: IMP and CFP	15/10/2019	9
FG5: Governance and management model	15/10/2019	18
FG6: Outermost regions	15/10/2019	10

CASE STUDIES
P1 - Investments on board
P2 - Aquaculture sustainable development
P5 - Transformation of fisheries' products

SURVEY
Universe of promoters (480)
Response rate of 44%

4. Key conclusions of the evaluation

From the evaluation performed a set of general conclusions can be draw. One key conclusion worth mentioning is that OP Mar2020 is a comprehensive, diverse, sensitive and complex Programme.

The OP Mar2020 is a **comprehensive** and rather **diverse** programme, as it covers four Thematic Objectives (TO) of Portugal 2020, related to the three dimensions of European growth agendas, namely:

- Smart growth agenda, which includes the objective of reinforcing companies' competitiveness (TO3);
- Sustainable growth agenda, which includes the objectives of supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy and preserving and protecting the environment (TO4 and TO6);
- Inclusive growth agenda, which includes the objective of sustainability and quality in employment and support to employees' mobility (TO8).

Likewise, the OP Mar2020 is a **sensitive** programme as it continuously integrates and develops a balance between the objectives for the promotion of a more competitive and more resource-efficient sector and the need to preserve the sustainability of its resources. This trade-off between the two aspects is transversal to the Programme and to all actors involved in its implementation. There is a profound awareness from the community of stakeholders of this Programme regarding the needed and sensitive balance between the two aspects - competitiveness versus sustainability - and it is recognized by all that the long-term competitiveness of the sector relies on its sustainability.

The OP Mar2020 is, simultaneously, a **complex** programme, as it encompasses different types of financing instruments, from more "classic" instruments of investment financing, framed under structural funds, to new support formats, previously operated directly by the European Commission. In this sense, the Programme includes dimensions related to investment support, income support, insurances, training programmes and operational support (with the integration of CFP and IMP in the OP). Some of these supports coexist in a "more comfortably and peacefully" way than others, considering the regulative framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) in general and of the EMFF in particular.

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The multiplicity of objectives and instruments coexisting under the OP Mar2020 and the inherent logic of differentiated intervention poses additional challenges to the management and operationalization of the OP, under a continuous dilemma between the needs expressed by demand and the available instruments, framed under EU regulations. The permanent trade-off between competitiveness and sustainability generates an apparent overvaluation of the latter, with consequences at the European regulatory framework level that may in fact question the enforcement of the principle of subsidiarity in the allocation of EU funds.

A set of conclusions resulting from the evaluation exercise is presented below, organized under three major themes related to the OP implementation:

- From the configuration process to the implementation and stakeholders' involvement;
- From operationalization to management and monitoring;
- From attainments to results and potential impacts.

From the configuration process to the implementation and stakeholders' involvement

No	Topic	Conclusion
C01	Stakeholders/ partners involved in the design and implementation of the OP	The framework under which the OP Mar2020 is developed is multiple and diverse, due to the triple nature of entities participating in the strategic design / definition and in the monitoring of the OP execution, bodies/entities directly related to the operationalization of financial support and entities representing the demand for the Programme, materializing the nature and objectives aimed by the interventions. The sector most relevant stakeholders/partners were involved in the design of the OP Mar2020 and have an effective intervention on its operationalization.
C02	Involvement of the Monitoring Committee (MC)	The MC has had limited intervention and participation on the implementation of the OP, in particular on the development of reflexion and strategic analysis initiatives concerning the OP Mar2020 domains of intervention. The MC intervention usually arises in response to requests from the MA and/or in the context of responsibilities related to the legal framework.
C03	MA structure and threefold management	The current structure and threefold management of the MA poses challenges to the articulation between parts, which are aggravated by the geographic distance between players (mainland versus Azores Autonomous Region versus Madeira Autonomous Region). Although surmountable, this structure does not promote the daily/regular management of the OP.
C04	Responsibilities management and delegation model	The management model adopted by the OP Mar2020 is quite dense and decentralized, involving multiple IE with different levels of experience and capacity in the implementation and management of EU financing. This requires strong articulation and cooperation between the MA and the IE and among the latter. The MA's role is reinforced also on training initiatives, issuance of technical guidelines and supervision of delegated responsibilities.

