

Advisory Board Meeting Conclusions

21 October 2025 Online

Advisory Board representatives: Glenn Douglas (BSAC), Daniela Costa (CCRUP), Julien Daudu, Manuela Iglesias (LDAC), Pedro Reis Santos (MAC), Rosa Caggiano (MEDAC), Tamara Talevska, Kenn Skau Fischer (NSAC), Mo Mathies (NWWAC), José Beltrán (SWWAC and PELAC), Rosa Caggiano (MEDAC).

Administrative Board representatives: Ricardo Segurado (Portugal), Michael Finn (Ireland), Jakub Moricky (Czech Republic), Peter Lengyel (Hungary), Stanislaw Kasperek (Poland), Yiannos Kyriacou (Cyprus), Martin Bjerner (Sweden), Ricardo Serrao Santos (European Parliament).

European Fisheries Control Agency representatives: Susan Steele (ED), Pedro Galache (HoU 5), Rafael Duarte (Deputy HoU 3), Clara Fernández (HoS U3), Cristina Morgado (HoU 2), Patricia Sanchez (Deputy HoU 5), Leon Bouts (Deputy HoU 2), Maria Cornax (AD Control U5).

1. Introduction and state of play

EFCA Executive Director opened the meeting and welcomed participants, thanking them for their attendance. Dr. Susan Steele informed participants of the upcoming events hosted by EFCA for the celebration of its 20th anniversary the 10th of November in Cyprus and on the 4th of December in Poland.

2. Advisory Councils: state of play

Advisory Councils (ACs) participated at the Advisory Board meeting, with the exception of Black Sea Advisory Council and Aquaculture Advisory Council. Members provided an overview on the state of play of their activities since the last meeting in April 2025 on subject matters related with EFCA's activities and mandate.

Among the issues raised across the ACs there were, inter alia, the upcoming fishing opportunities, scientific advice or the impact on climate change.

A number of Advisory Councils representatives pointed out the follow up work conducted on the implementation of the Control Regulation after the workshop hold in February 2025. In this context, Advisory Councils are planning a technical meeting with Control Expert Groups Member States by early 2026.

In the international dimension, the consultation on the EU Strategy on fisheries external action was raised as well as the work done by EFCA in support to the fight against IUU fishing.

The main points raised per Advisory Council are detailed as follows:

Northwestern Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC) informed participants that it finished its 20th operating year, covering an intensive work programme which is available on their website. The AC thanked EFCA Executive Director for the engagement of the Agency. In addition, NWWAC outlined several pieces of advice of interest to the Agency, including:

- NWWAC advice Addressing Choke Risk in NWW after exemptions
- Multi-AC Workshop on the Control Regulation
- Joint NWWAC, PelAC and NSAC Advice on the implementation of the EU Fisheries Control Regulation
- NWWAC Advice on the Commission Delegated Regulation of 27.8.2025 related to Control Regulation and on Boarding Ladder Safety and Material Standards provisions
- Joint ACs Letter "Towards improved consultation with Advisory Councils and stakeholders on Control Regulation"

. EFCA Executive Director noted the points, stressing the importance of safety at sea. NWWAC concluded that they are collaborating with other Advisory Councils on the implementation of the Control Regulation and, within this context, a workshop is being organized under the lead of the Pelagic Advisory Council with the Control Expert Groups following up on the conclusions of the Control Regulation workshop held in February 2025.

Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BSAC) representative reported the state of Baltic Sea stocks and the influence of environmental factors such as phosphorus and warming temperature of the water. The example of cod is cited pointing out that the stock is not showing signs of recovery despite efforts under the current plan.

BSAC has been active in the follow-up of the Control Regulation, requiring greater involvement of stakeholders in its implementation, including the request to BALTFISH Presidency earlier this year in this respect. The AC has also participated in the joint Advisory Council letter to the Commission on this matter. In addition, BSAC has worked for better cooperation with scientific advice through their EBM WG, including the identification of existing gaps in the fisheries' advice. Other topics under their scope included: REM, improved data collection and technical measures Regulation. They welcome EFCA presence at their meetings and to visit EFCA OPV in Gdynia in December 2025.

Outermost regions Advisory Council (CCRUP) Executive Secretary thanked EFCA for the continued support in combatting IUU fishing in outermost region highlighting the presence and support of EFCA Executive Director and Head of Unit 5, which has been highly appreciated by the Members. CCRUP informed of the adoption of a joint Recommendation with the Market Advisory Council on IUU fishing in outermost regions, proposing a set of concrete measures addressed to the European Commission and to the Member States including: the reinforcement of cooperation with the EFCA, the harmonization of the application European regulations and the reinforcement of the human and financial resources to better control the waters. CCRUP also informed of the ongoing work in producing a "*Road map to Combating IUU Fishing in the ORs by 2030* », which aims to define strategic guidelines and medium-term goals to strengthen the prevention, detection and response to IUU fishing.

