



Annual Activity Report 2023

DG MARE

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DG MARE IN BRIEF

The **mission** of the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) is:

“To strive for healthy seas and a sustainable use of the oceans and of marine resources in the EU and worldwide. This involves ensuring sustainable fisheries through the full implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy, promoting in the EU an integrated approach to all policies impacting the oceans and their good governance, including fostering a sustainable blue economy, thus providing jobs and prosperity to coastal communities and sustainable food, and contributing to a healthy environment for today’s and future generations, as well as projecting these policies internationally.”

DG MARE’s work is guided by the [Commission’s Political Guidelines for 2019-2024](#) and President von der Leyen’s [mission letter](#) to the Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus Sinkevičius. Our deliverables contribute mainly to two headline ambitions: the European Green Deal and A Stronger Europe in the World. Internationally, we aim to contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

Under the **common fisheries policy (CFP)** – the first strand of our work – the EU has **exclusive competence** for the conservation of marine biological resources, which also applies to the policy’s external dimension, notably Union activities in international fisheries organisations, the **sustainable fisheries partnership agreements (SFPAs)** with third countries and other forms of bilateral and multilateral agreements. On fisheries control, we work with the **European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA)**. For the areas of **shared competence** between the EU and its Member States⁽¹⁾ – including aquaculture and market policy – the subsidiarity principle⁽²⁾ applies. The maritime policy, in particular the sustainable blue economy policy, is the second strand of our actions. The third strand is international ocean governance for safe, secure, clean and sustainably managed oceans.

The European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) for 2021-2027 is the main instrument to support the implementation of the common fisheries policy and certain actions under the maritime policy and international ocean governance. The bulk of the funds are managed in **shared management** jointly with the Member States, in addition to expenditure under **SFPAs, direct and indirect management**. DG MARE continued working with the **Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA)**.

DG MARE has 351 (in 2022: 344) staff members⁽³⁾ organised in five directorates⁽⁴⁾ reporting directly to the Director-General, Ms Charlina Vitcheva. The organisational **values** DG MARE adheres to are translated in a [Management Pledge](#) of June 2017.

⁽¹⁾ Article 4(2)(d) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

⁽²⁾ Article 5(3) of the Treaty on the European Union

⁽³⁾ Number of Officials, Contract agents, Temporary agents and Seconded national experts on 31/12/2022

⁽⁴⁾ The five directorates cover: Maritime Policy and Blue Economy (directorate A), International Ocean Governance and Sustainable Fisheries (B), Fisheries Policy in the Atlantic, North Sea, Baltic and Outermost Regions (C), Fisheries Policy in the Mediterranean and Black Seas (D), and General Affairs and Resources (E)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This annual activity report is a management report of the Director-General of DG MARE to the College of Commissioners. Annual activity reports are the main instrument of management accountability within the Commission and constitute the basis on which the College takes political responsibility for the decisions it takes as well as for the coordinating, executive and management functions it exercises, as laid down in the Treaties ⁽⁵⁾.

A. Key results and progress towards achieving the Commission's general objectives and department's specific objectives

During 2023, DG MARE continued to focus on achieving the **key objectives of the common fisheries policy, the maritime policy and international ocean governance**, with support from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund 2014-2020 and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund 2021-2027. We aimed to ensure that fisheries, aquaculture and the EU blue economy are sustainable in the long-term, that they produce healthy food for EU citizens, and that our seas and oceans are kept healthy, safe and secure.

Under the [European Green Deal](#), DG MARE **contributes to the implementation of several EU priorities**, notably the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#), the [EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#) and the [EU Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change](#). Internationally, we contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, notably SDG 14 dedicated to life below water, SDG 2 on food security and SDG 13 addressing climate change and its impact. Our work on international ocean governance and sustainable fisheries worldwide helps making “Europe Stronger in the World”.

During 2023, the EU's blue economy, including the fisheries and aquaculture sector, continued to be affected by the **Covid-19 crisis**, and the challenges following **Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine**. In view of their high dependence on fossil fuels, fisheries and aquaculture continued to strongly suffer from the impacts of significantly increased fuel prices, which we addressed through strongly encouraging Member States on the uptake of specific support measures adopted in 2022. We continued to encourage Member States to include blue economy investments in their national recovery and resilience plans and in their national programmes for EU support for the period 2021-2027 and worked successfully towards improving the implementation of all programmes' actions enabling a green, digital and resilient transition.

The adoption in February 2023 of the **Fisheries and Ocean package**, consisting of 4 documents: the [Communication on the functioning of the Common Fisheries Policy](#), the [Action Plan “Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries”](#), the [Communication on the energy transition initiative](#) and the [Report on the functioning of the](#)

⁽⁵⁾ Article 17(1) of the Treaty on European Union.

[Common Market Organisation \(CMO\)](#), represented a milestone deliverable for DG MARE, bringing together all different aspects of the policy and setting the scene for the work ahead.

Progress towards sustainable fisheries continued in all EU sea basins. In the North-East Atlantic, stocks are overall fished sustainably. The Baltic Sea stocks continued to be in a more difficult situation, due to a combination of a past overfishing and environmental factors, and measures continued to be focused on recovery of these stocks. We continued working with the UK, Norway and other coastal States aiming to ensure that shared stocks were managed sustainably and to guarantee the fishing opportunities for the EU fleets. In the Mediterranean and Black Seas, further progress was made, but key stocks are still fished above sustainable levels and vigorous conservation efforts are to be continued. Sustainable fisheries increase the sector's resilience. While **overall the EU fishing fleet remained profitable**, higher fuel prices in 2022 strongly affected profits. In 2023, a recovery of the profitability to values similar to those observed in 2021 has been forecasted.

In the area of **fisheries control**, an important policy achievement was the adoption by the co-legislators of a [revised EU fisheries control system](#), with modernised and digitalised control rules, reduced burdens, better level playing field, enhanced control of the landing obligation and stepping up the fight against illegal fishing, while we continued working on the full implementation of existing rules and their enforcement.

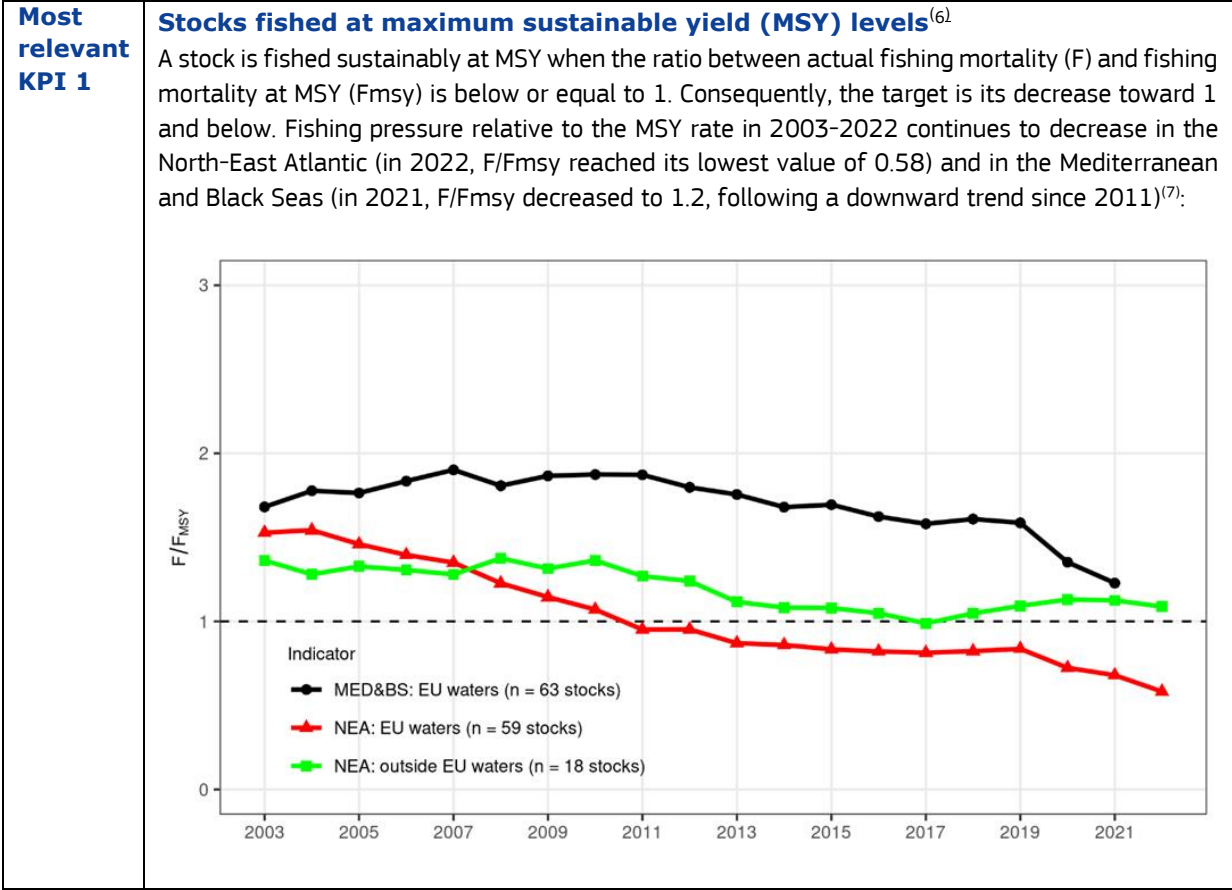
Implementation of the [new approach for a sustainable blue economy](#) continued to support a [green and inclusive recovery](#), in line with the [European Green Deal](#) and the [Recovery plan for Europe](#). It provides coherence and synergies across the blue economy sectors in the maritime space. The implementation of the [Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture by 2030](#) supported further sustainable growth.

Throughout the year, work with Member States continued to operationalise the new **European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) 2021-2027**, to support sustainable and resilient fisheries, a sustainable EU blue economy and international ocean governance. The EMFAF framework is now fully in place to continue to provide this support, with all Member State programmes at the implementation stage from the beginning of 2023.

Together with the European External Action Service, we worked on the [update of the EU Maritime Security Strategy and Action Plan](#), the implementation of the 2022 Joint Communication on [International Ocean Governance](#) and represented the EU in the process that led to the successful adoption of the **UN High Seas Treaty** on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), on 19 June 2023. In the **Regional Fisheries Management Organisations**, we continued to promote sustainable management of stocks in line with scientific advice, compliance with the rules and the fight against illegal fishing. Zero-tolerance towards **illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing** continued to guide our dialogues with third countries, in order to foster the necessary reforms in their legislation. At the end of 2023, **14 sustainable fisheries partnership agreements** were in force. They provide the EU's long-distance fleet access to fishing zones in third country waters, whilst partner countries receive EU support for better fisheries governance and a more sustainable local fishing sector.

As an organisation, we have continued **modernising the way we work**. We focused on digitalisation and collaborative methods, streamlining workflows and procedures and reducing further our environmental footprint.

B. Key performance indicators

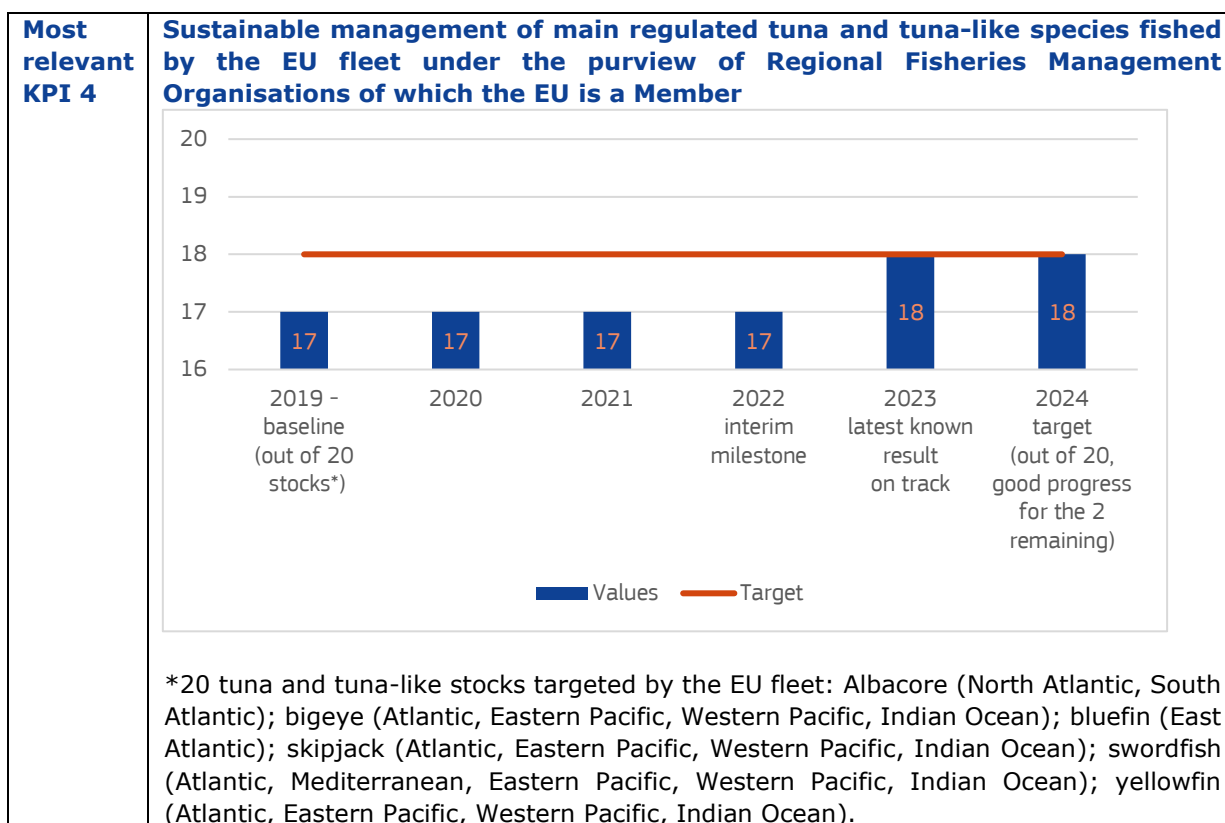


Most relevant KPI 2	Contribution from the European Maritime and Fisheries Funds (EMFF) 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 to climate related EU spending			
	2018 results	2022 results	2022 milestone	2024 target
EMFF 2014-2020	4% expenditure of total EMFF 2014-2020	17.8%	17%	22% (at end of implementation period)
EMFAF 2021-2027	N/A	6.26%	0% expenditure of EMFAF 2021-2027	2%

⁽⁶⁾ Managing stocks at “maximum sustainable yield” (MSY) means that fishers are allowed to fish the maximum amount of fish without compromising the regeneration and future productivity of the stocks.

