



AUDIT
OFFICE



REPUBLIC
OF CYPRUS

AUDIT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES AND MARINE RESEARCH

Executive Summary



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AUDITED ENTITY

Department of Fisheries and Marine Research

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Within the framework of the provisions of article 116 of the Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus and the article 81 of the Law on Financial Responsibility and the Financial Framework (Law 20(I)/2014), the Audit Office carried out a compliance audit for the Department of Fisheries and Marine Research (DFMR), mainly in relation to the findings and recommendations that were delivered from previous audits. Additionally, we investigated complaints submitted to our Office.

The most important findings from the audit, are summarized below:

- a. Weaknesses regarding the execution of the Department's competences, as the Intermediate Body (IB), for the management and implementation of Measure 4.3 of Priority No. 4 of the European Union of the Operational Programme «Thalassa» 2014-2020.
- b. Cases, where employees of the Department were compensated under the on-call system, while they were on vacation leave.
- c. During the examination of an objection provided in the context of the law, the Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment gave instructions for free mooring to some «Category C» fishing boats' owners without having adequate supporting evidence for his decision, since their applications for granting Category «A» and «B» had been examined by the Department and rejected.
- d. We noticed a case whereby, the DFMR granted an approval to a coastal vessel for a docking position in a fishing shelter, during the winter season, after instructions given by the Permanent Secretary (PS) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment, which were not properly justified and neither within his powers.

- e. Failure of DFMR to take radical measures, , to face the illegal mooring in the fishing shelter.
- f. The former Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment approved the deletion of penalty points of a boat owner without justifying his decision, in violation of the relevant Order.
- g. Weaknesses and omissions in the implementation of the procedure for recording arrival and departure time of the Department's staff, as well as, in the procedures for collecting and recording of revenues.
- h. Delay in promoting effective decisions and actions for the proper operation of the Paralimni fishing shelter kiosk and subsequently a risk of compensation payments.
- i. Issuance of license for establishing and operating a land-based fish farm that does not hold a planning permit.

For the above matters, we recommended that the competent Authorities (DFMR, PS of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment and the Verifications and Certification Directorate of the Treasury) should act in accordance with the regulatory framework and the principles of proper governance and equal treatment.