Long Distance Advisory Council (LDAC) thanked EFCA for the participation in the recent Working Group 5 meeting and in the high-level workshop on the evaluation of the CFP focused on the International Dimension in May which counted with the presence of EFCA's Executive Director and the Senior Officer for the International Dimension as panelists.

The LDAC representative informed participants of the strong interest of its Members in the implementation of the fisheries control system, and that they expect further engagement from the Commission on this respect. The LDAC welcomed developments concerning the IT CATCH system trusting it will have major impact for operators and third countries. The Advisory Council is strongly engaged with the consultation on the future EU strategy for fisheries external action with the aim of promoting a level playing field. They wished to highlight the work EFCA does in terms of external action. In addition, the representative requested specific feedback of the role of EFCA in French Guyana and further information concerning risk assessment for vessels operating outside EU waters.

Finally, LDAC recalled participants that recent advice ahead of RFMOs such as NAFO, NEAFC, ICCAT or WCPFC contain important elements related to fisheries control systems outside the EU.

EFCA Executive Director thanked LDAC and clarified that for further EFCA engagement in French Guyana a SCIP would be needed, yet the Agency is ready to support this region in challenges that are unique across Europe.

Market Advisory Council (MAC) informed participants on several recent piece of advice to the European Commission related to fisheries control provided since the previous meeting.

The MAC provided advice on integration of sustainability criteria under the regime of Autonomous Tariff Quotas for certain fishery products, which included recommendations for enhanced cooperation with countries identified as non-compliant under the IUU Regulation, enhancement of controls and implementation of the IUU Regulation by Member States, promotion of the ratification of the most relevant international agreements on fisheries management as well as participation in the relevant RFMOs, ensuring that operators and countries linked to IUU fishing and serious labour abuses do not benefit from preferential market access, assessing impacts on competitiveness and other potential externalities, and promotion of the ratification of the ILO conventions related to the fishing sector.

The MAC adopted joint advice with the CCRUP on IUU fishing in the Outermost Regions, which called on Member States to continue cooperation with EFCA for the proper control of fishing operations in the waters of the Outermost Regions and adjacent waters.

The MAC adopted joint advice with the LDAC on the urgent need for effective implementation of EU import controls rules across Member States, which recommended the allocation of sufficient human resources and financial means to DG MARE, leveraging the digitalisation of the catch certification system, prioritising launching infringement procedures against Member States that fail to implement import control rules, the provision (together with EFCA) of adequate intelligence and support to Member States, encouraging Member States to improve data submission in biennial reports and collaborate on a solution for public access, and making full use of the legal instruments available to ensure that products stemming from flagrant illegal activities cannot access the EU market.

The MAC provided advice on the evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy (2014-2024). On control and enforcement, the document recognised that the EU has one of the most developed systems to regulate and control fishing activities but drew attention to a widespread perception that a lack of coherence leads to inconsistencies between Member States. The document calls for a similar

treatment of the fisheries and aquaculture sector in comparison with other food sectors, including consistency in general food legislation. According to the document, there is coherence between the CFP and the control and monitoring framework, even though implementation and enforcement can vary across Member States. The reinforcement of catch certificates through the CATCH IT system is expected to improve information and control of products entering the Union market from 2026 onwards. Overall, the CFP is very coherence and well aligned with EU initiatives to combat IUU fishing, including traceability and international cooperation measures.

The MAC provided advice on the upcoming “Vision for Fisheries, Aquaculture and their Market in 2040”, which called for ensuring sustainable and sufficient supply through the sustainable exploitation of fishery resources and the sustainable growth of aquaculture. The document also called for ensuring a level-playing-field in the EU market and trade with fair conditions, including on the application of equivalent production and sustainability standards to products imported from third countries.

The MAC also provided advice to assist the European Commission in the preparation of the EU mandate for the Twentieth Session of the FAO’s Sub-Committee on Fish Trade. The document recognised the central role of FAO for the promotion of sustainable fisheries. The MAC called for sustainability requirements to be applied fairly and consistently across food sectors, the promotion of reliable traceability systems and harmonisation of sanitary measures and certification programs, and the promotion of the EU CATCH IT system, including through of the alignment of the FAO’s guidance with the EU’s import requirements.