⁽⁷⁾ [STECF-PLN-24-01: Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries – 75th Plenary Report](#)

Most relevant KPI 3	Installed capacity of offshore wind energy and ocean energy in EU			
	2018 baseline	2019 milestone	2022 results (latest data)	2024 target ⁽⁸⁾
Offshore wind energy	18.5 gigawatt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22.1 gigawatt (with UK) • 12 gigawatt (EU without UK) 	16.2 gigawatt (EU-27)	21 gigawatt (EU-27) for 2023
Ocean energy	38.9 megawatt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39.5 megawatt (with UK) • 34 megawatt (EU without UK) 	13.4 megawatt ⁽⁹⁾ (EU-27)	100 megawatt (revised target for 2027, please see footnote 8)

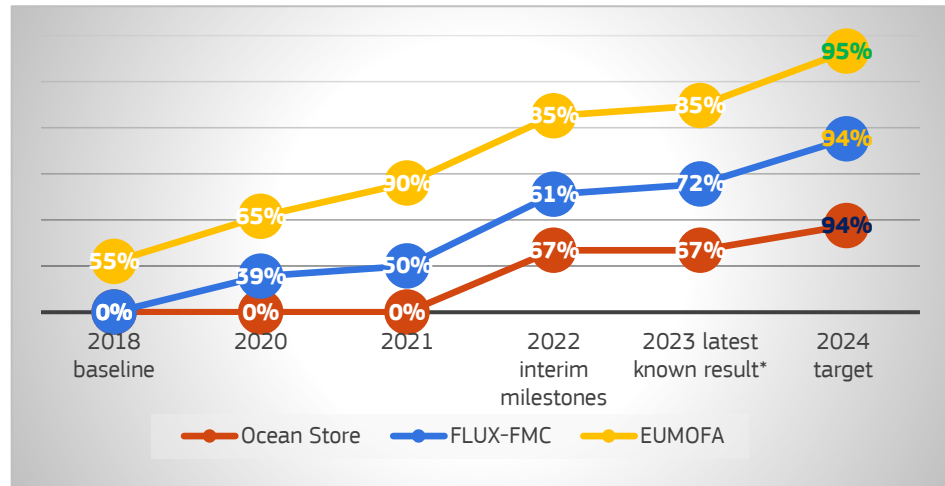


⁽⁸⁾ The [Communication “Delivering on the EU offshore renewable energy ambitions” \(COM/2023/668 final of 24.10.2023\)](#) confirmed the ambition and indicative objectives for ocean energy, and supporting measures needed, while revising the EU-level targets for offshore wind energy (111 GW in 2030, 300 GW in 2050) and ocean energy (100 MW in 2027, 1 GW in 2030, 40 GW in 2050).

⁽⁹⁾ This reduction is linked to a number of devices being decommissioned at the end of the testing period. Several multi-devices pilot farms with larger capacity are expected to be deployed in the short-term pending financial closure of the projects (expected in 2024-2025). While the technology is ready to grow (according to the JRC report), main challenges are related to the lack of visibility and funding of the first pilot and commercial farms by EU Member States. To address this, the Commission substantially increased its support to ocean energy in Horizon Europe 2023-2024 work programme (for a total close to €100 million), included offshore renewable technologies (including wave and tidal energy) as key net zero technologies in the Net Zero Industry Act ([COM\(2023\)161 final](#), [SWD\(2023\)68 final](#)).

Most relevant KPI 5

Degree of implementation of the digital strategy principles by the most important IT solutions⁽¹⁰⁾



*The Ocean Store is a complex project using innovative technologies, such as cloud-native development. The procurement process took longer than foreseen and has therefore delayed the start of the project. The complexity of the project and experience needed have been underestimated, and consequently the target will most probably be achieved in 2025, rather than 2024.

Both FLUX-FMC and EUMOFA systems are on track to achieve the 2024 targets.

⁽¹⁰⁾ FLUX-FMC: Fisheries Language for Universal eXchange (FLUX) - Fisheries Monitoring Center (FMC).
EUMOFA: European Market Observatory for fisheries and aquaculture

C. Key conclusions on internal control and financial management

In line with the Commission's Internal Control Framework DG MARE has assessed its internal control systems during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective and the components are present and functioning as intended. The principles are present and functioning well overall, but some improvements are needed as minor deficiencies persist related to staff allocation (ICP4). Please refer to annual activity report [section 2.3](#) for further details.

In addition, DG MARE has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, including those from supervised entities to which it has entrusted budget implementation tasks, as well as the observations and recommendations issued by the internal auditor and the European Court of Auditors. These elements have been assessed to determine their impact on management's assurance about the achievement of the control objectives. Please refer to [section 2](#) for further details.

In particular, for programmes under shared management (83% of the relevant expenditure in the reporting year), the estimated risk at payment⁽¹¹⁾ and the estimated risk at closure⁽¹²⁾ for the **EMFF** stand at 1.37% and 0.99% respectively. This is below the materiality threshold of 2%. For the **EMFAF**, the estimated risk at payment and the estimated risk at closure stand at 1.40%.

In conclusion, management has **reasonable assurance** that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated, and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented. The Director-General, in her capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance albeit qualified by a reservation concerning the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

D. Provision of information to the Commissioner

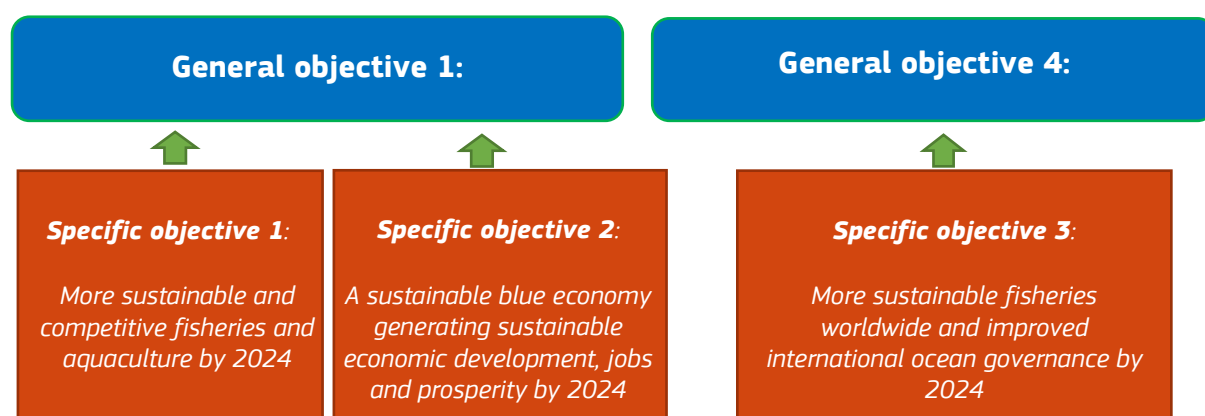
In the context of the regular meetings during the year between the DG and the Commissioner on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration, including the reservation envisaged, have been brought to the attention of Commissioner Sinkevičius, responsible for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries.

⁽¹¹⁾ The risk at payment is the weighted average of the RTERs of the individual operational programmes. The RTER is "the best estimation of the value of the total expenditure which was not in conformity with the applicable regulatory and contractual provisions after corrective measures have been implemented; expressed as a percentage of the total expenditure"

⁽¹²⁾ Estimated risk at closure = RTER minus the necessary financial correction to bring every RTER down to 2%

1. KEY RESULTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE COMMISSION’S GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE DEPARTMENT

DG MARE’s work is guided by the [Commission’s Political Guidelines for 2019-2024](#) and President von der Leyen’s [mission letter](#) to Commissioner Sinkevičius. We contribute mainly to two Commission priorities: the [European Green Deal](#) and [A Stronger Europe in the World](#), which are translated in **three specific objectives** for DG MARE:



In 2023, we continued to contribute to the European Green Deal, and in particular to the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#), the [EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#), the [EU Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change](#), including their external dimension. Internationally, we contributed to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, notably SDG 14 on life below water, SDG 2 on food security and SDG 13 addressing climate change and its impacts. Our work on international ocean governance and sustainable fisheries worldwide provides an important contribution to making “Europe Stronger in the World”.

This section summarizes DG MARE’s performance in 2023, reporting on the progress towards the achievement of key general and specific objectives, the main challenges encountered during the year and their impact. For more detailed technical information and full description of indicators and outputs, please refer to Annex 2 ‘Performance tables’.

General objective 1: A European Green Deal

Specific objective 1: More sustainable and competitive fisheries and aquaculture by 2024

Result indicator: Stocks fished at maximum sustainable yield (MSY) levels

The full implementation of the common fisheries policy (CFP) is a top priority of Commissioner Sinkevičius’ mandate. In 2023, DG MARE continued to work towards achieving the **key objectives of the CFP**, in particular:

- managing stocks at **maximum sustainable yield** (MSY) meaning that fishers are allowed to take the maximum amount of fish out of the sea without compromising the regeneration and future productivity of the stocks. Sustainable fishing is important also for fishers because of its correlation with economic returns and profitability;
- implementing the **landing obligation**, ending the wasteful practice of discards for all species subject to total allowable catch limits, or minimum conservation reference sizes in the Mediterranean;
- applying appropriate **technical measures** to minimise the negative impact of fishing on the marine environment.

Our assessment **on progress towards sustainable fishing in the EU and orientations for setting the fishing opportunities for 2024**⁽¹³⁾ shows that the EU fisheries policy has generally been delivering in reducing overfishing in European waters. At the same time, further efforts are needed to protect marine resources, both through maintaining high levels of ambition within the EU and by striving to achieve the same high standard in the work with non-EU countries, like Norway, UK and the coastal States. The stocks in the northeast Atlantic are, on average, within levels that deliver the highest sustainable yields into the future (MSY). For the Mediterranean, the situation has continued to improve but vigorous conservation efforts need to be continued. In the Baltic Sea, stocks continued to be in a more difficult situation, due to a combination of a past overfishing and environmental factors, and measures continued to be focused on recovery of these stocks.

Two important initiatives that contribute to continuing towards MSY and implementing the European Green Deal were adopted in February 2023, under the **Fisheries and Ocean package**: the [Communication on the functioning of the Common Fisheries Policy](#) and the [Marine Action Plan](#). Their adoption generated a lot of debate and drew much attention to the involvement of stakeholders, and Member States in particular, in taking action to improve protection of sensitive species and habitats and to invest in more innovative and less energy consuming fishing practices. The package places the focus firmly on the future vision for the CFP and of fishers and the fishing community.

When assessing the success of the CFP, it is important to stress the **critical role** of Member States' actions. While the Union has exclusive competence on the conservation of the marine biological resources, the Commission is at the same time restricted in its powers, including by the system of joint recommendations submitted by the Member States Regional Groups based on Article 18 of the [CFP Regulation](#), which the Commission can either agree to adopt, or refuse. The Marine Action Plan encourages Member States to come forward with a roadmap for the development of the fisheries sector and protection of the environment, and to intensify work on joint recommendation.

In the **North-East Atlantic and adjacent waters**, including the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, although some fish stocks remain under pressure, significant progress towards

⁽¹³⁾ COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL Towards more sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2024 – [COM\(2023\)303 final of 14/06/2023](#) and [SWD\(2023\)172 final of 14/06/2023](#)

sustainable fishing continued. In the early 2000s, fishing mortality was around 1.7 times higher than MSY, but this has reduced and stabilised to below 1 over the period 2013-2022, reaching its lowest value of 0.58 in 2022.

For **stocks managed only by the EU** in the Atlantic, Baltic Sea and the Skagerrak / Kattegat, we strived to progress towards sustainable fishing. To respond to the challenging situation in the Baltic Sea, for the 2024 **Baltic Sea fishing opportunities**, the EU implemented very stringent measures in line with the Baltic multiannual plan (Regulation (EU) 2016/1139). For the **Skagerrak / Atlantic**, there were many positive developments, with important TAC increases thanks to sustained good management and less environmental pressures on fish stocks.

We managed to successfully conclude the consultations on fishing opportunities for 2024 with the **UK, coastal States, the trilateral consultations EU-UK-Norway and the bilateral consultation with Norway**, in line with the mandate granted by the Council, the CFP and in the case of the UK, with the [Trade and Cooperation Agreement \(TCA\)](#). Consultations on sharing arrangements with coastal States were still ongoing at the end of 2023, as these are lengthy and complex negotiations, with intervening factors outside of DG MARE's control.

Moreover, we managed to successfully consolidate the implementation of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the UK, with regular technical, working group meetings and meetings of the **Specialised Committee on Fisheries** that delivered a decision and two recommendations, amongst other, contributing thereby to the Union's conservation objectives and improvement of relations with the UK.

In 2021, the fishing mortality ratio in the **Mediterranean and Black Seas** was on average 1.2, at the lowest value on record⁽¹⁴⁾. It means that the exploitation is still above sustainable levels. Although there has been improvement, the overall poor stocks status is largely due to the multispecies fisheries and the many stocks shared with third countries.

At EU level, vigorous conservation efforts continued, with the implementation of the [Western Mediterranean multiannual management plan](#) (WestMed MAP).