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C05	Strategic management and decision process versus project execution and monitoring phase	Although it includes many bodies that support the management and implementation of the EMFF, the management model concentrates the strategic management and decision process of the entire Programme in the OP Mar2020 MA. Regarding the follow-up, monitoring and financial reporting of the operations, the MA delegated to the IE some tasks inherent to management checks, such as carrying out administrative controls on payment requests in some measures and <i>in loco</i> controls, limiting an overall and integrated overview of the operations execution. In order to streamline the management of the Programme, the MA took the initiative to create an information system, which is currently being implemented, to improve the integration of the data available in the Agriculture and Fisheries Financing Institute (IFAP) system.
C06	Roles and responsibilities attributed to IFAP	The extension of roles and responsibilities attributed to the IFAP, including management responsibilities as diverse as those of an IE, paying entity and segregated audit structure, require IFAP to have in place an organizational structure that ensures the needed segregation of functions, as well as added technical and efficiency capacities.

From operationalization to management and monitoring

C07	Annual call for tenders' plan	The predictability and reliability in the call for tenders' plan for the projects financing is essential, both for a good management of the available financial support and for the promoters' guidance. Despite the existence and publication of the call for tenders' plan, there were some difficulties in complying with the established dates and deadlines, which led to limitations in the investment schedule by potential candidates.
C08	Design of calls for tenders and assigned financial allocation	In spite of the restrictions imposed by EU law, the MA of the OP Mar2020 developed significant efforts to adapt the calls for tenders to the characteristics required by potential promoters. The design and terms of the calls are considered adequate by most stakeholders and the financial allocation placed in each call matched, where possible, demand expectations and dynamics. There were, however, calls with no demand.
C09	Role and performance of the MA concerning the pace of decision on applications	Most of the consulted stakeholders acknowledge that there has been an effective effort by the MA on the implementation of an agile pace of decision and approval, in order to overcome the lag and limitations observed during the launching of the Programme.
C10	Management processes and procedures	Procedures and procedural mechanisms adopted by entities involved in the management and approved projects within the OP Mar2020 are, in general, duly identified and established in the Manual of Procedures, as well as in normative acts and supplemental guidelines. Most entities involved in the management of financial support and promoters of supported projects report overly complex, bureaucratic and lengthy processes and procedures (e.g. the analysis of applications by IE takes place outside of the information system; a large part of the information of applications during the first years of the OP was not scanned; the IE had to upload the information received from beneficiaries and the results of their analysis; administrative procedures are still very time-

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From operationalization to management and monitoring

		consuming). These features and the difficulties in the interaction between promoters and technical structures indicate the existence of room for manoeuvre to obtain added efficiency and effectiveness gains in the management of OP Mar2020 financing.
C11	Deadlines for analysis of applications and payment requests	The deadlines to analyse applications are too long, exceeding the limits established in the applicable rules, which defines average terms no longer than 60 days for first decisions. The analysis and settlement of payment requests take place within more reasonable timeframes. It should be noted that the limitation on the information available in the information system does not enable the disaggregation of time between the receipt of the application and its approval in other process phases. As such, the analysis' times may include periods inherent to clarification requests or information submission that in general put on hold the deadlines considered for first decisions.
C12	Clarity in management flows and procedures concerning information systems	In spite of the efforts developed so far to empower structures, there are still significant differences in the adoption of criteria and procedures by the different IE concerning the registration of data in information systems. This undermines the MA operations and limits efficiency and effectiveness gains in the management of instruments. The access, operationalization and communication of procedures concerning information systems do not safeguard the tools needed for an efficient and effective management of instruments.
C13	Forms from platforms used by promoters	The forms existing in the information system used by promoters (Balcão 2020 -> Balcão Mar2020) in the application submission phase and in the execution and operations phase (SIIFAP) demonstrate some limitations concerning ease of access, guidelines for forms' filling, as well as requirements and procedures for the upload of documentation.
C14	Integration and interoperability of information systems	<p>The lack of an integrated information system that ensures the interoperability between the multiple systems is one of the key constraints to the implementation of the Programme.</p> <p>There is, at management level, an urgent need to stabilize an information system that enables the consultation of the entire life cycle of application and that ensures the due integration of operations' information from different sources: information regarding tenders from AD&C, decisions from the MA, analysis of applications and payment requests from the IE and projects' execution from promoters/beneficiaries.</p> <p>The delay in the implementation of a fully functional information system (e.g. it is missing in the Si2P a service that registers data on payments collected and settled in SIIFAP), in spite of the developments made when the Programme was already ongoing concerning the dematerialization of applications (concluded in 2018) and more recently (during 2019) the dematerialization of the entire procedure of analysis and decision and a higher integration between the MA's information system and the SIIFAP, had consequences not only on the registration and update of previously submitted information on paper but also on the efficient interoperability with other critical systems such as the SI PT2020 and the SIIFAP.</p>