The representative informed that the MAC would be preparing advice on the upcoming EU Strategy for Fisheries External Action. The Advisory Council would be focusing on the market and trade aspects of the communication.

EFCA Executive Director welcomed the intervention of MAC representative and noted the importance of a zero-tolerance approach against IUU fishing as a key message.

Mediterranean Sea Advisory Council (MEDAC) Executive Secretary thanked EFCA for the workshop organised in Malta on the 19th of June underlining the high interest it raised among Members including the visit to EFCA OPV as well as the constructive dialogue held.

MEDAC informed participants of the contributions provided to GFCM Subcommittees requesting a greater involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process and underlining the positive approach on GFCM CPCs on this respect. Also, in the GFCM context, advice has been given aimed at ensuring the level playing field in North-South including FRAs implementation and blackspotted seabream fisheries.

In ICCAT context, one MEDAC advice has been produced concerning IUU fishing activities by Turkish purse seiner fleet in the bluefin tuna fishery, the presence of decomposed tuna carcasses at sea in the Balearic islands, and the use of trap-lines for the capture of Mediterranean swordfish. They asked ICCAT and GFCM to continue cooperation to eliminate the use of driftnets. Also, jointly with other ACs MEDAC has provided advice on the fight against IUU fishing calling for further transparency and the implementation of PSMA.

The Executive Secretary also outlined the Advisory council contributions in topics such as Multiannual Management Plans, recreational fisheries and spatial management. On the Multiannual

Financial Framework, the Advisory Councils are questioning whether they will be a priority in absence of a specific funding mechanism for fisheries and stressed the need for dedicated funds for primary sector. Another topic is related to MEDAC advice on disaggregated data for tailored management measures.

EFCA Executive Director appreciated the range of issues brought by MEDAC aligning with the importance of fisheries in the region reason why the Agency is ensuring a fisheries patrol vessel active in permanence all year round in the Mediterranean Sea.

North Sea Advisory Council (NSea AC) Executive Secretary thanked EFCA for the organization of the 20th anniversary event back in April. The Secretary informed participants that the activity has strongly focused over the past months on fisheries control. In May, NSea AC submitted an advice on CFP evaluation around changes needed in governance, fisheries management and science. The Advisory Council also produced detailed advice mapping most important fishing grounds in alignment with the wider international environment agreements and with the Greater North Sea Basin Initiative (GNSBI), who are working on a similar project, and is followed closely by the advisory council. The Secretary also outlined additional advices provided including the long standing TACs and quotas 2026.

Members have devoted substantial effort to analyse the impact of the UK declaration of 42 MPAs in its waters banning bottom trawling, including assessment on the socioeconomic impact, and the background science used. The Secretary also highlights the cooperation with Wageningen Marine University

Pelagic Advisory Council (PelAC) informed participants on the recommendations submitted vis a vis the fishing opportunities focusing on the economic and social impact of TAC reductions of mackerel and blue whiting requesting more strategic evaluations that incorporate an ecosystem-based management approach and climate change impact. The members requested as well an improved quality controls of ICES advice and greater investment in modelling and a long-term management approach to shared stocks such as Atlanto-scandian herring.

The representative underlined Members concerns regarding the lack of cooperation between coastal States and its impact on overfished stocks such as mackerel.

EFCA Executive Director thanked the Pelagic AC for its intervention highlighting the importance EFCA gives to the level playing field in these fisheries and the actions conducted within the Agency' mandate.

Southwestern Waters Advisory Council (SWWAC) outlined the advices produced recalling the challenges derived from climate change and other factors affecting the multiannual management plan for anchovy. The AC actively worked also in the artisanal fisheries definition and in favour of a multicriteria approach. In addition, the representative informed on the ongoing drafting of an advice concerning *piedraboia*. The SWWAC informs they will join PelAC in the organisation of the workshop with Member States in 2026

3. EFCA draft Single Programming Document (SPD) 2026-2030

EFCA presented the SPD to participants outlining the Agency' multiannual objectives and the key four areas of intervention: Operational coordination, assistance to operations, the international dimension, and innovation and cooperation. The SPD was presented to the Administrative Board for its adoption on the 23rd of October.

4. Rotation of the Advisory Board representative in the Administrative Board of EFCA

The Advisory Councils are reminded of the Rotation system of representatives to the EFCA Administrative Board. From 2 March 2025 to 1 March 2026 the representative of the Advisory Board in the Administrative Board of EFCA will be the North Sea Advisory Council and the alternate will be the MEDAC. Then, from 2 March 2026 to 1 March 2027, the representative will be the MEDAC, and the alternate, the NWWAC.

5. AOB

No AOB points were raised.