

## ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

15 October 2024, Vigo

**Advisory Board representatives:** Marzia Piron (MEDAC), Guillaume Carruel (BSAC), Buhai Sidor Dragos, Julien Daudu (LDAC), Tamara Talevska (NSAC), Irene Prieto (NWWAC), Daniela Costa (CCRUP), Paul Thomas (PELAC), Chloé Pocheau (SWWAC), Pedro Reis (MAC).

**Administrative Board representatives:** Michael Finn (Ireland), Carlos Ferreira (Portugal).

**European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA):** Susan Steele (ED), Pedro Galache (HoU 5), Mario Santos (HoU 2), Cristina Morgado (U2), Patricia Sánchez Abeal (Deputy HoU 5), Miguel Nuevo (HoS JDPs & RC), Carlos Couce (AD Control U3)

### 1. Introduction and state of play

The EFCA Executive Director (ED) welcomed the Advisory Board representatives and noted that she had met some of them in different meetings lately. She also thanked the Administrative Board members present at the meeting.

#### Advisory Councils (ACs) state of play

**BSAC** apologised on behalf of Jarek Zieliński, Chair of the BSAC Executive Committee for not being available. BSAC thanked EFCA for the invitation to the meeting and for the good cooperation. The EFCA team took part in the BSAC meetings and was available to inform the BSAC on the work undertaken with BALTFISH to publish the Compliance Evaluation report on the Landing Obligation in the Baltic Sea in 2019-2021.

BSAC highlighted some issues and concerns related to the revised Fisheries Control Regulation:

- The BSAC is part of a group of ACs trying to organise a workshop with the Commission to understand better how it will be implemented.
- The BSAC is also wondering how this regulation will change EFCA's work, specifically what it will mean for the Baltic and if EFCA will be working through the BALTFISH Control Expert Group or directly with inspectors of the Member States.

In relation to other EFCA's topic of interest:

- In July, the BSAC published its reply to the Commission Evaluation of the EU Landing Obligation and is curious to see the outcome of the Commission's evaluation when it will be published in January.
- The BSAC is scheduled to co-organise a workshop on monitoring and enforcement of the Landing Obligation with EFCA-BALTFISH. The workshop on enforcement of the Landing Obligation will follow the publication of a specific Compliance Evaluation report on the Baltic Sea in using data from years 2019-2021. In this respect, the BSAC welcomes the work to find a date for this workshop and stands ready to contribute to its organisation.
- CFP evaluation: After more than 10 years of the current CFP it is always useful to take stock of what has been working and what has been less efficient. The BSAC prepared 2 years ago a detailed White Paper on the Common Fisheries Policy with a Baltic perspective. In the context of the evaluation launched by the Commission in spring 2024, all BSAC working

groups are reviewing this White Paper, adding comments and examples. This will feed in a BSAC input to the evaluation of the CFP. It should be ready in November 2024.

BSAC thanked EFCA again for the good cooperation. EFCA responded that the main work with Member States in EFCA is done through the JDPs and a reflection is ongoing on how to best support Regional Control Expert Groups.

**CCRUP** thanked the visit of the ED and Head of Unit Strategy and Cooperation (HoU 5) to French Guiana so they could take note of the cases of IUU, which showed a grim picture in EU waters.

At the IUU Fishing Working Group on 19 September 2024 in Cayenne (hybrid), a review of the work on IUU fishing was carried out. An overview of the MCS framework in ICCAT was presented by Neil Ansell, a project was presented estimating the impact of IUU Fishing and also an analysis of the value chain of the corvinata swim bladder in French Guiana.

In response to the European Commission Communication on Sustainable Fisheries in the European Union: Status and Guidelines for 2025, they recommended, among other issues, that recreational fishing should be more controlled, due to the pressure it exerts on the waters of the ORs, and that new specific rules be created to prevent illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing associated with this activity.

About the Conservation and Management of Tropical Tunas in the Indian Ocean, they adopted a recommendation for the EC to work towards a level playing field between European vessels and third-country fleets, in terms of catch reporting and fisheries control.

They also informed us that their work on "illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing in the outermost regions" was finally approved by the IUU working group.

