

Fisheries

Electronic recording and reporting of fishing activities.

According to Regulation (EC) 1224/2009, the masters of Community fishing vessels shall record and transmit electronically to the competent authority the information of the fishing logbook and transshipment and landing declarations. The Regulation specifies that these provisions apply from 1.1.2010 to Community fishing vessels of 24 metres in length and more, from 1.7.2011 for vessels from 15 to 24 metres in length and from 1.1.2012 for vessels between 12 and 15 metres.

In order to implement the above provisions, the Department signed, on 20.4.2011, following a public procurement procedure, a contract with a consortium of companies for the purchase of an electronic system for the registration, reporting, processing, storage and transmission of data on fishing activities. Under the terms of the contract, the project would be completed within 16 months. Due to financial problems faced by one of the companies in the consortium, the delivery of the system was delayed, thereby prolonging the non-implementation of the Regulation provisions.

It was noted that the Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission, by letter dated 25.7.2011, stressed the importance of the Department avoiding further delay in the implementation of the system.

As we were informed by the Director, the implementation of the system is underway, with a number of subsystems already in operation, while the integrated system is expected to be in operation before the end of 2012.

Implementation of the «Marine Environment Monitoring System» (MEMoS) Programme. The above programme, concerning the monitoring of the marine environment in Cyprus, in accordance with the obligations of the Republic under the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, was approved for funding under the Swiss Cooperation Programme to reduce economic and social disparities in enlarged European Union. The agreement was signed on 20.12.2007 and the budget for the programme was 4.574.000 Swiss francs (about €3,1 million), 85% of which would be the Swiss contribution.

The Department launched a public procurement procedure on 4.4.2011, during which two tenders were submitted, neither of which, according to the evaluation report, satisfied the criteria set in the tender documents, resulting in the cancellation of the procedure. In its letter to the Planning Bureau, the Department of Fisheries and Marine Research expressed its concerns regarding the re-launching of the procedure, due to both the inability of interested institutions to meet the conditions set and the fact that the sustainability of the programme would require additional trained staff and significant financial resources to cover the maintenance and operation costs of the system, in an economically difficult time.

In view of the non-implementation of the programme, we inquired as to the fulfilment of the obligations of the Republic arising from the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the relevant international agreements.

The Director of the Department informed us that the MEMoS programme would enable a high-quality environmental monitoring at a frequency that is impossible to achieve with existing resources. He pointed out that the Department already carries out several monitoring projects to meet obligations of the Republic under international conventions and EU Directives, however, given the current economic crisis, will attempt to cover, as much as possible, the gap created using proposals for financing such programmes by the EU and / or other organisations. He also expressed the view that if the Department does not secure funding for these programmes, the non-implementation of the MEMoS programme will have negative implications for the implementation, by the Republic, of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.