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C15	Impact of the non-integration of systems of supports' monitoring	<p>There are serious difficulties in ensuring an adequate periodical collection and treatment of data, which enables the OP Mar2020 MA to monitor the execution regularly and, ideally, in real time.</p> <p>The information systems from IFAP and the MA are not duly integrated. As such, access to reported data has not been efficiently operationalized. Although this does not hinder regular monitoring, the lack of integration constitutes an inefficiency in the management of the Programme, as it requires from the MA additional tasks and a data harmonization work outside of the system to ensure a timely and full disclosure of data concerning the execution of projects supported by the OP Mar2020.</p>
C16	Indicators of attainments and results of the OP Mar2020	<p>The indicators of attainments and results set for the OP Mar2020 cover all the specific objectives defined by Priority and encompass the four TO of the Programme. Nevertheless, the selected indicators are not the most adequate, as they are relatively complicated to calculate by promoters, requiring frequent reviews from management.</p> <p>The limited flexibility on the definition of indicators, which are "imposed" at EU level, is the main justification presented for the issues of quantification that the OP Mar2020 management is currently facing. The difficulties in the calculation of indicators is unanimous, both from the management side and from beneficiaries, and consequently in some cases reported information requires validation.</p> <p>In addition, this inadequacy seems to prevail also on the selection and definition of the Programme indicators. These show limited effectiveness and appropriateness to monitor the effect of the instruments in the national territory and economy.</p>
C17	OP Mar2020 communication strategy and plan	<p>Fitting under the global Portugal 2020 strategy, the OP Mar2020 communication strategy and plan are based on a combination of means that aim at reaching the diversity of beneficiaries that characterizes the Programme and have been able to do so in an adequate manner.</p> <p>The OP Mar2020 communication strategy attributes to the OP website the role of aggregator of information concerning regulations, rules, statistics and news related to the Programme. Nevertheless, the absence of the Programme from social media constitutes a relevant limitation.</p> <p>The OP Mar2020 communication strategy has been essentially external-oriented, privileging the dissemination of Programme instruments to the general public. The most significant investments were the Programme promotion and launching session, the Programme's website and the organization of an event about the sea economy. Even though these were the most substantial investments, its return is acknowledged by most promoters and stakeholders.</p>

From attainments to results and potential impacts

C18	Programme take-off and approval and execution timeframes	<p>The delay in the take-off of the OP Mar2020 (approved on 30 November 2015) in comparison to other Portugal 2020 Programmes forced the MA to speed up, during 2017 and 2018, the implementation of the OP, which translated into the launching of several calls for tenders and the approval of corresponding allocations. In spite of presenting levels of mobilization of financial resources similar to those of other Portugal 2020 OP, the pace of new allocations has not been accompanied by a similar pace in the execution of approved projects.</p>
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From attainments to results and potential impacts