They are planning to draft a recommendation, requesting France to take the appropriate measures to provide the city of Cayenne with basic fishing infrastructure that has social and health conditions in accordance with the legislation and is adequate to the needs of its professional fishermen. This recommendation will also be forwarded to EFCA, for its information.

**LDAC** thanked HoU 5 for attending the Executive Committee and General Assembly and Neil Ansell for his presentation during an LDAC-COMHAFAT meeting. They updated on the following activities:

- Organisation of a seminar on the role of Fishing Companies with Investments and Operations in Non-EU countries
- Following up on control and IUU issues and the introduction of IUU IT Catch
- Recommendations on fisheries outside EU waters within the context of regional fisheries management organisations
- Issuing of recommendations with African partner civil society organisations on the negotiation of fisheries agreements
- Working on Social and Labour issues, Climate Change and Deep-Sea mining
- On COMHAFAT, they intend to review and renew their MoU. COMHAFAT welcomes support in training like on SMEFF database and IT Catch. Possible areas of cooperation include, amongst others, Safety standards.
- Looking into the evaluation of the CFP, specifically focusing on the external dimension.

**MAC** updated on their state of play. They have issued several advices on the following items:

- Energy transition in fisheries and aquaculture recommending the Commission to look into alternative financing measures.
- Terms of reference for the study on feasible traceability
- Trade relationship between the EU and Norway adopted in July.
- Sharks, calling on the Commission to take into account that there is a limited number of sharks species that are actually targeted by the fishing fleet and commercialised in new markets

The next meetings will be in 29 and 30 January 2025. They are preparing a workshop about producer organisations.

The **MEDAC** Secretariat thanked EFCA for the opportunity to contribute to the Advisory Board meeting today. MEDAC maintains its interest and close cooperation with EFCA in the framework of MEDAC work plan, in particular in WG2 topics related to ICCAT. As you know the MEDAC WG2 on large pelagics will be held in hybrid mode in Split on next October 17 and they really appreciated the attendance in person of the EFCA representative, Leon Bouts.

From May 2024, amongst other areas, the MEDAC work included the debate and the draft of advice on the following topics:

- Contributions to each GFCM Sub-Regional Committees, to provide the MEDAC point of view on the current issues to be addressed: first of all, about an effective involvement of the stakeholders in the process of a sustainable management, implementation of Multi-annual management plans, where relevant, spatial management and marine recreational fishery;
- Multi-AC advice on the "Fishers of the Future" EU-wide participatory foresight project by highlighting how to improve the process to obtain more reliable outcomes;
- Multiannual plan of the Western Mediterranean especially on new management measures concerning fishing gears other than trawling according to EU Reg. 2019/1022. The effort reduction has mainly concerned trawling so far, but more attention should be paid to the effort reduction of other fishing gears that are continuously impacting on hake (*Merluccius merluccius*). As already stated in the MEDAC letter of 17 September, it was a surprise to discover that the first five years of the MAP, the socio-economic impact of which is not yet known, are described as a transition phase.
- The MEDAC agreed on a letter to support the "LDAC ADVICE Recommendations for 2024 ICCAT Annual Meeting", in particular the actions proposed to fight against Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing.

The MEDAC proposed to EFCA the continuation of a heightened involvement and mandate in the enforcement and control of ICCAT and GFCM conservation and management measures by third countries and contribution to a level playing field in the Mediterranean Sea.

MEDAC thanked the contribution of EFCA and looks forward to a close collaboration, both in forthcoming RFMO meetings namely GFCM and ICCAT.

**NSAC** apologised from the Executive Committee Chair, Kenn Skau Fischer who was not available to participate in the meeting. Many thanks to EFCA for hosting the meeting, and even bigger thanks for meeting them in Edinburgh on the NSAC 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and for the lovely present.