At international level, we continued enhancing cooperation with, and among, the riparian third countries and improved fisheries governance in the region in the framework of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), based on the [GFCM 2030 Strategy](#). In cooperation with the Member States, we worked towards the adoption of an important number of proposals at the 46th Annual Session of the GFCM that reinforced management and control measures at regional level: 34 decisions adopted (28 EU proposals) – 24 binding recommendations and 10 resolutions⁽¹⁵⁾.

In addition, the **European Fisheries Control Agency** (EFCA) deployed important efforts, including through its chartered patrol means, to improve compliance with the measures

⁽¹⁴⁾ [STECF-Adhoc-24-01: Monitoring of the performance of the Common Fisheries Policy](#)

⁽¹⁵⁾ [Fisheries management control in the Mediterranean and Black Seas \(europa.eu\)](#)

adopted at EU and international level, notably with the permanent deployment of a vessel in the Mediterranean Sea.

To facilitate the implementation of the landing obligation, **five discard plans** establishing de minimis and / or high survivability exemptions in the various sea basins were adopted for the period 2024-2027, based on joint recommendations submitted by the Member States concerned.

While overall the poor status of some stocks is due to the high fishing pressure, other **external factors** (e.g. climate change, pollution, the position of third countries and the way rules are implemented and enforced by Member States) go beyond the Commission's control.

Building awareness of and support for the common fisheries policy is a cornerstone of DG MARE's **communication** strategy for 2020-2024. We developed a third season of the campaign "Taste the Ocean", which was launched in September 2023 and which attracted more than 11 million social media impressions.

Result indicator: Profitability of the EU fishing fleet

Progress towards sustainable fisheries contributes to better economic performance of the EU fishing fleet. **Sustainable fisheries pay off in terms of higher profits of the fleets.** As fish stocks are more abundant, landings per unit of effort – such as the number of fishing days – are higher, whilst the operational costs are lower. By contrast, profitability stagnates in the fleet segments that depend on stocks that are still overfished, or overexploited.

The [2023 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet](#) provides a structural and economic overview of the EU fishing fleet in 2021 (latest data):

- in 2021, the EU fishing fleet numbered 71,628 vessels, with a combined gross tonnage of 1.30 million and engine power of 5.3 million kW. There were 54,213 active vessels, offering direct employment to 121,917 fishers, earning on average €26,387 in wages, annually;
- the Gross Value Added (GVA) and gross profit (all excluding subsidies) were estimated at €3.3 billion and €1.18 billion, respectively. GVA as a proportion of revenue was estimated at 54%, and gross profit margin at 19.1%, both lower than in 2020;
- with a total net profit of almost €0.56 billion in 2021 (up 23% from 2020 although not recovering the values observed for 2019), **8.2% of the revenue was retained as profit.** While overall the EU fishing fleet was profitable, 4 out of the 22 coastal Member States fleets suffered net losses in 2021, namely: Cyprus, Germany, France and Greece. Results also varied by scale of operation and fishing region;
- Although the value of landings increased by 5.1% compared to the previous year, energy cost increased sharply by 26.3%. It should be mentioned that 2021 does not consider the sharp increase in fuel prices brought on by the Russian war in Ukraine. Estimates indicate that **the performance of the fleet deteriorated in 2022**, due, chiefly, to the effects of this war, in particular with high fuel costs and inflation rates. In **2023, a**

recovery of the profitability to values similar to those observed in 2021 has been forecasted.

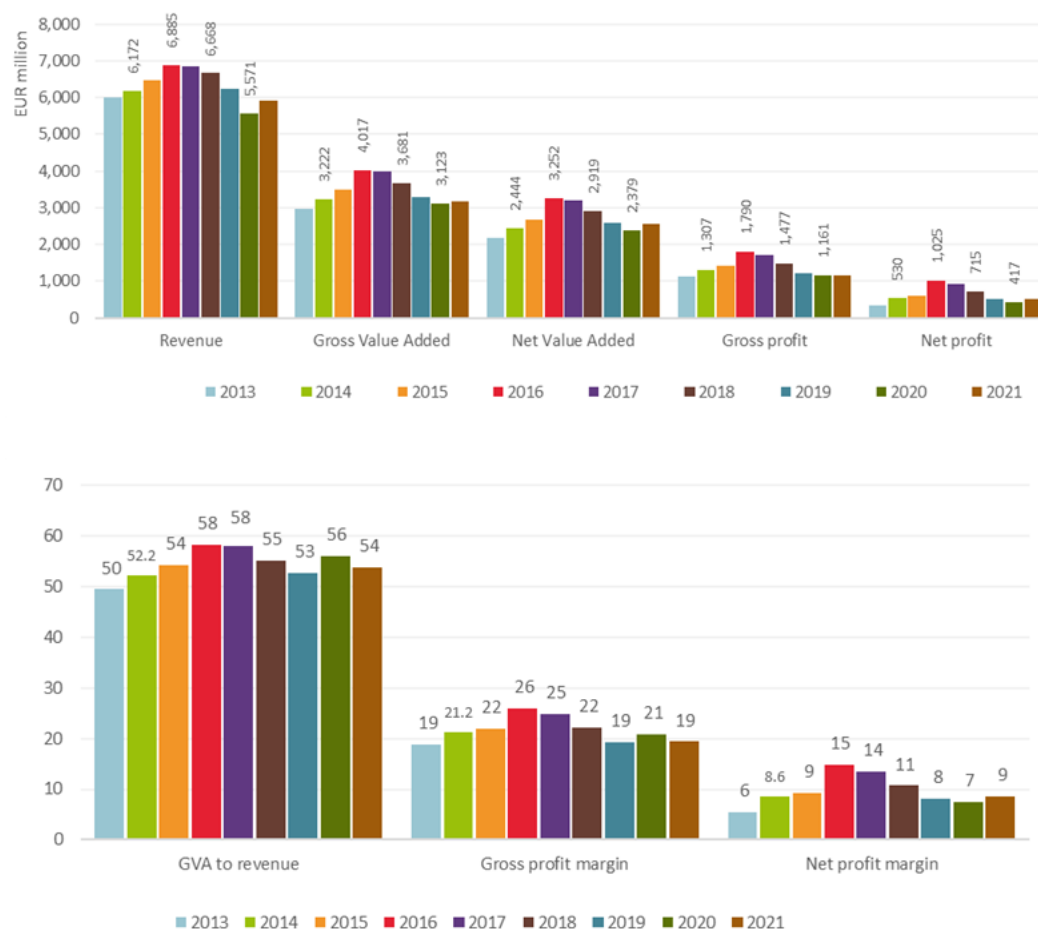


Figure 1: Trends on revenue and profit for the EU fishing fleet

Source: [2023 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet \(STECF 23-07\)](#), p. 40



After the adoption of the [Communication on the energy transition of the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector](#), as part of the **Fisheries and Ocean package**, in February 2023, work focused on the implementation of the action plan, including the setup of the Energy Transition Partnership, its launch event that gathered around 150

participants, the support work through the Blue Economy Observatory, many debates around the energy transition in the sector, and the preparation of the workshops, which will feed into the Roadmap to be delivered by the end of 2024.

Result indicators on aquaculture:

- Volume and value of aquaculture production in the EU
- Volume of organic aquaculture production in the EU
- Profitability of aquaculture production in the EU

When managed sustainably, **aquaculture** is a valuable, low-impact source of food and feed. It remains a sector with a growth potential in the EU. The **Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for 2021-2030** set a concrete path for the Commission, Member States and stakeholders to work towards a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture that contributes to a sustainable food system. In 2023, we finalised the first two guidance documents announced in the guidelines: on access to marine space for aquaculture and on administrative procedures planned for adoption in early 2024. The EU Aquaculture Assistance Mechanism developed further its activities, by assisting DG MARE with the preparation of guidance documents and filling the [EU Aquaculture website](#) with substance, including a knowledge base with information about relevant legislation, good practices and experiences, results of EU-funded projects, scientific papers and publications, learning and communication material.



Sketchnote – EU Algae awareness Summit © Fanny Didou

In 2023 we started implementing the 23 actions listed in the **Communication ‘Towards a strong and sustainable EU Algae sector’**, adopted in November 2022. As regards Algae, we further developed the European Algae platform **EU4Algae** (more than 900 stakeholders by December 2023) and we organised the first **EU Algae Awareness Summit** in October 2023..

The [European Court of Auditors’ Special Report 25/2023 on EU aquaculture policy](#) recognised the improvement of the strategic policy framework for aquaculture through the Strategic Guidelines and the multiannual national strategic plans, and made observations and recommendations that will be implemented by the Commission by 2025 and 2026 and taken into consideration under the next multiannual financial framework (MFF).

Reaching the targets that DG MARE has set for aquaculture will depend on many factors, including on activities of private businesses and direct support from Member States, or regions.

Result indicator: Effectiveness of Member States' fisheries control systems measured by the number of control action plans implemented within the deadline set

The ambitious objectives of the CFP for healthy fish and eco-systems can only be achieved if Member States and the EU as a whole have a proper control and enforcement system in place.

The adoption of the [revised EU fisheries control system](#), five years after the Commission proposal, is an essential step in improving the effectiveness of fisheries control by Member States. The Commission invested very significant resources in 2023 to overcome difficulties on key aspects of the reform, resulting in a visibly modernised EU fisheries control system, which fills some important gaps in existing rules (e.g. full digitalisation of fisheries control data and process, also for small-scale and recreational fisheries, introduction of remote electronic monitoring to control the landing obligation, better traceability and control of engine power, enhanced and fairer sanctioning regime).

Enforcement is an essential part of an effective fisheries control system. In 2023 a particular effort was made on the follow-up given to the significant number of EU pilots and progress in infringement proceedings against Member States for failure to implement EU control rules. In particular, substantial progress has been made on the 13 EU pilots concerning the implementation by Member States of the sanctioning provisions of the control⁽¹⁶⁾ and fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing⁽¹⁷⁾ Regulations. This effort is also part of the follow-up to the European Court of Auditors' [Special report 20/2022: EU action to combat illegal fishing](#).

In addition to the measures above, the Commission continued to implement action plans to strengthen the Member States' fisheries control systems. While most of the remedial measures in the four new action plans adopted since 2020 have been implemented according to schedule, there are a few measures mainly related to the modernisation of IT-systems for fisheries control that have been delayed. For this reason, two actions plans that should have been implemented by the end of 2022 and closed by the end of 2023 remain open (as the action plan cannot be entirely closed until all measures have been implemented).

Result indicator: Contribution from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) for 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 to climate related EU spending⁽¹⁸⁾

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) for 2014-2020 and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) for 2021-2027 are the main financing instruments to support the full implementation of the common fisheries policy, as well as the maritime policy, the EU Blue Economy Strategy and International Ocean Governance. The funds provide support to fishers in the transition towards more sustainable fisheries, and to

⁽¹⁶⁾ [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Union control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy](#)

⁽¹⁷⁾ [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1005/2008 of 29 September 2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing](#)

⁽¹⁸⁾ See also the [Programme Performance Statements for the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund](#)

Member States for data collection and fisheries control, both essential to ensure sustainable fisheries.

For the EMFAF programmes, the focus in 2023 was on working with Member States to provide concrete targeted contributions to the EU policy priorities under the European Green Deal, the Biodiversity and Farm to Fork Strategies, and to effectively support resilience building, as well as the green and digital transformation of the sector.

Overall, €328 million (6.1%) of EMFAF support has already been committed to 1,767 operations implemented under shared management (12 Member States) and (in-)direct management as of 30 June 2023, the most recent reporting period⁽¹⁹⁾. Under shared management around €100 million was provided to improve the environment, and nearly €110 million dealt with climate change. €6.7 million contributed to the protection and restoration of aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems.

As regards the **European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) for 2014-2020**, our [EMFF implementation report 2022](#) indicates that it continued to advance. For the first time, support for productive investments in aquaculture in terms of amount committed is in the leading position, ahead of the usual frontrunners: data collection, control and enforcement. COVID-19 pandemic-related emergency support⁽²⁰⁾ and compensations related to the Ukraine crisis⁽²¹⁾ aided the absorption of EMFF funding.

EMFF **spending** continued to advance up to end 2022 (latest data)⁽²²⁾. By the end of 2022, EUR 5.6 billion of EMFF funding had been committed, corresponding to 99% of the total EMFF funding available (under shared management). Commitments made during 2022 were EUR 644 million, or around 11% of the total EMFF allocation.

Overall, the EMFF contribution to climate change objectives⁽²³⁾ by the end of 2022 was €964.7 million, or 17.8% of the total EMFF funding committed to date. The corresponding number for total EMFF funding already declared by beneficiaries was €653.9 million (17.3% of total EMFF declared by beneficiaries). The EMFF supports operations related to climate change and energy efficiency in accordance with the headline target of the Europe 2020 strategy.

⁽¹⁹⁾ [EMFAF Implementation Report June 2023](#)

⁽²⁰⁾ [Regulation \(EU\) 2020/560 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2020 amending Regulations \(EU\) No 508/2014 and \(EU\) No 1379/2013 as regards specific measures to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak in the fishery and aquaculture sector](#) (OJ L 130, 24.4.2020, p. 11).