C19	Level of financial commitment of OP Priorities and Measures	The level of financial allocation is relatively heterogeneous by Priority and Measure of the OP Mar2020. Priorities related to the promotion, commercialization and transformation of fishing and aquaculture products (P5) and with the promotion of fisheries and aquaculture that are environmentally sustainable, resource efficient, innovative, competitive and based in knowledge (P1 and P2) present the highest levels of commitment from the OP.
C20	Conditions to reach physical and financial execution goals	<p>The achievement of the physical goals set and the full financial realization of programmed amounts entail a demanding challenge of accelerating annual paces of physical and financial execution for most of the Priorities that integrate the OP Mar2020. This need largely results from the fact that the Programme implementation began with a substantial delay in comparison to the programming period (OP approved on 30 November 2015).</p> <p>Nevertheless, considering the allocation rates registered until the end of 2018, it seems that the conditions required to accelerate the execution rates seem to be fulfilled. This will contribute to meeting global goals set for the end of the programming period, both in terms of physical and financial execution.</p>
C21	Effects on the economic development of the business	The OP Mar2020 gathers a set of financial resources capable of generating relevant quantitative effects on the economic development of business in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. However, certain constraints in the EU legal framework aimed at resources sustainability do not seem adequate to the characteristics of the fisheries sector in Portugal, limiting business development.
C22	Differentiated impacts between intervention types	Implemented measures, in particular concerning fisheries, tend to generate, in relative terms, qualitative effects more relevant in the improvement of the sectors' collective efficiency conditions than in the direct support to productive investment.
C23	Initiatives to promote gender equality and non-discrimination	The nature and specificities of the fisheries sector, particularly the physical requirements, have contributed to having matters related to equality of opportunities arising as relatively neutral in the operationalization of the OP Mar2020. The workforce in fishing and aquaculture activities is predominantly male, but transformation and commercialization activities counterbalance this trend. No initiatives to promote gender equality and/or integration of people with disabilities have been developed, whether in specific regulation or in criteria selection and prioritization of financed operations. The effectiveness of such measures may, however, be limited by the nature and requirements of the sector.
C24	Initiatives to promote sustainable development	Concerns related to resources and environment sustainability are on the foundation of the OP design and are present in its implementation in different ways. Most support instruments available and Programme limitations arising from the legal framework are due to concerns related to sustainable development.

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5. Evaluation recommendations

As demonstrated by the abovementioned conclusions of this evaluation, although the current OP represents an advancement in comparison to previous EMFF execution periods in Portugal, in line with the EU's CFP and IMP, the operationalization of this Programme reveals a set of limitations. These limitations range from the configuration and implementation of instruments and measures to the way in which different stakeholders have operationalized the Programme. These conclusions translate into lessons that support a set of straightforward and feasible recommendations that aim at increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the EMFF implementation, with the ultimate goal of maximizing results.

Given that the OP Mar2020 execution is currently in an advanced stage with a high level of allocation, the set of lessons obtained from this evaluation is particularly relevant for the 2021-2027 period, supporting its strategic preparation, operational programming and implementation. In this sense, it is important to recover and integrate the essence of the EMFF regulation proposal for the post-2020 period and its relevance for the correct implementation of the CFP's objectives. The aforementioned proposal intends to overcome the complexity of rules and bureaucracy associated to the EMFF's execution in the past, aiming at making the EMFF a more flexible instrument, adapted to the European sector of fisheries.

The tables below present a set of recommendations associated to and/or resulting from the study conclusions. Simultaneously, it is presented for each recommendation its operationalization method and the stakeholders that should lead it, notwithstanding the possibility of involving other stakeholders, depending on the breadth and implementation degree in each case, in a collaborative process to develop instruments targeting the promotion of maritime and fisheries' sectors. It should be further noted that the recommendations presented are based on the principle of incremental evolution of public policies, to which evaluation processes are essential.

From the configuration process to the implementation and stakeholders' involvement

R01. Consider the inclusion, in the MC, of an entity dedicated to scientific knowledge and technological development

For the next programming period it should be considered the inclusion of other entities dedicated to areas of investigation, scientific knowledge and technological development, in addition to the IPMA, in the structure of the OP Mar2020 MC, given the relevance of this subject for the OP Mar2020 strategy and expected for the EU programming period of 2021-2027.

The participation of the aforementioned entities would contribute to the development of the national scientific and technologic base in subjects related to the sea, in this way promoting a strategy based on the knowledge of resources and the innovation on fisheries and maritime matters.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
Ministry of the Sea, EMFF National Coordination Committee (NCC), MA	C01, C02

R02. Strengthen intervention and participation of the MC throughout the Programme lifecycle and implementation

The experience from the current programming period enables the call for added intervention and participation of the OP Mar2020 MC on the implementation of the Programme, particularly concerning the development of reflexion and strategic analysis initiatives regarding its domains of intervention.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
Ministry of the Sea, NCC, MA	C02

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R03. Define specific action/intervention plans for the Autonomous Regions, with specific indicative financial allocations, goals and indicators

In line with the EMFF regulation proposal for the period 2021-2027, the support in a regime of shared management should comply with the definition of a specific action plan for each outermost region, which should include: i) a strategy for the sustainable use of fisheries and development of sustainable blue economy sectors; and ii) a description of the key actions planned and corresponding financial means. In addition, specific execution and results' indicators should be defined, indicating the goals to achieve and the respective timeframe.

