



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION

The Director-General

Brussels  
EMPL.E.1/IZ/ao(2022)4920828

**Subject: Your letter of 30 May 2022 asking to designate European fishers as essential workers**

Dear Mr López van der Veen,

Thank you for your letter of 30 May 2022 in which you invite the Directors-General for employment, trade and maritime affairs and fisheries of the European Commission, to designate European fishers as essential workers.

The role of European fishers in delivering high quality seafood and seafood products has proved to be highly important for European citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fishing and aquaculture have been among the economically hardest hit sectors. In addition, sanitary measures (such as physical distance between crew members at sea, use of facial masks etc.) and unpredictable restrictions on movement for professional seafarers and marine personnel made the work of fishers more complicated.

The Common Fisheries Policy Regulation aims to provide a fair standard of living for people who depend on fishing activities. This overarching objective is also key to ensuring generational renewal in fisheries. Increasing the attractiveness of the profession is important for the Commission, including in the context of the 2022 European Year of Youth. The social dimension is strongly reflected in the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund. The Fund is fostering human capital and skills, attracting young people into the fisheries sector through a number of initiatives: educational and communication measures, granting start-up support to young fishers, improving safety and working conditions on board fishing vessels, improving gender balance and facilitating labour relations involving all relevant stakeholders.

The Commission emphasises the importance for Member States to ratify and implement the International Labour Organisation Work in Fishing Convention (Convention 188) and is examining the notifications by the Member States of their transposition measures of Council Directive (EU) 2017/159 of 19 December 2016. This Directive implements into EU law the provisions of the Convention 188 falling under the EU competence and, at the same time, integrates in a single legal framework the relevant EU acquis applicable to fishers' working conditions. Directive 2017/159 is a major contribution to improvement of the working and living conditions as well as of health and safety of fishers working on vessels flying the flag of EU Member States.

Mr Iván López van der Veen  
LDAC Chair  
EU Long Distance Fleet Advisory Council  
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On 30 March 2020 the Commission issued ‘Guidelines concerning the exercise of the free movement of workers’<sup>1</sup>. The Guidelines’ objective was to ensure that mobile workers, in particular those in critical occupations, can reach their workplace and are exempted from national confinement and sanitary measures preventing free movement introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fishers were listed as a specific category on the list of critical occupation workers.

As regards the EU legal framework, there is no EU legislation that provides for a permanent list of essential or critical workers. If a need emerges for creating such a list, we will take your request into account.

Yours faithfully,



Joost KORTE

c.c.: Ms Charlina Vitcheva, Director-General of Directorate General Maritime Affairs and Fisheries,  
Ms Sabine Weyand, Director-General of Directorate General for Trade

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<sup>1</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020XC0330\(03\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020XC0330(03))