⁽²¹⁾ [Commission Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/500 of 25 March 2022 establishing the military aggression of Russia against Ukraine as the occurrence of an exceptional event causing a significant disruption of markets](#)

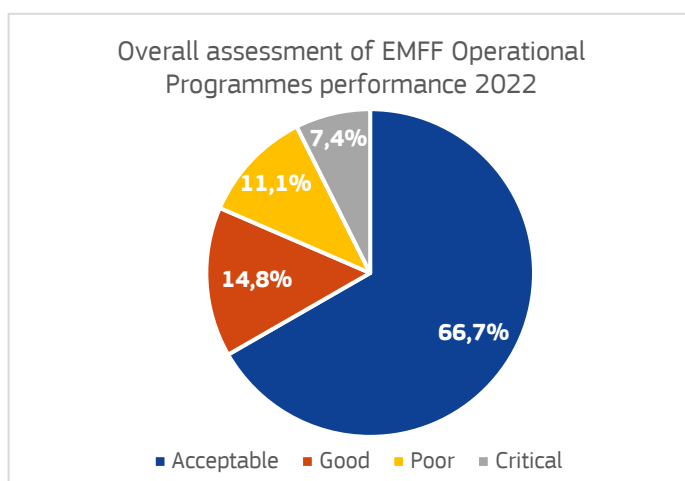
⁽²²⁾ [EMFF implementation report 2022 - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽²³⁾ The coefficients for calculating amounts of support for climate change objectives are provided in Annex III of the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No. 1232/2014

Table: EMFF contribution to climate change of operations selected for support

Total EMFF allocation (Annual Implementation Report, 31/12/2022)	Total EMFF committed by Managing Authority (Annual Implementation Report, 31/12/2022)	Climate change amount of total EMFF committed by Managing Authority (Annual Implementation Report, 31/12/2022)	Climate change / EMFF allocation (%)	Climate change / EMFF committed (%)
€5,618,465,367	€5,358,071,004	€956,059,766	17.0%	17.8%

Overall, €209.8 million of the EMFF funding in 21,843 operations were committed to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This corresponds to 3.8% of total EMFF funding committed at the end of 2022. 59.0% (EUR 123.7 million) of the funding was allocated via the temporary cessation of fishing activities (Article 33). The number of operations related to compensations as a percentage of the total number of operations in Member States varies from 1.8% to 68.5%. Compensations related to the Ukraine crisis helped stakeholders to deal with the negative effects of various market disruptions. In total 2,595 operations were reported, with €13.4 million of EMFF funding committed. Throughout 2023, we continued to encourage Member States to speed up absorption of the funds, including for dedicated climate and biodiversity related actions.



Overall, the **performance of the 27 EMFF programmes** is satisfactory, with 81.5% of programmes assessed as good or acceptable. Financial implementation in terms of EMFF commitments went up from 87.1% (end of 2021) to 99% (end of 2022), while selected operations increased to over 110,000 (89,000 at the end of 2021). For 88.9% of the programmes, progress with regard to output implementation was assessed as

acceptable or good, which shows good implementation towards reaching the output indicator targets for 2023. The administrative capacity ranked high and was found satisfactory, with again 77.8% of the programmes assessed as good or acceptable.

Regarding the reliability of the underlying performance data under shared management, in line with the corporate criteria, Member States have been provided by DG MARE with working papers, templates, tools, support and documentation for the preparation, validation and submission of their reports. The tools conduct formal, plausibility, completeness and consistency checks, leading to timely delivered and highly reliable data on indicators, milestones and the progress of the (operational) programmes. Additionally, DG MARE compiles data at EU level and conducts further quality checks before data is released for DG MARE internal use and dissemination. Whenever systemic problems are detected, DG MARE offers support to the Member State through online capacity building, or in location workshops. For direct and indirect management, and data processed by DG MARE internally, the whole

process has been fully integrated in the shared management workflow. No significant issues were identified.

Examples of EU added value of EMFF support:

- [Fully Documented Fisheries – Artificial intelligence \(AI\) makes a difference](#)

Dutch researchers and fishing industry developed an AI-based tool that automatically recognises the size and species and of each fish, facilitating the handling of fish and recording of catches on board vessels. It also provides valuable data for fisheries scientists and managers.

- [LagoMeal – Turning toxic pufferfish invader into aquaculture feed](#)



Fish feed

©TL23photo/stock.adobe.com

The pufferfish, originating from the Red Sea, is one of the most harmful invasive species now present in the Mediterranean Sea. In Greece, the EU-funded LagoMeal project managed to create a commercial fishery for this invasive species that used to have no commercial value. A team of experts from various national institutions and the private sector developed a process to deactivate a powerful nerve toxin and turn deadly pufferfish into high-quality fishmeal. Local fishers have now a valuable catch, the aquaculture sector benefits from lower feed

prices, and the damaging pufferfish numbers are expected to fall.

Following up on the European Court of Auditors' [Special Report 26/2020 on the marine environment](#), we continued to work closely with DG Environment on the timely implementation the Court's recommendations. The implementation of two recommendations in DG MARE's remit was considered by the Court fully and timely (end 2023), while for the third one the implementation was classified as done in most respects, with the deadline still pending (July 2024).

As regards the **European Fisheries Fund (EFF) for 2007-2013**, all operational programmes of Member States were closed or pre-closed.

The partnership with Euronews on the **OCEAN magazine** continued in 2023 and enabled strong coverage of key priorities, such as blue skills, the work of the European Fisheries Control Agency and critical infrastructure, reaching millions of viewers in Europe. Building on the successful partnership with Euronews, the second season of the podcast series 'Ocean calls' was launched, with 8 episodes covering topics such as underwater noise, sharks and marine heatwaves.

Specific objective 2: A sustainable blue economy generating sustainable economic development, jobs and prosperity by 2024

Result indicator: Size of the EU blue economy



The [EU blue economy report 2023](#)⁽²⁴⁾ gives an overview of the **size and performance of its seven established sectors** in the EU-27 (final data 2020): they directly employed 3.34 million people and generated around €523 billion in turnover and €129.1 billion in gross value added (GVA) in 2020 (decreases of 22%, 26% and 30%- respectively, compared to 2019, due to COVID-19 impacts).

Two sectors are particularly noteworthy: coastal tourism and offshore wind. Coastal tourism was most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a 58%- decrease in GVA and 40%- decrease in employment. However, it kept generating the largest share of employment and GVA in the EU Blue Economy, with 51% and 26%, respectively. The offshore wind energy sector is the only one that showed an increase in GVA and employment in 2020.

7 established sectors of EU-27 blue economy (final data 2020)	
Economic performance:	
gross value added generated	€129.1 billion
gross operating surplus (profit)	€43.6 billion
total turnover	€523 billion
Social dimension:	
Direct employment	3.34 million people

The unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine has affected the EU Economy and the Blue Economy sectors in different ways, ranging from increases in oil and marine diesel prices, to trade restrictions, and supply chain bottlenecks. The impact on the different sectors will depend on the extent and duration of the conflict and retaliation measures.

In 2021, **household expenditure on fishery and aquaculture products** in the EU-27 grew 7% from 2020, continuing the upward trend already registered between 2019 and 2020⁽²⁵⁾. The year 2021 saw overall growth in the total value of EU trade flows of fishery and aquaculture products, and it also initiated a period of economic recovery from the 2020 pandemic crisis. In February 2022, the total value of EU trade of fishery and aquaculture

⁽²⁴⁾ [EU Blue Economy Report 2023](#), see:

- p. 6: The 7 established sectors are: marine living resources, marine non-living resources, marine renewable energy, port activities, shipbuilding and repair, maritime transport and coastal tourism.
- p. 3: Analysis in this report are provided for 2009-2020 period for the EU-27 as a whole and by the sector and industry for each Member State. New data for 2021 will soon be released on the [Blue Economy Indicators](#).

⁽²⁵⁾ [The EU Fish Market 2022](#), p.15, paragraph 1

products plummeted. This is linked to the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine⁽²⁶⁾, which affected oil prices and created bottlenecks in the supply chain globally. The Russian invasion of Ukraine further exacerbated the spike in energy prices driven by COVID-19 in late 2021 and in 2022. Marine-diesel prices doubled from 2021 to 2022⁽²⁷⁾, leading energy costs to increase from 13% of revenues in 2020 to an estimated 35% in 2022.

By December 2023, **BlueInvest**⁽²⁸⁾ has provided technical assistance (customised investment readiness and fundraising support) to 81 companies and has coached more than 150



investors (investor capacity building). More than €100 million private investment has so far been secured by BlueInvest beneficiaries. During the same period, a dedicated financial instrument, **InvestEU Blue Economy**, which is supported by an EMFAF top-up, has been launched and started to allocate capital to

intermediaries, to be invested in innovative and sustainable blue economy ventures.

Aligned with Horizon Europe, smart specialisation strategies helped boosting innovation. In 2023, the **Smart Specialisation Platform for the Blue Economy** contributed with two new partnerships (blue bio-economy and aquaculture).

We continued to foster cooperation in Europe's sea basins, also with third countries, through the implementation of the **revised Atlantic Action Plan**⁽²⁹⁾, the **WestMED Initiative**⁽³⁰⁾ and the **Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea**⁽³¹⁾. Two ministerial meetings took place in 2023, concluding with the adoption of new Ministerial Declarations for the WestMed Initiative and the Atlantic Maritime Strategy⁽³²⁾. We have also coordinated the organisation of the second edition of "Our Baltic Conference" (September 2023, Palanga, Lithuania), which resulted in commitments on unexploded munitions. The setting up of the Greater North Sea Basin's initiative has been initiated successfully, thanks to the Commission support during the Ministerial meeting in November 2023.

⁽²⁶⁾ Idem, paragraph 2

⁽²⁷⁾ In the first 9 months of 2022, marine fuel prices averaged close to €1.00/litre, with peaks well above €1.00/litre, which was more than double the 2021 average. Source: EUMOFA Macroeconomic dashboard. Macroeconomic (eumofa.eu).

⁽²⁸⁾ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/en/frontpage/1451>

⁽²⁹⁾ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/news/atlantic-action-plan-20-revamped-maritime-strategy-foster-sustainable-blue-economy-and-eu-green-deal-2020-07-23_en

⁽³⁰⁾ [COM\(2017\)183 final of 19.4.2017](https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/ocean/sea-basins/black-sea_en)

⁽³¹⁾ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/ocean/sea-basins/black-sea_en

⁽³²⁾ For the WestMed Initiative: [Publications - WestMED \(europa.eu\)](https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/ocean/sea-basins/black-sea_en)

For the EU Atlantic Maritime Strategy: [EU Atlantic strategy: what's next? - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/ocean/sea-basins/black-sea_en)



DG MARE launched the **European Blue Forum of sea users** on 26 May 2023 in Brest. Overall, more than 500 stakeholders registered. The work of the Blue Forum continued with two deep dive workshops in September and October 2023, and the first two papers of the Blue Forum will be published in early 2024.

The Sustainable Blue Economy agenda was promoted throughout the year, especially during the

European Maritime Day (EMD) in Brest, France (1,655 participants), and through more than 500 **EMD in my country** events in the EU and across the world.

Result indicator: Improved marine knowledge measured by the degree of use of the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet) in terms of the quantity of downloaded data per month

The **European Marine Observation and Data Network** (EMODnet)⁽³³⁾ provides marine data, data products and metadata for those who analyse, or use the seas and ocean. More than 120 organisations contribute to EMODNet through collection and dissemination of marine data. Private users represent about a quarter of EMODnet usage. The average monthly download of data and data products from the EMODnet central portal was 182.6 GB per month in 2023 (EU-27), almost double compared to 2022 (94.3 GB per month), due to the centralisation of EMODnet under the europa.eu domain. An external study and the EMODnet internal evaluation, finalised in June 2023 conclude that EMODnet is still relevant, with clear value at EU level.

The implementation of the Mission **“Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030”** through the Work Programme 2023 provided visibility and funding opportunities for actions to support the achievement of the Mission’s objectives. DG MARE contributed by monitoring and raising commitments of the regional stakeholders for the “lighthouse” projects launched in 2022 and by promoting the Mission through the networks under the sea basin strategies.

The work in the **EU4Ocean Coalition for Ocean Literacy**, uniting ocean literacy efforts in the EU continued its endeavours to make the ocean a concern of everyone. Its three communities – **EU4Ocean platform**, **Network of European Blue Schools** and the **Youth4Ocean Forum** – have constantly grown since their launch in 2020, with now a total of 842 registered members.

⁽³³⁾ <https://emodnet.eu/en>

Result indicator: Reduction of economic impact of marine litter in the EU measured in terms of median number of litter items per 100 metres of beach in the EU




#EUBeachCleanup event in Nouakchott, organised by the EU Delegation in Mauritania

Taking plastics out of the ocean remains a priority. The Commission co-organised with the United Nations and the European External Action Service, the sixth and so far largest [#EUBeachCleanup](#) campaign (June-October). 550 events were organised, mobilising around 45,000 volunteers worldwide. The campaign succeeded in multiplying the number of grassroots events (i.e. events organised without the direct

involvement of the EU, or UN staff), thanks to the deployment of the ActNow mobile app.

Result indicator: Maritime security measured by the number of new CISE (Common Information Sharing Environment) connections/nodes

The  [Joint Communication on the update of the EU Maritime Security Strategy and its Action Plan](#) has been adopted in March 2023. It is a key contribution to the implementation of the [Strategic Compass](#) and a deliverable of the [2023 Commission Work Programme](#). The revised Strategy has been negotiated and [endorsed](#) by the Council in October 2023.

The transitional phase for the [Common Information Sharing Environment](#) (CISE) for maritime surveillance is running. 14 out of the expected +15 nodes were established.

DG MARE continued to monitor the cooperation between Frontex, the European Fisheries Control Agency and the European Maritime Safety Agency for better assistance to Member States' national authorities performing coast guard functions and to support cooperation in the context of the European and Mediterranean Coastguard Functions Fora.

Result indicator: Installed capacity of offshore wind energy and ocean energy in the EU

The [European Green Deal](#) emphasises the key role of marine renewable energy, and in particular offshore wind energy in the transition to a climate-neutral economy. Ocean energy technologies are reaching pre-commercial stage and should be able to provide substantial capacity at commercial size in the coming years, also thanks to a substantial increase of support through the Horizon Europe work programme 2023-2024. Throughout 2023, we worked closely with DG ENER in implementing the Commission's [EU Strategy on Offshore Renewable Energy](#), which includes the following EU targets:

		By 2030	By 2050
Offshore wind	current level: 12 GW	60 gigawatt	300 gigawatt
Ocean energy	by 2027⁽³⁴⁾: 100 megawatt	1 gigawatt	40 gigawatt

We have also contributed, under DG ENER’s lead, to preparing the Communication on “Delivering on the EU offshore renewable energy ambitions”⁽³⁵⁾, as part of the Commission’s Wind Power Package.