Financial resources to allocate should be indicative but sufficiently flexible to respond to eventual changes in priorities and consequent reallocation of resources on the three territories (mainland Portugal and Autonomous Regions of Azores and Madeira), in this way safeguarding the integral allocation of funds.

With the creation of specific action plans for the Autonomous Regions an effective segregation of interventions and responsibilities in the EMFF management will be promoted in the context of its implementation in mainland Portugal and outermost regions.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
Ministry of the Sea, NCC, MA	C03

From operationalization to management and monitoring

R04. Encourage training and knowledge-sharing between the MA and IE, creating workgroups to discuss relevant topics for the Management

Training and knowledge-sharing sessions between the MA and IE should be encouraged, in addition to the regular strategic discussion and operational and functional articulation forums (in the context of the Management Commission). For this purpose, specific workgroups to discuss relevant topics for the Management (MA and IE), as these moments represent opportunities to train and build capacity in technical and management teams that are extremely important for an inclusive governance model. In addition, these initiatives enable the transfer of knowledge between management structures, the standardization of procedures and efficiency gains.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
MA, IE	C04, C05, C06

R05. Strengthen the sectoral/thematic specialization of IE technical resources, in parallel with an added effort on capacity building and training

Within the delegation of responsibilities concerning instruments' operationalization, to make the interaction with promoters and the execution of formalities related to the projects' lifecycle prompter and more efficient, the monitoring process will benefit from a better organization of the technical resources of some IE by sectors / themes.

Such reorganization will enable not only the improvement in the quality and agility in responses to promoters' questions and efficiency gains in processes, but also a closer and more informed interaction with beneficiaries concerning the business and specificities of each investment project. This sectoral / thematic specialization can be strengthened, as well as the current offer of training areas.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
MA, IE	C10, C11

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R06. Promote a harmonized effort between IE of criteria and procedures of analysis of applications and payment requests

Within the delegation of responsibilities concerning instruments' operationalization, the harmonization of criteria and procedures of analysis of applications and payment requests should be promoted, having implications on the way the respective information systems are used.

Likewise, the monitoring of projects by the different IE will require a regular access to data related to projects' execution, whose availability should be ensured by IFAP having in consideration the objective of full operationalization of the MA information system, which is currently being developed.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
MA, IE, IFAP	C10, C11, C12

R07. Consider the possibility of centralizing technical resources capacity-building

Within the delegation of responsibilities concerning instruments' operationalization, it should be considered the possibility of centralizing in the MA the technical management of teams distributed by IE dedicated to technical and management roles related to the EMFF (e.g. the MA may organize capacity-building and awareness-raising sessions for all IE resources on technical, management and thematic specificities related to Programme supports and beneficiaries). This will enable a standardized capacity-building of multiple teams, adding efficiency on the management and deployment of the Programme, as well as a higher understanding of the OP values and objectives by technical resources.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
Ministry of the Sea, NCC	C03

R08. Strengthen the involvement of the MA in the monitoring of approved projects, for which the regular access to monitoring data is critical

So that the Programme execution monitoring is closer and more effective, the involvement and intervention of the MA in the effective management of OP Mar2020 supports in the post-contracting phase should be strengthened. For this purpose, the preparation and disclosure of specific and periodic monitoring reports will be critical to overcome difficulties related to the access of information concerning projects' execution.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
MA, IFAP	C14, C15

R09. Attribute expenditure validation responsibilities to an entity that does not hold responsibilities as IE, paying entity and/or audit entity

The set of responsibilities delegated to IFAP combined with the fact that this entity is simultaneously the Programme's expenditure certification entity is not the ideal solution on the implementation of the EMFF. In spite of the segregation of responsibilities within the IFAP, it is recommended that expenditure certification and other responsibilities currently delegated may be assigned to other entity/entities, including the MA itself, as a way to prevent the concentration of responsibilities at IFAP.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
Ministry of the Sea, NCC	C6

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R10. Promote the intervention of the generality of IE in a previous phase of demand mobilization and qualification

