

WP5 – Deliverable 5.4.2

N. 1 meeting with EASME, DG Enterprise and Industry, DG Research and Innovation

Deliverable Number D5.4.2

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Project Acronym	INVESTINFISH
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Project Title	Boosting INVESTments in INnovation of SMEs along the entire FISHerY and aquaculture value chain
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Specific objective	1.1 – Enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area
Work Package Number	5
Work Package Title	Knowledge transfer and long term sustainability
Activity Number	5.4
Activity Title	Knowledge transfer to EU mainstreaming groups
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Partners involved	LP – t2i
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The meeting with EASME, planned in the AF, was not possible since EASME ceased its operations, and its responsibilities were re-distributed among other entities. INVESTINFISH therefore identified as a suitable counterpart Water Europe (<https://watereurope.eu/>, originally born as European Technology Platform), a key EU stakeholder on water-related innovation.

Two meetings were held between the LP and Water Europe, on October 7th, 2021 and December 6th, 2021. Due to the Covid19 pandemic, the meetings were held by conference call.

INVESTINFISH PROJECT

INVESTINFISH - “Boosting INVESTments in INnovation of SMEs along the entire FISHERY and aquaculture value chain” is a project funded by the Italy – Croatia CBC Programme under the Priority Axis 1 “Blue Innovation”, Specific Objective 1.1 (S.O.1.1) “Enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area”.

INVESTINFISH sees the cooperation of n. 6 Partners from 5 Different Regions: T2I (LP – Italy – Veneto), Sviluppo Marche (PP1 – Italy – Marche), D.A.Re. Puglia (PP2 – Italy – Puglia), Punto Confindustria (PP3 – Italy – Veneto), Istrian Development Agency (PP4 – Croatia – Istria), Zadar County Rural Development Agency (PP5 – Croatia – Zadar).

INVESTINFISH main objective is strengthening of competitiveness of F&A production system through promotion of investment programs aimed at acquisition of innovation services. INVESTINFISH implements pilot actions providing some IT-HR F&A SMEs with a roadmap to innovation instruments & services, boosting creation of marketable innovative products and/or processes that will improve the SMEs potential market positioning.

Expected benefits for enterprises are: accelerate time to market, increase linkages with innovators, increase F&A enterprises R&D expenditures in new & greener components/technologies/services, to boost HR-IT competitiveness. INVESTINFISH intends also to offer to the F&A sector to substitute the value chain concept with value network, proposing a shift from traditional value chains towards more collaborative value networks.

EASME CEASING OPERATIONS

INVESTINFISH planned for a "Face-to-face consultation meeting with the DGs to contribute at the EU policy design towards the new programming period (2020-2026). In particular for suggesting suitable instruments for the F&A sector". The meeting was planned for the last period of the project.

As of 1 April 2021, EASME ceased its operations and its responsibilities were split into several new agencies. The European Innovation Council and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Executive Agency (EISMEA), was established. The EIC and COSME programmes are now delegated to the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency 'EISMEA'. The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), the LIFE programme and Horizon 2020 Energy Efficiency market-uptake activities (CSA) (under the new LIFE programme) and climate action part of the Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge 'Climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials (under the new Horizon Europe) are delegated to the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA). Environment and resource efficiency projects have been delegated to the European Research Executive Agency (REA) and raw materials projects to the newly established European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA).

Given that the goal of the project activity was to address to the strategic Innovation policymakers in Brussels the message related to the importance of providing the F&A stakeholders (mainly SMEs) of some specific financing opportunities that can improve the innovation capacity of the sector as drivers for sustainable growth, as well as the fact that the new agencies that directly replaced EASME were still setting up their organisations, INVESTINFISH project partners agreed that they weren't the most effective entities to reach the project goals, even if it was agreed that they would be they should still be informed about the project.

WATER EUROPE

In order to reach Activity 5.4 goals, i.e. being able to contribute to the future EU policies and allocation of funds for the upcoming programming period from 2021 and beyond, it was agreed that the most effective counterpart would be the Water Europe Platform.

Water Europe (WE) was initiated by the European Commission (EC) in 2004 as the European Technology Platform (ETP) for water with the name WssTP. This ETP status was renewed by the EC in 2013 in line with its ETP2020 strategy. In 2007, WE was transformed into a member-based multistakeholder platform under Belgian law. Since then, the membership and activities of the organisation have continuously grown and evolved in line with its ambition to represent the whole value-chain of water and achieve a European

“Water-Smart Society”, a vision that is quite in line with the INVESTINFISH project mission.

Water Europe envisions a Society in which the true value of water is recognised and realised, protecting it from pollution, fostering circular economy and optimal resource efficiency, promoting resilience against the impact of climate change events.

MEETINGS WITH WATER EUROPE

Two virtual meeting between LP and the WE technology platform managers were organized, and were held on **October 7th 2021** and on **December 6th 2021**. The participants in the meeting were:

- Roberto Santolamazza (t2i Managing Director)
- Marco Galanti (INVESTINFISH project manager)
- Andrea Rubini (Water Europe Director of Operations)
- Eleonora Marton (Unioncamere Bruxelles, that facilitated WE engagement)

WE activities are organised in programmes:

- The **Water Europe Advocacy Programme**, dedicated to raising the awareness of the value of water for our society and economy, making sure that all the right financial, regulatory, governmental, and informational drivers are put in place, and advocating for the proper inclusion of the water-related topics in European funding programmes.
- The **Water Europe Collaboration Programme** focuses on networking, exchanging knowledge and experiences, and collaborating along the water value chain to address

challenges, develop and implement new solutions, and shape successful project consortia. WE has developed 4 innovation areas that are quintessential for the transition to a WaterSmart Society: The Multiple Waters, the Digital Water, the Value in Water, and an underpinning Hybrid Grey-Green Infrastructure, which are further explained in our Water Vision.

- The **Water Europe Market Programme** enables its members to bring their research results and innovative solutions to the market in Europe and beyond.

INVESTINFISH results were deemed interesting for WE, both to be implemented directly by WE (in its Collaboration and Working Groups Program to foster collaborative initiatives between members), and to be promoted through lobbying the EU policymakers.

WE final goal is to foster new, inclusive governance models to involve water users, public authorities and nature. This requires a more effective involvement of Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), that are the backbone of Europe's economy: they represent 99% of all businesses in the EU, and they employ around 100 million people, account for more than half of Europe's GDP and play a key role in adding value in every sector of the economy. INVESTINFISH outputs represent best practices that can be useful to reach these goals.