Three new Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) cross-border cooperation projects were kicked off in January 2023 ([REGINA MSP](#), [MSPGreen](#), and REMAP EU). In the same month, DG MARE, together with CINEA organised the launch event of the [Community of Practice on Maritime Spatial Planning in the Mediterranean](#). Our work on offshore renewables accelerated through REPowerEU and the increased ambition for this type of renewables, which will have an impact on Member States’ maritime spatial plans and offshore licensing procedures.

In 2023, the Commission continued monitoring the implementation of the [Maritime Spatial Planning Directive 2014/89/EU](#) and followed up on the infringement procedures launched in previous years. Four Member States (Spain, Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus) adopted their maritime spatial plans in 2023, taking the total number of coastal Member States having adopted one to 19 (out of 22). In December 2023 the Commission launched a court case against Greece for failure to establish a maritime spatial plan.

The European Court of Auditor’s [Special Report 22/2023 on offshore renewable energy](#) concluded that the Commission had facilitated national maritime spatial planning by identifying potential conflicts, providing guidance, and targeting EU money at issues essential for offshore renewable energy development.

See also the section above: Result indicator ‘Size of the EU blue economy’.

General objective 4: A Stronger Europe in the World

Specific objective 3: More sustainable fisheries worldwide and improved international ocean governance by 2024

The EU, represented by the Commission, is committed to leading the way on international ocean governance by playing a prominent role in all relevant fora. In 2023, our main achievements were the following:

- The implementation of the 2022 Joint Communication on [International Ocean Governance](#) and confirmation of the EU as a driving force in the implementation of global commitments set out in the [2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals](#). Notably, we have further promoted an International Panel on Ocean Sustainability, and organised

⁽³⁴⁾ Target updated following the [Communication “Delivering on the EU offshore renewable energy ambitions” \(COM/2023/668 final of 24.10.2023\)](#)

⁽³⁵⁾ [COM/2023/668 final of 24.10.2023](#)

several dialogues with key partners, including with China under the EU-China Ocean Partnership.

- The United Nations High Seas Treaty, also known as the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction treaty, or the BBNJ treaty was adopted by consensus in the UN on 19 June 2023, with the EU playing a major role. The signature and conclusion decision has been adopted by the Commission and the Agreement signed by the EU on 20 September 2023. We have further worked on developing the [High Ambition Coalition on behalf of the EU and its Member States, during the event organized in September 2023, in the margin of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly](#). USA and the Republic of Korea joined in 2023.
- We have continued to deliver on the **EU Arctic Policy** as set out in the [Joint Communication - A stronger EU engagement for a greener, peaceful and prosperous Arctic](#) (2021). DG MARE (together with the EEAS) participated in relevant Arctic events and promoted arctic matters in High-level dialogues with the US, China, Canada and Japan. We successfully organised the EU Arctic Forum and Indigenous People's Dialogue, in Nuuk, Greenland, on 8-9 February 2023, an event that benefited from more than 200 participants in person, and more than 600 unique online viewers. We have continued to support the implementation of the [Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean](#).
- We have continued to promote the Commission's policy on deep sea mining, based on the precautionary principle.
- We ensured the EU coordination and participation in the ["Our Ocean Conference"](#) held in Panama on 2-3 March 2023, where the European Union confirmed its strong commitment to the protection and governance of the ocean by announcing 39 action commitments for the year 2023, with a total value of €816.5 million for all projects.
- We ensured input into the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change COP 28, and oceans were for the first time mentioned in the Global Stock Take.
- To enhance cooperation with **African partners**, DG MARE worked on establishing the [EU-Africa Ocean strategic group for policy cooperation and dialogue on international ocean governance](#), with a kick-off meeting taking place on 10 July 2023, and preparing a second edition of BlueInvest outside the EU that will take place in July 2024 in Kenya.

Result indicator: Sustainable management of the main regulated tuna and tuna-like species fished by the EU fleet under the purview of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations of which the EU is a Member⁽³⁶⁾

Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMO) manage fish stocks by geographical area and are key actors for the joint management of highly migratory and straddling stocks

⁽³⁶⁾ See also the [Programme statements for the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements](#)

under the Law of the Sea. The EU, represented by the Commission, plays an active role in 5 tuna organisations and 13 non-tuna organisations⁽³⁷⁾.

18 out of 20 tuna and tuna-like stocks fished by the EU fleet in RFMOs areas are in good condition. In 2022, of the total commercial tuna catch worldwide, 87% came from stocks at healthy levels of abundance. This is due to the fact that skipjack stocks contribute to more than half of the global tuna catches and are all in a healthy situation. By contrast, bigeye and yellowfin in the Indian Ocean are currently overfished despite the efforts from the EU to reverse the trend.

A new conservation measure for **bigeye tuna in the Atlantic** has been under discussion in the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) for several years, so far without success.. We will continue the discussions on a new measure for tropical tunas to pave the way for a hopefully successful outcome at the 2024 ICCAT annual meeting.

Yellowfin tuna in the Indian Ocean remains overfished. At the last annual meetings in 2022 and 2023, the EU had made a wide set of proposals to address the situation of the yellowfin tuna, which were not adopted. In 2023 the IOTC adopted with the support and full commitment of the EU a new resolution defining for the first time catch limits to **bigeye tuna**, which is overfished and subject to overfishing. The EU is the main contributor with the biggest level of catch reduction. We will continue to promote the sustainability of the stocks in 2024.

Result indicator: Conservation measures based on scientific advice adopted for the main regulated species fished by the EU fleet under the purview of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations of which the EU is a Member⁽³⁸⁾

In 2023, 36 out of 41 (88%) **conservation measures adopted by Regional Fisheries Management Organisations** (RFMOs) for the management of the stocks under their purview were **in line with scientific advice**. This outcome is less positive than the results achieved in 2022 (97%), which were above the target of 95%, but it is similar to the result of 2019 (88%) and is above 2020 (74%). More importantly, while it clearly shows the difficulty to achieve the 95% target, it still keeps an upward trend for the period as close as possible to the target.

The positions taken by the EU in the RFMOs are fully in line with the objectives of the [EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#) and the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#). We have consistently promoted a **sustainable management of stocks based on scientific advice**, adequate monitoring, control and surveillance measures, the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and better governance in these organisations. However, the EU has only a certain leverage to influence the decisions of RFMOs that are normally taken by consensus.

⁽³⁷⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/fisheries/international-agreements/regional-fisheries-management-organisations-rfmos_en

⁽³⁸⁾ See also the [Programme statements for the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements](#)

In 2023, the Commission has adopted two regulation proposals (introduction of the electronic reporting system in the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, and an amendment to Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation regulation together with a delegated act), while the co-legislators have adopted two regulations regarding the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and two regulations transposing control, conservation and management measures. The Commission has also adopted, during 2023, 17 proposals for a Council decision on the mandates for the various RFMOs of which EU is a Member (with all having been adopted by the Council in December 2023 and January 2024).

Result indicator: Fighting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing measured by the number of non-EU Member States that the Commission has engaged in a dialogue with and the number of countries having addressed their deficiencies

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing has strong detrimental effects on the stocks and the marine environment, profitability of legitimate operators, viability of coastal communities, and on food security.

If third countries do not comply with their **obligations as flag, coastal, port and market State** under international law, they incur the risk of being identified as a non-cooperating country in the fight against IUU fishing. Since 2012, the Commission has held **IUU dialogues** with 68 third countries (cumulative figure of formal and informal dialogues). The number has slightly increased when compared to 2022 (67 third countries), as we resumed cooperation with countries already subject to dialogues in the past and we deepened interaction with some countries exporting tuna species to the EU.

In 2023 the Commission conducted missions on the spot to third countries under yellow card dialogues (Ecuador, Ghana, Panama and Vietnam) and to some countries under informal IUU dialogue (Mauritius, Philippines) and also has held IUU working groups with China and Taiwan. We have maintained IUU dialogues with nine yellow-carded countries, although two of them have been transformed in red cards (Cameroon and Trinidad and Tobago). With the other three red-carded countries (Cambodia, Comoros, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) some improvements have been recorded, however the identified shortcomings have still not been fully addressed, thus not allowing for a lifting of those red cards.

Following the withdrawal of the UK from the EU, we established close and continued technical exchanges with this country to ensure its compliance with the IUU rules without affecting legitimate trade and engaged in discussions on the facilitation of implementation of the Ireland/Northern Ireland protocol, part of the Withdrawal Agreement.

Result indicator: Control of imports of fisheries products in the EU measured by the number of catch certificates import refusals by Member States

The adoption by the European Parliament and the Council of the [revised EU fisheries control system](#) has provided the legal basis for the future mandatory use of the IT CATCH system in the context of **EU IUU catch certification scheme**. The scheme aims to ensure that fishery products imported into the EU stem from legal fishing in accordance with international law of the sea and in compliance with national and regional conservation and management rules.

It is the Member States' responsibility to apply the scheme and, in particular to apply the checks and verifications on imports of fishery products. In 2023, catch certificates refused have decreased (24) when compared with 2022 (32).

Since 2019, the tool **IT CATCH** is available for a digital transmission of catch certificates, processing statements and other relevant processes. IT developments of IT CATCH have continued as planned in 2023, and the Commission continued providing guidance to Member States through the organisation of dedicated working groups, trainings and guidance documents.

The European Court of Auditors [Special Report 20/2022 on EU action to combat illegal fishing](#) concluded that the control systems in place to combat illegal fishing are partially effective; although they mitigate the risk, their effectiveness is reduced by the uneven application of checks and sanctions by Member States. The adoption of the [revised EU fisheries control system](#), which includes provisions on the compulsory use of IT CATCH and on more uniform criteria for risk identification is in line with the recommendations formulated by the Court.

Result indicator: Number of sustainable fisheries partnership agreements (SFPAs) in force⁽³⁹⁾

Sustainable fisheries partnership agreements (SFPAs) give access for the EU long distance fleet to fishing zones in third country waters, and provide support to those third countries for better fisheries governance and a sustainable development of their local fishing sector. These agreements also contribute to economic activity and job creation both in the EU and in partner countries.

At the end of 2023, there were **14 SFPAs in force⁽⁴⁰⁾**. A new Agreement and Protocol with Madagascar and a new Protocol with Kiribati were signed in 2023 and entered into provisional application during the year. Preparatory work regarding negotiations to be held in 2024 have been initiated. More specifically, several prospective and retrospective evaluations of SFPAs and their implementing Protocols were completed (regarding Angola, Morocco, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire) or launched (for Senegal, Cook Islands and Sao Tomé and Príncipe). A mandate authorising the opening of negotiations with Cape Verde was adopted in December, while those concerning the renewal of SFPAs Protocols with Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire have been undergoing preparations.

Joint Committee meetings were held with partner countries throughout the year for the proper monitoring of the implementation of the protocols.

The number of fishing authorisations issued in the framework of the SFPAs in force has reached a total of 374 for 2023 (184 in mixed agreements and 90 in tuna agreements) benefiting to a total of 132 vessels (one vessel can receive several authorisations to fish in various countries). Finally, 91 direct authorisations regarding fishing activities in third

⁽³⁹⁾ See also the [Programme statements for the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements](#)

⁽⁴⁰⁾ 11 tuna agreements: Cabo Verde, Ivory Coast, Sao Tomé e Príncipe, Gabon, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Seychelles, Mauritius, Madagascar, Senegal and The Gambia (with a hake component for the last two) and 3 mixed agreements: Greenland, Mauritania, and Guinea-Bissau

countries outside Union waters where no SFPAs apply and 21 authorisations in the high seas have been granted in the framework of the implementation of the [Regulation \(EU\) 2017/2403 on the sustainable management of external fishing fleets](#), from a total of 169 notifications received by the Commission services.

While negotiations are always planned with the objective of ensuring continuity of the fishing activity, on some occasions, negotiations have taken more time than expected. This led in some cases to a prolonged interruption of fishing activities in some third countries, which could at least be partly mitigated by the EU fleet accessing alternative fishing grounds.

2. INTERNAL CONTROL AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Assurance is provided on the basis of information on the efficiency and effectiveness of internal control systems and governance processes. The management monitors the functioning of the internal control systems on a continuous basis and carries out an objective examination with internal and external auditors. The results are explicitly documented and reported to the Director-General. The following **reports/documentation** have been considered:

- the reports from Authorising Officers by Subdelegation (AOSDs), in accordance with the AOSD Charter, together with questionnaires designed for the preparation of the Annual Activity Report;
- the reports on control results from managing/audit authorities in Member States in shared management, as well as the result of the Commission supervisory controls on the activities of these bodies;
- the reports from Authorising Officers in other DGs managing budget appropriations in cross sub-delegation;
- the reports on control results from entrusted entities in indirect management, as well as the results of the DG's supervisory controls on the activities of these bodies;
- the contribution by the Director in charge of Risk Management and Internal Control, including the results of internal control monitoring at the DG level;
- the reports on recorded exceptions, non-compliance events and any cases of 'confirmation of instructions' (Article 92.3 of the Financial Regulation);
- the reports of the ex-post control sector;
- the monthly reports to MARE management on budget implementation;
- the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control, and the observations and recommendations reported by the Internal Audit Service (IAS);
- the observations and the recommendations reported by the European Court of Auditors.

The systematic analysis of the available evidence provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in the full coverage of the budget delegated to the Director-General of DG MARE.