A wider intervention of the IE should be promoted in respect to the demand mobilization and qualification directed to the OP Mar2020 supports, in all the Priorities, and in particular in Measures where this action has been less present, with the aim to strengthening the IE role on the identification and development of projects with features oriented to achieve the objectives and promote the effectiveness of sector policies.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
MA, IE	C3, C4, C22

R11. Support the dematerialization of processes and procedures on the digital component and the (re)qualification of human resources of intervening entities, and promote training sessions and guidelines for management entities (information systems)

An added effort should be promoted on data digitalization and treatment, requiring a clear commitment from intervening entities towards the dematerialization of processes and procedures, the digital component and the (re)qualification of human resources.

At the same time, training sessions should be organized (including the preparation of user guides) for management entities (IE and MA) concerning the functioning of information systems, aimed at maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness of its use and mitigating needs to share knowledge in this matter when new resources join these entities (these guidelines should be permanently updated in the case of changes in procedures).

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
MA	C10, C12

R12. Promote greater stability and reliability in respect to the compliance with the calls for tenders' plan

The preparation and dissemination of an annual plan of calls for tenders, and the respective enforcement, are fundamental for a correct management of expectations by promoters and a better planning of potential demand. This will facilitate the allocation of financial and technical resources needed to carry out procedures within the expected timeframe.

It should be noted that in addition to MA ensuring the periodic and systematic (once a year) dissemination of the annual Plan, this should also be updated whenever it is expected that it will not be met and such changes should be communicated in the appropriate media. Changes on dates should be disclosed on the plan (maintaining the dates that were subject to change), to ensure the transparency on the management of instruments in this matter and for future evaluations.

Concerning the planning of calls for tenders to include in the annual plan, it is important to consider a time distribution throughout the year that does not jeopardise the response capacity of IE and the MA safeguarding, whenever possible, the non-overlap of calls that typically present higher demand.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
MA	C7

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R13. For the next programming period, to promote a greater flexibility of adaptation of calls for tenders to the specificity of the demand

During the next programming period it is important to bring in more flexibility of adaptation of calls to the specificity of demand, with more anticipation, avoiding postponing the adaptation of supply to the specific sectoral demand and subsequent difficulties in the management of allocations.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
MA	C8

R14. Develop a clearer management and control system, defining procedures and systems' communication between the MA and IE

The OP Mar2020 management and control system should be clearer on the presentation of the design of the procedural architecture related to the communication between the MA and the IE. It should detail not only administrative procedures for which each IE is responsible, but also how information is generated, treated, and which systems are used, as well as how the interoperability between these information systems takes place.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
MA	C10, C12

R15. Review the interoperability between information systems and build capacity within management structures on the information recorded in the different systems (Si2P, SIIFAP and SI PT2020)

It is important to rapidly build capacity within the Mar2020 management structure and respective information technology team of the Si2P on the information recorded on SIIFAP and SI PT2020. This is important to guarantee a rapid response to the needs of adaptation of management and monitoring information systems (e.g. analysis, monitoring and business intelligence tools). This recommendation also includes a higher automation (through interoperability of information systems) on the communication of results of the analysis of payment requests as soon as these are concluded and validated by the IE and IFAP.

It will also be important to perform an exhaustive mapping, by an external team, of the architecture that based the operationalization of information systems supporting the OP Mar2020 management (in particular between Si2P and SIIFAP and including the respective articulation with the information system of PT2020), to identify concrete solutions that increase the efficiency in the operationalization and interoperability of information systems for the next programming period.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
MA, IFAP, AD&C	C14

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R16. Create a one-stop shop (contact centre) for all matters related to the OP Mar2020, integrated within the Portugal2020 one-stop shop

Even though the creation of a one-stop shop for matters related to the ESIF (Balcão PT2020) is an established procedure under cooperation agreements, there are many options for matters concerning the OP Mar2020, one of these being the MA platform with a similar name - Balcão Mar2020 - to which all interactions with the PT2020 one-stop shop platform related to this OP are redirected.

Due to the existence of a great diversity of IE in this Programme, the proximity to promoters allows a more direct and prompter contact. Both managing entities and approved projects' promoters stress the need to create effectively a single contact point for matters related to the OP Mar2020.

