



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels
MARE.D.3/MLD

**TO THE CHAIRPERSONS OF THE
AQUACULTURE ADVISORY COUNCIL
BALTIC SEA ADVISORY COUNCIL
BLACK SEA ADVISORY COUNCIL
LONG DISTANCE ADVISORY COUNCIL
MARKET ADVISORY COUNCIL
MEDITERRANEAN SEA ADVISORY COUNCIL
NORTH SEA ADVISORY COUNCIL
NORTH WESTERN WATERS ADVISORY COUNCIL
OUTERMOST REGIONS ADVISORY COUNCIL
PELAGIC ADVISORY COUNCIL
SOUTH WESTERN WATERS ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Dear chairs of the Advisory Councils,

With this letter, I aim to update you on the recent developments following our InterAC meeting of 18 January.

I would like to thank you personally again for the fruitful dialogue during the meeting. It has helped us in the reflections on how to strengthen the role and functioning of the ACs and to see what specific initiatives can be taken in that respect. We are currently working on the various elements and will keep you informed of next steps on a regular basis.

At this stage, let me highlight the following:

Better planning and more InterAC meetings

In view of the common interest and crosscutting nature of many files and discussions and as a means to be more efficient and coherent in the dialogue with the different ACs, we have decided to organise regular InterAC meetings. These meetings will serve to address issues of common interest for all or several ACs. This will allow for a more focussed debate, crosspollination of ideas and will help to address the concerns expressed by some of you regarding our participation at the meetings organised by the ACs.

Our aim is to plan these meetings well in advance and to define the agenda on the basis of your suggestions as well as timing of key deliverables. The next interAC meeting will take place on 5 May 2021, 14:30-18:30 CET and we invite you to send us your suggestions for points for the agenda by Friday 26 March.

At the same time, we see a clear need for a better planning to rationalise Commission attendance at AC meetings. While the current remote setting facilitates participation of relevant MARE colleagues,

it is evidently not possible to attend all meetings. Recently, we have been receiving numerous, often last minute requests for Commission attendance. While we are keen to contribute to the discussions and reflections of the ACs and answer to questions, there is a need to rationalise and prioritise our involvement. We therefore ask you to share with us, well in advance, the forward planning of meetings with indications as to where Commission attendance would be most important and why. Such forward planning will help to have more transparency on the choices, to involve other Commission services where relevant, and to ensure equal attention to each AC. Where Commission participation is not possible, we would encourage the ACs to send us their questions in writing, or when of relevance for several ACs, to suggest inclusion of the topic on the agenda of one of the upcoming InterAC meetings.

To help us think forward in terms of organisation and also in order to anticipate your needs, we invite you to provide the Commission with a calendar of the meetings to be held this year.

Other follow-up actions

The discussion at the InterAC meeting in January has provided useful insights on possible changes to the legislation. There was also a call for having targeted meetings/trainings for the secretariats and chairs. Both suggestions are currently being analysed and we aim to come back to you with these and other specific follow up actions during the next InterAC meeting.

Participation of UK stakeholders in ACs

Finally, let me take this opportunity to come back to recent questions raised regarding the participation of UK stakeholders in AC meeting in view of the end of the transition period set out in the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement and the new EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

As set out in the CFP Regulation and the Delegated Act laying down the rules on the functioning of the Advisory Councils¹, membership of Advisory Councils is restricted to sector organisations and other interest groups of Member States having a direct management interest in one of the areas of competence. As per Article 3 of the delegated act, this rule is systematically applied to new applications, for which the agreement by the Member State concerned is required.

With UK no longer being a Member State, ACs need to reassess the membership in the light of these provisions. Concretely, organisations from the UK industry and from UK other interest groups should no longer be members of the ACs. Similarly, it seems appropriate that representatives from UK organisations (including those representing UK interests in EU-based consortia, which are AC members) should no longer be allowed to serve as chairs or working group chairs. It will be for each AC to assess the situation in line with the internal procedures to assure whether the organisations as well as any members of those organisations can still be considered representing EU stakeholders and interests. The EU legislation is not prescriptive on this. Each Member State and each AC has their own ways of selecting and approving the members and their representatives.

In view of the applicable legislation, and to the extent not already done, we invite the ACs to assess the situation. This to assure that all member organisations, as well as the persons representing the

¹ Delegated Regulation (EU) No 2015/242, [OJ L 41, 17.2.2015, p. 1–4](#)

member organisations in meetings and in specific roles and functions in the AC can indeed be considered to represent the interest of the sector or other interests in Member States having a direct management interest in one of the areas of competence. We would be grateful if you could inform us by the end of March of the outcome of this analysis. My services remain of course available to discuss bilaterally any specific questions you may have.

At the same time, we would like to stress that Brexit does not mean the end of our partnership with the UK. The EU must strive for constructive, friendly and close cooperation with the UK. UK stakeholders can continue to participate in AC meetings as active observers when issues that affect them are discussed, as provided for in Article 2(k) of Annex III to the CFP Regulation. They can also be reimbursed for their participation in meetings in accordance with Article 6(2) of the Delegated Regulation. I invite you to make full use of these provisions to ensure effective cooperation, which is a prerequisite to the sustainable management of fisheries resources in sea basins shared with the UK. To encourage cooperation and reciprocity, you could also consider attending meetings of UK stakeholders that are represented in ACs under EU organisations.

Looking forward to our continued cooperation,

Yours faithfully,

Charlina Vitcheva