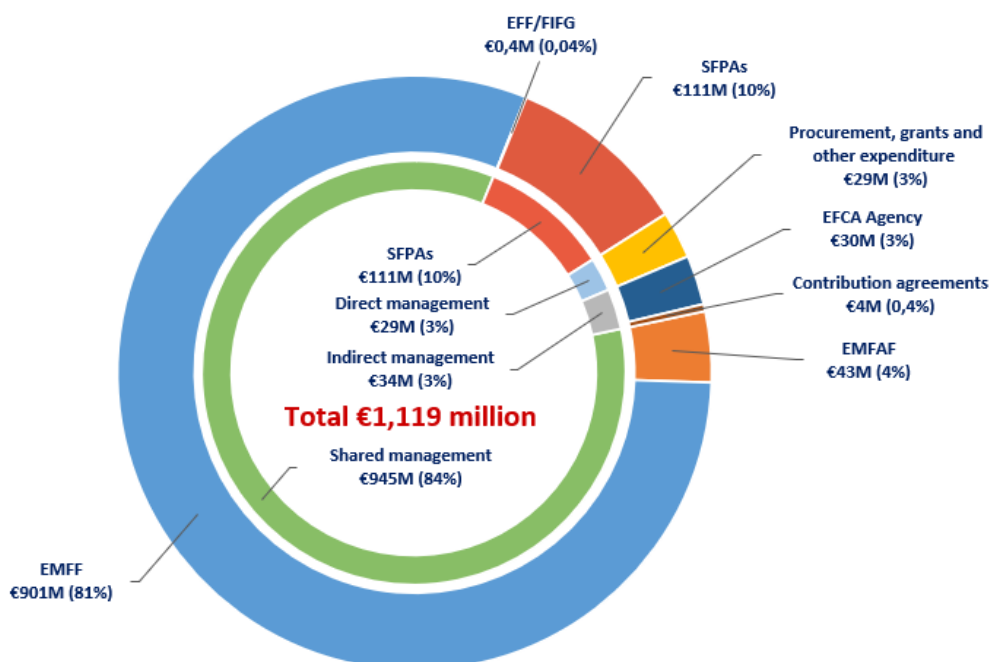
This section covers the control results and other relevant elements that support management's assurance. It is structured into [2.1. Control results](#), [2.2. Audit observations and recommendations](#), [2.3. Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems](#), and resulting in [2.4. Conclusions on the assurance](#).

2.1. Control results

This section reports on the control results used by management to support the assurance on the achievement of the **internal control objectives (ICO)**⁽⁴¹⁾. The DG MARE's assurance building and materiality criteria are outlined in annual activity report annex 5. In addition, the annual activity report annex 6 outlines the main risks together with the control processes to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems. Finally, the annual activity report annex 7 describes the assurance building and control frameworks for the different management modes.

In 2023 DG MARE executed payments totalling **€1.1 billion** spread across the different expenditure areas, namely shared management, SFPAs, indirect and direct management.

DG MARE 2023 PAYMENTS PER EXPENDITURE AREA



Shared management (84% of 2023 payments)

The most significant expenditure area for DG MARE relates to the programmes implemented by Member States under shared management amounting to €945 million of the DG's executed payments in 2023.

The main expenditure area relates to the **European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)** 2014-2020. In 2023, €901 million were paid.

⁽⁴¹⁾ 1) Effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; 2) reliability of reporting; 3) safeguarding of assets and information; 4) prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and 5) adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes as well as the nature of the payments (FR Art 36.2). The 2nd and/or 3rd Internal Control Objective(s) (ICO) only when applicable, given the DG's activities.

For the **European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)**, its successor for the 2021-2027 programming period, €43 million were paid in 2023.

Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) (10% of 2023 payments)

The second most significant expenditure area for DG MARE relates to **SFPAs**, amounting to €111 million of the DG's executed payments in 2023. These financial contributions cover the EU access to a third country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ), allowing for EU vessels to carry out fishing activities. These contributions are paid to each partner country annually, on the basis of the provisions set in the signed protocols.

Indirect management (3% of 2023 payments)

In 2023, DG MARE paid €4 million (0.4% of 2023 payments) related to **contributions agreements**⁽⁴²⁾. These payments mainly concerned the voluntary contributions to the activities of international organisations dealing with fisheries. In addition, the EU contribution to the **European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA)**⁽⁴³⁾ amounted to €30 million (3% of 2023 payments).

Direct management (3% of 2023 payments)

In 2023, DG MARE implemented €22 million (2% of 2023 payments) in the form of **procurement contracts and grant agreements** under the EMFF or EMFAF. In addition, €7 million (1% of 2023 payments) were implemented regarding **pilot projects and routine administrative expenditure**.

In line with the 2018 Financial Regulation, DG MARE's assessment for the new reporting requirement is as follows:

- No cases of "confirmation of instructions" (FR art 92.3)
- Eleven cases of financing not linked to costs (FR art 125.3) linked to grant agreements signed with the Advisory Councils
- No financial Framework Partnerships >4 years (FR art 130.4)
- No cases of flat-rates >7% for indirect costs (FR art 181.6)
- No cases of derogations from the principle of non-retroactivity pursuant to Article 193 of the Financial Regulation.

2.1.1. Effectiveness of controls

a) Legality and regularity of the transactions

DG MARE uses internal control processes to ensure sound management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions it is responsible for, taking into

⁽⁴²⁾ For further details refer to Annex 11

⁽⁴³⁾ For further details refer to Annex 13

account the multiannual character of programmes and the nature of the payments concerned.

Shared Management

In 2023, €901 million was paid out for the EMFF, of which €112 million in pre-financing and €789 million in interim payments.

2023 EMFF payments



For the EMFAF, €43 million was paid out, of which €27 million in pre-financing and €16 million in interim payments.

2023 EMFAF payments



All Member States fulfil **horizontal enabling conditions**⁽⁴⁴⁾ except Hungary and Poland (situation end 2023). In January 2024, **Poland** submitted their revised self-assessment of the horizontal enabling condition on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (the Charter), which the Commission now considers as having been fulfilled. As regards **Hungary**, in December 2023, the Commission concluded that the country now fulfils the Charter as concerns judicial independence. This allows EMFF expenditure to be reimbursed for both Member States.

1) *Control objective (shared management)*

For the EMFF 2014-2020 and the EMFAF 2021-2027, the **control objective** is to ensure that the estimated residual error rate per programme does not exceed 2% for each accounting year.

DG MARE's annual assurance is mainly based on the analysis of the **assurance packages** provided by the Member States' authorities each year by 15 February, in combination with the results from all other audit information available throughout the year, as listed below:

- DG MARE's audit work on the review of the reliability of the audit authorities, including compliance audits and assessment of national system audit reports;
- DG MARE's thematic audits as well as targeted fact-finding missions;
- relevant audit information received from DG REGIO, DG EMPL and/or the ECA;
- annual control and quarterly technical meetings with national audit authorities;

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Similar to ex ante conditionalities under 2014-2020

- annual implementation reports from the Member States;
- monitoring committees and annual review meetings;
- contacts with regional and national programme managers;
- OLAF.

In particular, the audit authorities report a **total error rate (TER)**, which is the rate prior to corrections, and a **residual total error rate (RTER, for 2014-2020)/residual error rate (RER, for 2021-2027)** which represents the error remaining in the accounts after corrections. Further details on the control cycle are disclosed in Annex 7.

In relation to the closure of the EMFF 2014-2020 operational programmes, **finalisation of all legality and regularity issues** may take place after the payment of the final balance for the last accounting year, given that the legality and regularity can only be closed once DG MARE has assurance that the estimated residual total error rate (RTER) per programme does not exceed 2% for each accounting year and that all open issues, such as payment interruptions, suspensions or financial corrections stemming from previous audit work or from non-compliance with CFP provisions have been closed. This might entail carrying out compliance audits in relation to expenditure of the last accounting year.

2) Assessment of the control results (shared management)

For the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF 2014-2020), the audit authorities have reported **significant audit coverage** through their audits of operations by auditing 823 out of a total of 23,617 items in the population of the accounting year 2021-2022 (payment claims/operations), representing 20% of the total declared expenditure of €1.4 billion (audit population). Of the total irregular expenditure of €8.5 million reported by the audit authorities, 65% relates to “ineligible expenditure” and 13% to “missing supporting information or documentation”.

In addition, DG MARE carried out **26 audit assignments** during the reporting year. 12 of these assignments related to the assurance packages for the accounting year 2021-2022 and 14 audits covered thematic issues such as effective and proportionate anti-fraud measures, selection of operations and adequate management verifications. The main errors found during the compliance audit work carried out by DG MARE relate to “lack of or incomplete verifications” (37%) and “additional ineligible expenditure” (27%).

In relation to the accounting year 2022-2023, DG MARE has carried out a first preliminary consistency review of the error rates reported by the Member States for the EMFF 2014-2020, leading to the “reportable” error rates. All five Member States reporting a total error rate above the materiality threshold have taken adequate measures to reduce the residual error in the population to 2% or below. However, for the Romanian EMFF operational programme the existing reservation is maintained (see Annex 9), due to a reported total error rate above 10% and to the inadequate implementation of the necessary remedial measures relating to previous accounting years.

For the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF 2021-2027), one assurance package with an EMFAF error rate of 0% was submitted for the accounting year 2022-2023.

The confirmed EMFF error rate for the **amount at risk at payment** for the relevant expenditure 2023 is 1.37% and the confirmed error rate for the **amount at risk at closure** is 0.99%⁽⁴⁵⁾. For the EMFAF, the error rate for the **amount at risk at payment** for the relevant expenditure and the error rate for the **amount at risk at closure** is 1.40%⁽⁴⁶⁾.

DG MARE has **reasonable assurance** on the legality and regularity of EU payments made in 2023 for the EMFF 2014-2020 and for the EMFAF 2021-2027. Pre-financing payments bear no risk as they remain assets of the European Commission until their 'clearance'. For the interim payments made, adequate mechanisms are in place to ensure that only legal and regular expenditure is included and certified in the annual accounts, such as the review of the effective functioning of management and control systems through the assessment of the annual assurance packages of Member States and related audits. Details are included in Annex 7.

The benefit of controls relates partially to the **financial corrections** applied by the Member States following the Audit Authorities', the Court of Auditors' or the Commission's audit work as well as OLAF recommendations. These financial corrections are in general directly implemented by the Member States through deductions from interim payment applications and/or from the annual accounts. Further details are described in Annex 7.

DG MARE has not applied any net financial corrections under the EMFF. Nonetheless, its corrective capacity is unaffected, since Member States have fully implemented all necessary financial corrections, in accordance with Article 143 of the [Common Provisions Regulation \(EU\) No 1303/2013 \(CPR\)](#)⁽⁴⁷⁾. No financial correction decisions by the Commission have therefore been necessary.

It should be noted however, that the provisions for the net financial corrections in the CPR are very strict, limiting the scope for their application and potentially leading to considerable challenges in applying net financial corrections in practice.

In this context, it must be pointed out that financial corrections are not an objective as such. A decreasing level of corrections over the years would not solely result from an increase of the quality and/or quantity of controls at Member State and EU level operated throughout the various control stages (selection, implementation and monitoring, audits), but could also reflect an improvement in sound financial management of the programme by the Member States.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ The amount at risk "at closure" indicates the remaining risk to the 2023 relevant expenditure once the necessary financial corrections have been applied to bring the total residual error rates for all OPs down to 2%. DG MARE is able to identify for which OPs additional financial corrections are required. These estimated future corrections - if any - are deducted from the amount at risk at payment.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Since no confirmed error rates are yet available for the EMFAF, the amounts at risk are based on reported error rates, where available and reliable, or on flat rates, in accordance with Annex 5.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013

For the European Fisheries Fund (EFF 2007-2013), following the closure procedure, one partial final payment was made for €0.4 million. A **net financial correction** amounting to €0.02 million was implemented regarding one Member State.

Other expenditure areas

Payments relating to **Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements** made during the year totalled €111 million, equivalent to 10% of all amounts paid by DG MARE. At the end of 2023, **14 SFPAs protocols** were in force including two new protocols signed with Kiribati and Madagascar.

Payments under **indirect management** made during the year relating to the contribution agreements signed with **international organisations** and the EU contribution to the **European Fisheries Control Agency** totalled €34 million, equivalent to 3% of all amounts paid by DG MARE.

In 2023, DG MARE made payments under **direct management** for an amount of €29 million, equivalent to 3% of all amounts paid by the DG, in relation to procurement, grants and other expenditure implementing both the EMFAF and the legacy EMFF programmes.

1) Control objective (other expenditure areas)

As regards legality and regularity of the transactions that fall under SFPAs, indirect and direct management, the materiality criteria includes the standard quantitative threshold of 2% of the executed payments, in addition to any weakness on the functioning of the internal control system or entailing reputational risks for the DG or the Commission.

A combination of controls, as detailed in Annex 6, are embedded into the programming and planning, verification, execution and monitoring, management and reporting processes to ensure effective mitigation of the financial and operational risks.

2) Assessment of the control results (other expenditure areas)

Since a quantitative estimation of the value of errors prevented and detected is not available, it is not possible to quantify the related benefits, other than the amounts recovered as a result of these controls. The benefits of control in non-financial terms cover: better value for money, deterrent effect, efficiency gains, system improvements and compliance with regulatory provisions.

An essential element of **Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements** is the policy dialogue on fisheries between the EU and the partner countries during the negotiation process and the lifetime of the protocols. Through its controls, DG MARE ensures that the financial contribution resulting from the negotiations represents a fair balance between the access to third country waters and the positive returns for the EU.

Under **indirect management**, the various **contribution agreements** signed with international organisations took place after the conclusion of a pillar assessment at

Commission level. This assessment confirms the reliability of the control systems applied by these organisations. DG MARE scrutinises, at ex-ante level, all contribution agreements.

With regard to **direct management**, in 2023, DG MARE did not launch any open calls for tender. Similarly, no open calls for proposals were initiated and published by DG MARE. One exceptional negotiated procedure without a publication of a contract notice was conducted, for a case covered by the Financial Regulation (EU) 2018/1046 Art 164(1)(d) Point 11.1(b) of Annex 1.

In 2023 no non-compliance or exception events were recorded (2022: 1 non-compliance event). The total **interest paid** due to late payments in 2023 totalled €567.24 (2022: €0).