In this sense, it is important to create a one-stop shop (contact centre) to support potential beneficiaries that, in addition to virtual contact, should also have available a more personalized contact through a call centre (to implement, either in a centralized or decentralized format, connected to IE and the MA). This type of service, clearly favoured by beneficiaries especially when matters to clarify are not very specific, should be widely promoted, so that there is an effective and efficient contact point that can be transparent and widely accessed by everyone who is looking for or received support from the OP Mar2020.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
MA, IE, AD&C	C7, C15

R17. Create electronic tools of self-diagnosis of eligibility for promoters and projects and autofill of certain form fields

It should be promoted an increased communication capacity regarding promoters' eligibility criteria and projects available in each category, adjusting the OP Mar2020 website accordingly in terms of forms, application tools and user guides. Information sessions should be promoted during the opening of certain calls for tenders, in which conditions of access and objectives of these instruments should be accurately communicated. These sessions may be recorded and later on posted on social media to ensure they reach a wider audience.

Simultaneously it should be created a self-diagnosis tool to assess promoters and projects' eligibility (based on checklists used by analyst technicians), which should be available online. This would aim at clarifying concepts and criteria and thus reduce the volume of projects rejected by non-eligibility.

It is important to improve guidelines and manuals supporting the filling of applications' submission forms. Support documents specific to each call should be available to beneficiaries, containing relevant information and rules that should be met under the EMFF supports.

Lastly, it is important to include in forms functionalities that support the autofill of certain qualitative and quantitative fields that are relevant for the evaluation and compliance of eligibility rules and selection criteria. Furthermore, mandatory fields should be identified and the promoter should be warned about non-eligibility criteria (for instance in quantitative fields when there is a limit amount which is not being met).

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
MA	C10, C11, C13

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R18. Implement administrative simplification procedures, in particular concerning the verification of expenditure documentation eligibility

Administrative simplification is clearly a challenge for the next EU financing cycle, in particular concerning the verification of expenditure documentation eligibility (analysis of payment requests). It is important to reduce administrative procedures and the bureaucratic burden required during projects' execution.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
MA, IFAP	C10, C11

R19. Perform a thorough analysis on the relevance and effectiveness of attainments and results' indicators and respective goals, to improve monitoring quality and its focus on Programme results

In addition to mandatory indicators imposed by the EU, the current list of attainments and results' indicators should be reviewed, and eventually specific indicators duly agreed upon concerning Programme measures and instruments should be added to it, having in consideration their specificities at national level and the focus on results of the OP monitoring.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
NCC, MA	C15, C16

R20. Develop an information system capable of generating automatically attainments and results' indicators from the Programme with the required frequency

It is important to ensure the possibility of having on the information system the ability to generate automatically the Programme's indicators of attainments and results at the required frequency. This should be based on a real time connection to validated information in the SIIFAP concerning the execution of operations.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
MA	C16

R21. Promote a higher focus on the communication strategy and selection of target audience for the promotion of the Programme's instruments of support, making communication more effective on the attraction of certain segments of qualified demand

Concerning the Mar2020 communication strategy, it is recommended an increased focus on the selection of the target audience and more clarity and simplification of the language used for the promotion of the Programme's instruments of support, making communication more effective on the attraction of certain segments of qualified demand.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
MA	C17

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R22. Coordinate communication initiatives promoted by the Ministry of the Sea, the OP and IE, to promote added efficiency on the management of costs arising from communication initiatives

The OP Mar2020 communication strategy should be reconsidered, taking into account communication initiatives planned by the Ministry of the Sea for matters related to the fostering of investment in the sector that may be eligible within the OP Mar2020. This will intend to promote added efficiency on the management of costs arising from communication initiatives and avoid overlaps.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
Ministry of the Sea, MA, IE	C17

R23. Include in specific regulation and/or selection criteria elements valuing the integration of women and people with disabilities in sector-specific activities

Although many physical requirements from the sector do not favour a more effective presence and participation of women and people with disabilities, there are still domains of intervention such as the transformation and execution of Local Development Strategies, in which the promotion of equality of opportunities may be feasible. In these specific areas there may, for instance, be considered selection criteria and/or be defined mark-ups that aim at increasing the share of women and people with disabilities in Programme interventions.

Recipients:	Correspondence with conclusions:
MA	C23

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