In conclusion, through the analysis of the available control results relating to **other expenditure areas**, such as SFPA, indirect and direct management, an assessment can be made of identified weaknesses and their relative impact on legality and regularity. This assessment has not unveiled any significant weakness which could have a material impact as regards the legality and regularity of these financial operations. Though the results of this assessment indicate an error rate close to 0%, for prudence reasons, the error rate for the underlying payments was set to 0.5% (refer to *Table X* below).

3) Supervision/Coordination of EU bodies (executive agencies, decentralised agencies, joint undertakings and other union bodies).

When it comes to the **European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA)**, although Union bodies have full responsibility for their own management, a number of reporting and supervising arrangements allow DG MARE to exercise its supervisory role. DG MARE participates at different levels in the supervisory and governance boards of the Agency. The Commission supervises the EFCA annual and multi-annual work programmes, the staff establishment plan and budget, and adopts an opinion on its draft Single Programming Document. The Commission follows-up the discharge process by participating and, if necessary, intervening in the relevant parliamentary debates.

DG MARE delegates the execution of the majority of the grant and procurement actions to the **European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA)**⁽⁴⁸⁾. As one of its parent DGs, DG MARE participates as an observer in CINEA's Steering Committee, chaired by DG MOVE and composed of representatives of 6 parent DGs. A dedicated unit in CINEA manages the delegated grant actions, procurement procedures, calls and evaluations in line with the adopted work programmes. A Memorandum of Understanding on mutual cooperation has been established and formalised between DG MARE and CINEA.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Refer to CINEA's AAR for further details

4) Overview of DG MARE risk profile

DG MARE's portfolio consists of segments with a relatively low error rate. This is, respectively, thanks to the inherent risk profile of the programmes and funding modalities and the performance of the related control systems.

5) Table (X): Estimated risk at payment and at closure

Based on all the above, DG MARE presents in the following Table X an estimation of the risk at payment and risk at closure for the expenditure managed during the reporting year:

Table (X): Estimated risk at payment and at closure (amounts in € million)

The full detailed version of the table is provided in annex 9.

DG MARE	Payments made	Relevant expenditure	Estimated risk (error rate %) <i>at payment</i>		Estimated future corrections and deductions		Estimated risk (error rate %) <i>at closure</i>	
	<i>m EUR</i>	<i>m EUR</i>	<i>m EUR</i>	%	<i>m EUR</i>	%	<i>m EUR</i>	%
EMFAF	43.13	17.27	0.24	1.40%	-	0.00%	0.24	1.40%
EMFF	901.48	849.61	11.68	1.37%	3.25	0.38%	8.43	0.99%
EFF/FIFG	0.42	8.27	-	0.00%	-	0.00%	-	0.00%
SFPAs	110.54	110.54	0.55	0.50%	-	0.00%	0.55	0.50%
EFCA Agency	30.10	28.61	-	0.00%	-	0.00%	-	0.00%
Contribution agreements	4.29	0.30	0.00	0.50%	-	0.00%	0.00	0.50%
Procurement, grants and other expenditure	28.74	39.17	0.20	0.50%	0.05	0.12%	0.15	0.38%
DG MARE total	1,118.69	1,053.77	12.67	1.20%	3.29	0.31%	9.38	0.89%

The **estimated overall risk at payment** for 2023 expenditure, 1.20%, is the AOD's best conservative estimate of the amount of relevant expenditure during the year, not in conformity with the contractual and regulatory provisions applicable **at the time the payment was made**. This expenditure will subsequently be subject to ex-post controls and a proportion of the underlying errors will be detected and corrected in subsequent years, corresponding to the conservatively **estimated future corrections** for 2023 expenditure, 0.31%.

The difference between those two results in the **estimated overall risk at closure**⁽⁴⁹⁾, 0.89%. The overall risk remains stable compared to 2022 (0.88%).

⁽⁴⁹⁾ This is the AOD's best, conservative estimation of the expenditure authorised during the year that would remain not in conformity of applicable regulatory and contractual provisions by the end of implementation of the programme.

For an overview at Commission level, the departments' estimated overall risk at payment, estimated future corrections and risk at closure are consolidated in the AMPR.

6) Preventive and corrective measures

As regards the corrections carried out in 2023, DG MARE has in place an effective mechanism for correcting errors, through ex-ante and ex-post controls, resulting in preventive and corrective measures, amounting to €23.4 million and €6.5 million respectively. This is similar to last year (€29.9 million and €4.7 million respectively). Member States play an important role in this corrective mechanism and part of the benefit stems from their actions. Please see table below for details:

	Preventive Measures EU share (m EUR)	Corrective measures EU share (m EUR)
Implemented by the Member States	23.35	6.40
<i>of which from Member States controls</i>	23.32	3.72
<i>of which from EU controls ⁽⁵⁰⁾</i>	0.04	2.67
Implemented by the Commission	0.07	0.06
<i>of which from Member States controls</i>	-	-
<i>of which from EU controls</i>	0.07	0.06
DG MARE total	23.42	6.45

b) Fraud prevention, detection and correction

DG MARE has developed and implemented a joint anti-fraud strategy together with DG REGIO and DG EMPL since 2015, based on the methodology provided by OLAF. It is updated as necessary and was last updated in December 2019 following a fraud risk assessment. Its implementation is being monitored and reported to the management twice a year in the bi-annual report on audit matters to the Commissioner. All necessary actions for which DG MARE is responsible have been implemented. The implementation of the remaining actions is in progress, in close cooperation with DG REGIO and DG EMPL; their completion is of an ongoing nature such as raising fraud awareness during technical meetings with the national authorities.

DG MARE also contributed to the revised Commission anti-fraud strategy action plan of July 2023⁽⁵¹⁾, notably to actions 1, 14-16, 18 and 19⁽⁵²⁾. DG MARE followed up OLAF’s financial recommendations with the following results: 33% of recommendations were implemented

⁽⁵⁰⁾ As a result of Commission controls and audits (including additional corrections to ensure a risk at closure below 2% in case of EMPL, REGIO and MARE), OLAF investigations or ECA audits.
⁽⁵¹⁾ Commission Staff working Document SWD(2023) 245 final, accompanying Communication from the Commission COM(2023) 405 final. The listed actions mainly concern encouraging and raising fraud awareness in Member States and verifying, as relevant, their procedures for reporting, handling and follow-up of detected irregularities.
⁽⁵²⁾ These actions mainly relate to encouraging Member States to put in place effective and proportional anti-fraud measures, to raising awareness and sharing best practice examples, to verifying, as relevant, the procedures in place in the Member States for the reporting, handling and follow-up of detected irregularities, and to reminding Member States of their obligation to report irregularities to OLAF.

and 67% are still under analysis. The reason for not yet implementing a recommendation is that further information is needed from the Member States concerned, in relation to the irregular amounts actually certified to, and hence recoverable by, DG MARE⁽⁵³⁾.

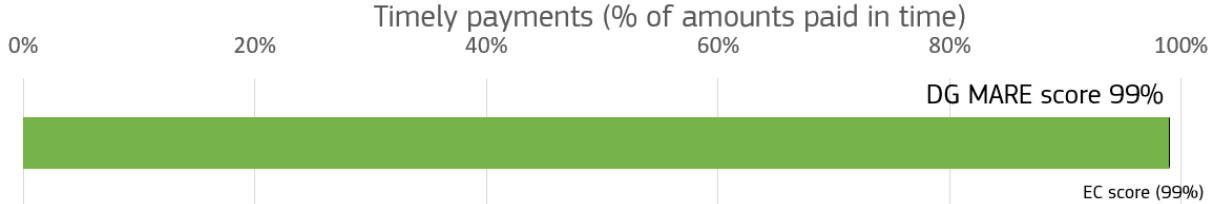
As a result of the anti-fraud measures in place during the year, fraud awareness has overall increased due to dedicated information sessions and continuous cooperation with OLAF and the Member States.

Based on the available information, DG MARE has reasonable assurance that the anti-fraud measures in place are effective overall.

2.1.2. Efficiency of controls

The principle of efficiency concerns the best relationship between resources employed and results achieved. This section outlines the indicators used to monitor the efficiency of the relevant control systems.

DG MARE closely monitors the efficient processing of payments to ensure that they are made within the legal deadlines. One indicator is defined for all relevant control systems, namely **timely payments** (% of amounts paid in time), which for DG MARE stood at 99% in 2023 (2022: 100%).



Furthermore, the **average net time-to-pay** statistics of DG MARE are presented below:

DG MARE - Average net time-to-pay
18 days (2022: 16 days)

<p>Shared Management 30 days (2022: 26 days)</p>	<p>SFPAs 16 days (2022: 16 days)</p>	<p>Indirect Management 14 days (2022: 14 days)</p>	<p>Direct Management 15 days (2022: 13 days)</p>
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⁽⁵³⁾ DG MARE has fully implemented three out of nine financial recommendations, for two of which the amounts recommended for recovery by OLAF were in excess of the EU contribution paid by DG MARE.

Shared Management

For shared management, efficiency indicators relate to DG MARE's ability to meet the deadlines laid down in Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

All accounts provided by Member States were accepted within the regulatory deadline of 31 May 2023, in accordance with Article 84 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. Furthermore, all legality and regularity assessments, although not subject to regulatory deadlines, were analysed in a timely manner. The average assessment time was 52 days (2022: 37 days), the increase being caused by additional audit work and information requested from the Member States concerned.

Throughout the reporting year, a total of 47 (2022: 68) national system audit reports were received. The average response time was 32 days and remains stable compared to 2022 (34 days). Finally, DG MARE issued 45 audit reports in 2022. All reports were delivered in due time, i.e. within the regulatory 3 month period in accordance with Article 75(2a) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

Initiatives to improve control efficiency

DG MARE strives to continuously **improve and optimise** the financial processes. In 2023 it electronically signed all its contractual agreements with third parties. In addition, with the progress in the development of the corporate tools for eProcurement, DG MARE further streamlined and automated the preparation and selection phases in the procurement procedures and had its first specific contract under an existing framework contract prepared and signed in a fully automated IT environment.

In 2023, DG MARE has been onboarded on two **IT tools** in order to enhance efficiency and transparency of the daily management of operational programmes and of audits:

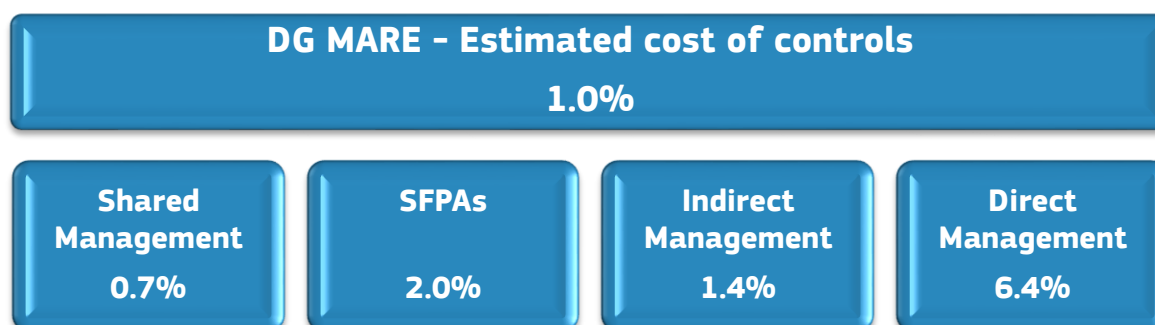
- **MAPAR** (Management of Audit Processes, Activities and Resources), which guides the auditors through the different audit phases, serves as a safe storage for all audit documentation and facilitates monitoring and quality review;
- **ARACHNE** risk scoring tool for managing authorities, which supports administrative controls and management checks and audit preparation.

Conclusion on efficiency of controls

In conclusion, controls carried out by DG MARE were efficient during the reporting year 2023.

2.1.3. Economy of controls

This section presents the **estimated cost of controls** per relevant control system in 2023. The total estimated cost of controls for DG MARE's systems is 1.0%⁽⁵⁴⁾, refer to Annex 7 table Y for further details. Overall, the cost of control has **remained stable**⁽⁵⁵⁾ compared to 2022 (1.0%).



Shared Management

In 2023, the estimated costs of controls relating to shared management (0.7%) has **slightly decreased** compared to 2022 (0.8%) as an effect of the increased level of payments to the Member States in 2023.

DG MARE quantifies the costs of the resources and inputs required for carrying out the controls described in Annex 6. The costs relate to the annual overall DG MARE costs. They include:

- costs relating to staff carrying out controls throughout the different design, implementation and monitoring phases; and the Commission ex-ante checks of the periodic expenditure declarations (financial circuits);
- costs relating to staff assessing the management and control systems in Member States (including ex-post auditors).

In relation to the **cost of controls in Member States**, the administrative costs for the EMFF stand at 4.4%⁽⁵⁶⁾ of eligible public funding. This is slightly above the average for ESI Funds (4%), although taking account of the private contribution element of the EMFF⁽⁵⁷⁾, the percentage decreases to 3.5%.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Equivalent to €10.8 million

⁽⁵⁵⁾ This variation is mainly due to an increase in the value of the shared management payments made in 2023 compared with the previous year

⁽⁵⁶⁾ For the EMFF, the administrative costs are on average €44,200 per million Euro of eligible public funding, as per the final report of the study "New assessment of ESIF administrative costs and burden" issued in October 2018. The Commission plans to launch a new study in 2023/2024 for which conclusions shall be available in 2024/2025

⁽⁵⁷⁾ There is a significant private contribution element of the EMFF (20%) which is also subject to controls but which was not taken into account in the study

Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements

The 2023 cost of controls for SFPAs (2.0%) **slightly increased** compared to 2022 (1.3%) as a result of the lower amount of payments.

Indirect management

The 2023 cost of control for indirectly managed expenditure (1.4%) **slightly increased** compared to 2022 (1.2%) as a result of the lower amount of payments.

Direct management

For 2023, the cost of controls for procurement, grants and other expenditure (6.4%) **slightly decreased** compared to 2022 (6.8%). This cost is mainly driven by the significant number of low value contracts awarded (not offering material economies of scale typical for larger contracts) carried-out at stable staffing levels.

2.1.4. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

Based on the most relevant key indicators and control results, DG MARE has assessed the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of its control system and reached a **positive conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of the controls for which it is responsible**.

Shared Management

The amount at risk at payment is **below materiality**. In addition, the retention of 10% (5% for the EMFAF) from each of the interim payments made by the Commission protects the EU budget.

The assurance elements, in particular assurance packages and national and EU audit reports, were processed in a timely manner and mitigating and corrective actions were taken as necessary. Furthermore, Member States were timely reimbursed.

The costs of controls of the Commission and the Member States have been analysed and are in line with the principle of economy. In addition, the benefits of the controls are demonstrated by an increased level of assurance through improvements in the management and control systems and interruption of payment requests for unreliable systems. DG MARE therefore considers that the necessity of these controls is undeniable, as the totality of the appropriations would be at risk were they not in place.

In light of the above, the control strategy applied by DG MARE during the reporting year for the management of the budget appropriations for shared management is considered being the best suited to fulfil the control objectives effectively and at a reasonable cost.

Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements

For SPFAs, in the absence of any significant weakness detected, which could have a material impact as regards the legality and regularity of the financial operations, taking into account

the cost of applicable controls, it is concluded that the relevant control objective of cost-effectiveness has been achieved.

Indirect management

For contribution agreements signed under indirect management, a significant part of the control is ex-ante and covered by the pillar assessments performed at horizontal level in the European Commission. DG MARE builds its assurance on these pillar assessments, complementing it by DG specific internal procedures which cover 100% of the related expenditure. In addition, taking into account the cost of controls, it can be concluded that the cost-effectiveness control objective has been achieved.

Direct management

For procurement, grants and other expenditure, the control procedures stem to a large degree from regulatory requirements. Since costs cannot be compared with quantifiable benefits, it is therefore not possible to quantify the overall cost-effectiveness of controls. Nonetheless, as the cost of controls has remained stable over the last years, and no significant systems deficiencies have been detected, DG MARE can conclude that the applied control strategy adequately and efficiently fulfilled its control objective.

2.2. Audit observations and recommendations

This section sets out the observations, opinions and conclusions reported by auditors – including the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control. Summaries of the management measures taken in response to the audit recommendations are also included, together with an assessment of the likely material impact of the findings on the achievement of the internal control objectives, and therefore on management's assurance. Further details on the audits of the Internal Auditor (IAS)- and the European Court of Auditors (ECA) can be found in Annex 7.

Conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control in DG MARE

IAS concluded that the internal control systems in place for the audited processes in 2023 are effective, except for the observations giving rise to the 'very important' recommendations addressed to DG MARE in the final audit report "Audit on preparedness for closing the 2014-2020 programming period of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)", which assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of controls put in place by DGs REGIO, EMPL and MARE for the closure of the 2014-2020 programming period. For DG MARE, the audit resulted in two very important recommendations, namely 1) planning of the closure exercise and 2) financial settlement at closure. A detailed description of these recommendations is provided in Annex 7. These recommendations do not affect the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions in 2023, and rather suggest improvements in the future control activities. The IAS recommendations are being addressed according to the agreed action plan.

Audit work of the European Court of Auditors in 2023

2022 Annual Reports⁽⁵⁸⁾

The [report](#) was published on 5 October 2023. DG MARE is concerned by the following two Chapters:

- Chapter 2 ‘Budgetary and financial management’. ECA did not have any comments;
- Chapter 7 ‘Natural Resources’. ECA’s assessment of the estimated overall error rate stands at 2.2% (2021: 1.8%), which is slightly above the materiality threshold. While four non-conformity errors were reported by ECA for the MARE payments audited (five in total), the ECA did not identify **any quantifiable errors in DG MARE’s payments** that would have contributed to the overall level of error estimated by the ECA for Chapter 7.

ECA concluded that DG MARE’s methodology for the calculation of the final risk at payment (or closure) was in line with the Commission guidelines.

Overall conclusion

As a result of the assessment of the risks underlying the auditors’ observations, together with the management measures taken in response, the management of DG MARE believes that the recommendations issued do not have any assurance implications and are being implemented as part of the ongoing continuous efforts in terms of further improvements.

2.3. Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems

The Commission has adopted an Internal Control Framework based on international good practice, to ensure the achievement of its policy and management objectives. Compliance with the internal control framework is a compulsory requirement.

DG MARE uses the organisational structure and the internal control systems suited to achieving its policy and internal control objectives in accordance with the internal control principles and has due regard to the risks associated with the environment in which it operates.

Its annual assessment of the effectiveness of its key internal control systems relies on a number of monitoring measures and sources of information including a survey-based management self-assessment; interviews with staff, AOSD management reports, registered instances of exceptions, non-compliance events and internal control weaknesses; relevant audit findings; very important IAS recommendations; and the risk assessment process.

Based on the assessment carried out, no weaknesses were identified which could seriously affect DG MARE compliance in 2023 with the internal control principles.

⁽⁵⁸⁾ [Annual reports on the implementation of the EU budget for the 2022 financial year](#)

DG MARE has assessed its **internal control system** during the reporting year and has concluded that it is **effective and the components are present and functioning as intended**. The principles are present and functioning well overall, but some improvements are needed as minor deficiencies persist related to the principle “*The Commission demonstrates a commitment to attract, develop, and retain competent individuals in alignment with objectives*” (ICP4). Its effectiveness remained relatively weak due to staff allocation deficiencies. The gap between the corporate allocation of staff and the resources needed to achieve policy objectives remained substantial despite a small increase in staffing levels. Good progress was made in the implementation of the MARE HR Strategy. In 2023, various initiatives to address the challenges posed by high workload were implemented, such as use of project teams and temporary re-allocation of staff between teams, revision of working methods and focus on personal effectiveness as well as use of TEAMS. MARE’s Senior Management team held several dedicated discussions on workload, including with the Cabinet, to jointly set priorities. Skills and competences have been strengthened with the availability of a reserve list of 87 laureates from the specialised competition available since the beginning of 2023 (22 recruitments from the list in 2023). The work will continue in 2024.

2.4. Conclusions on the assurance

The information reported in [section 2.1](#) stems from the results of management and auditor monitoring contained in the reports listed. These reports result from a systematic analysis of the evidence available. This approach provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in a comprehensive coverage of the budget delegated to the Director-General of DG MARE.

The report has been prepared with the objective of providing the reader with the fullest possible reliable information and does not knowingly contain any material inaccuracy or omission.

The EMFF and the EMFAF expenditure is implemented under shared management through comprehensive management and control systems which are designed to ensure the legality and regularity of transactions at the level of the beneficiaries. The multi-layered approach taken by DG MARE shows that evidence can be drawn from different sources in order to provide the basis for an assessment. As a general rule, these various sources of evidence corroborate and complement each other and enable conclusions to be drawn.

In 2023, for **shared management**, the estimated risk at closure for the 2023 EMFF payments is 0.99% and for the EMFAF 1.40%, thus both below materiality.

The reservation first issued in the 2021 AAR for the EMFF Romanian operational programme is maintained again in the 2023 AAR; the necessary protective measures are taken to address this reservation.

For the activities under **SFPA’s, indirect and direct management**, the information (covering internal control, internal audit opinion, ex-ante and ex-post controls) is considered

as complete and reliable for the purposes of the declaration of assurance. No material deficiencies were identified affecting the expenditure paid in 2023.

DG MARE has in place a **joint anti-fraud strategy**, together with DG REGIO and DG EMPL, and is regularly following up on OLAF investigations.

Looking at **efficiency and economy of controls**, the main benefits are largely non-quantifiable, in particular as regards shared management where they are demonstrated by an increased level of assurance through improvements in the Member States management and control systems. Similarly, the benefits under direct and indirect management stem principally from the simplification and optimisation of processes in the past three years. The costs of control remained stable compared to 2022 and DG MARE’s control objective was met.

The assessment of the risks underlying the recommendations issued by **auditors’ observations**, together with the management measures taken in response, do not raise any assurance implications. DG MARE can conclude that the internal control framework in place functions effectively and reporting is reliable.

Overall, the resources for which DG MARE was responsible in 2023 have remained stable and have been managed for their intended purpose and in accordance with the applicable legislation and the Financial Regulation and in particular in accordance with the principles of sound financial management. In addition, the control framework yielded the necessary assurance with respect to legality and regularity of the funds spent.

The table below reflects the evolution of the reservations between 2022 and 2023.

Reservation Title	Financial Impact (m EUR)		Residual error rate 2022	Evolution
	2022	2023		
Shared management – EMFF (concerning the management and controls system in one MS)	0.08	0.00	See Annex 9	Maintained

In conclusion, based on the elements reported above, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated; and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented. The Director-General, in her capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation has signed the Declaration of Assurance albeit qualified by a reservation concerning the EMFF.

2.5. Declaration of Assurance and reservations

Declaration of Assurance

I, the undersigned, Charlina Vitcheva

Director-General of DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view⁽⁵⁹⁾.

State that I have reasonable assurance that the resources assigned to the activities described in this report have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that the control procedures put in place give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement and on the information at my disposal, such as the results of the self-assessment, ex-post controls, the work of the Internal Audit Service and the lessons learnt from the reports of the Court of Auditors for years prior to the year of this declaration.

Confirm that I am not aware of anything not reported here which could harm the interests of the institution.

However, the following reservation should be noted:

- *A reservation concerning the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund management and control system in one Member State. More details are provided in annex 9.*

Brussels, 18 April 2024

(e-signed)

Charlina Vitcheva

⁽⁵⁹⁾ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the DG/Executive Agency.

3. MODERNISING THE ADMINISTRATION

This section covers the key achievements in the fields of human resources, digital transformation and information management and sound environmental management. For an extensive reporting on all outputs identified in the management plan 2022, please refer to Annex 10.

3.1. Human resource management

DG MARE continued good progress in the implementation of its local HR Strategy and its action plan, notably in the area of strengthening specialist skills with a reserve list of 87 laureates available since the beginning of 2023. A particular focus has been put on MARE's staff training needs and onboarding of newcomers has been further improved.

DG MARE staff reached a record high participation rate of 79% in the 2023 Staff Survey (compared to 68% Commission average, 48% for MARE in 2021). Provisional results indicate that the staff engagement index in DG MARE went down from 78% in 2021 to 74%, compared to the EC average of 73%. The detailed breakdown of the Staff Survey results is expected in the first quarter of 2024.

Having met its revised target of 1 woman out of 2 first appointments in middle management in 2023, MARE has reached 55% of female middle managers at the end of 2023.

Throughout the year, internal communication continued through DG MARE's intranet and physical events. EMAS initiatives, staff events and volunteering initiatives were widely advertised. 17 lunchtime conferences covered a wide range of DG MARE policy topics.

3.2. Digital transformation and information management

Digital transformation - The Integrated Fisheries Data Management (IFDM) programme achieved a main milestone with the delivery of the Electronic Catch Reporting system (ECR), the first functional system in DG MARE's Ocean Store using cloud-based technology. The overall migration to the Ocean Store, including of the Vessels Monitoring System (VMS), progressed well.

For business led projects, in line with DG MARE's Digital Strategy principles on the simplification of technical landscape and progressive movement towards a leaner operating model, focus has been on adherence to the Commission IT Governance, corporate requirements, generalising best practices and finding synergies across initiatives. To accelerate the deployment and usage of M365, DG MARE nominated new M365 champions, who have been proactively providing training to DG MARE staff. Trainings were also provided to the SharePoint site owners, to facilitate the transition to SharePoint Online.

On cybersecurity, priority was put on the coverage of IT Security Plans updated in less than two years (90% objective achieved), on-boarding into corporate tools, compliance with

priority controls and adoption of EU Login (supplemented with Multi-Factor Authentication for systems handling sensitive non-classified data). Some of DG MARE staff followed trainings on Cybersecurity.

Document management - Significant progress has been achieved on the organisation of the filing plan of DG MARE, with the closure of approximately 950 files (around 10% of active files in the beginning of the year) and reduction in the length of the paper files by 50 meters.

Protection of personal data - Ensuring compliance with the Internal Regulation on Data Protection (EU) 2018/1725 (IDPR) and the implementation of the Commission's Data Protection Action Plan remained a priority in 2023. DG MARE continued stocktaking of processing operations regarding personal data and new records have been implemented or existing ones reviewed as necessary. Transparency vis a vis data subjects on the processing of their personal data was ensured. Further progress has been made with regard to providing appropriate safeguards for international transfer of personal data under Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements, as a model data protection agreement has been established with DG JUST/LS/DPO.

In this context, the Data Protection Coordinator (DPC) provided guidance on the implementation of the legislative framework, on the consultation of European Data Protection Supervisor, the follow-up of the action plan and promoted and conducted trainings in DG MARE. Senior management monitors compliance based on the reporting of the DPC.

3.3. Sound environmental management

DG MARE continued to make serious efforts to implement its local greening strategy and to support the corporate strategy and action plan. MARE participated to corporate energy saving actions and total CO2 emissions from missions were further decreased, reaching a total reduction of 45% since 2019. Eight additional video conferencing facilities have been installed in MARE premises, the number of parking places was reduced and MARE staff was also actively engaged in the Commission's annual cycling challenge "Velomai".

3.4. Examples of economy and efficiency

A study on the possible use of Artificial Intelligence has been launched, with the aim to automate and/or innovate some processes resulting in more efficiencies and thus reducing workload in some areas. To reduce the number of emails and enhance collaboration across DG MARE, the use of an ALL MARE Teams channel is promoted.

DG MARE has continued exploring ways of increasing flexibility to tackle new priorities and peaks in workload, for example through the use of project teams and through temporary re-allocation of staff between teams and personal effectiveness trainings.

DG MARE strives to continuously improve and optimise the financial processes, including the related audit work (please refer to [section 2.1.2](#) for further information).