Main topics raised by NSAC:

- The NSAC advice on the CFP evaluation will be heavily based on the conference on the future of the CFP held in September, but also on some past advice that is still relevant (such as LO, MSY approach, the long term management plan for NS) and other relevant discussions that are ongoing (industry-science-society interface, regionalisation, decarbonisation, capacity ceilings and funding ceilings in relation to fleet modernisation, MSP and mapping of fishing grounds). One of the focal points in this advice will likely be food security within ecosystem limitations, considering this is also a new direction of the COM, as indicated by the Commission's president. The NSAC hope to have an exchange with the new Commissioner on his Fisheries Strategy for 2040.
- Apart from the CFP advice, they are also discussing potential separate advice on blue foods, recognising their contribution to climate objectives. This will run in parallel in the Climate Change FG, which will also discuss different funding challenges and options for the decarbonisation of the fleet.
- In terms of the new Control Regulation, the NSAC are working closely with other ACs at the initiative of the NWWAC to determine a way forward on the joint workshop in spring 2025 and internally, they plan to reinstate our Control FG to discuss what NS-specific aspects to bring into discussions to aid the implementation of the regulation. At the same time, The NSAC members are keen to continue discussions with EFCA on risk assessment of compliance with the LO.
- Adopted Advice on 2025 Fishing Opportunities and are currently finalising the Joint-AC advice on improving stakeholder engagement in scientific advice request formulation. This advice aims to close the loop across the different stages of advice formulation and hope for Commission's positive regard of it.
- Very important work is also the mapping of vital fishing grounds in light of the decreasing space for fisheries in the North Sea and how to claim the remaining space. Working closely with a number of other scientific institutes and initiative (such as ICES and GNSBI) on technical issues, data collection, analysis and storage, and interpretation and presentation of these data. A comprehensive advice will stem from this work and can be expected by the end of 2024.
- Recently submitted the Joint-AC Advice on valorisation of fisheries and aquaculture byproducts. This is an important contribution to the efforts to improve circularity of byproducts in fisheries and aquaculture and provides some concrete measures that can be taken to improve the competitiveness of the EU blue bioeconomy.
- Many of these advice papers were developed in collaboration not only with other ACs but also several external experts and organisations, aimed at gathering a wide range of views and expertise.
- Some of the ACs agreed to follow up on the previous request to the Commission to grant special status to ACs as legitimate stakeholder bodies, especially important in fora such as the Joint Special Group on Marine Action Plan where consensus is such a crucial part of implementation success.
- NSAC industry members remain quite concerned about several streams of transformations and transitions that the sector is or will be undergoing and the related costs.

NSAC thanked EFCA once more for this exchange, which it is always presented as an example of how stakeholder engagement should be carried out.

**NWWAC** apologized on behalf of his Chair. The NWWAC just started its 20<sup>th</sup> operating year, the NWWAC can look back on a productive and successful year across its entire work programme with some of this work of particular interest for EFCA.

Thanked EFCA for their support of and participation in the 20-year anniversary event in Dublin in March, including the much-appreciated opportunity for members to visit the Ocean Protector in Dublin port.

EFCA-relevant areas of work highlighted:

- Focus Group Landing Obligation has started working on its annual advice on choke risks in the North-West Waters. Work is continuing on the choke tool which the NWWAC developed in 2015. This tool was used to underpin the NWWAC's choke advice and has since been updated to allow for an analysis of the effects of the current exemptions under the Western Waters Discard Plan.
- Both the Focus Group on the Landing Obligation and the Focus Group on Control, Enforcement, and Compliance are also responsible for following up on the outcomes of the joint workshop held in Copenhagen in January 2024 with the EFCA and the Member States' NWW Control Expert Group. This workshop addressed key issues related to the implementation of the Landing Obligation focusing on monitoring and control, particularly concerning REM, where AC input may be required.
- The NWWAC continues to closely monitor the implementation of the revised Control Regulation. Alongside other Advisory Councils, it is considering the organization of a workshop on this topic, in collaboration with DG MARE, scheduled for the first quarter of 2025. This workshop would build upon discussions from the joint Horizontal Working Group meeting with the Pelagic Advisory Council in March 2024, where both ACs exchanged views on key elements of the new Control Regulation.

Other topics to be addressed by the AC include:

1. Work on the evaluation of the CFP and of the Landing Obligation.
2. Work on King scallop management in the Channel.
3. Work on Technical Measures in the Irish and Celtic Sea, with specific focus on cod and whiting stocks and the impact of climate change in the scientific assessment.
4. Follow up on VMEs implementation.
5. Work on spatial aspects in a joint Focus Group with Pelagic Advisory Council.

As already mentioned in previous meetings of this Advisory Board, the NWWAC reminded about the AC FishMap, the NWWAC's online digital fisheries management tool, and encouraged everyone to send comments on the contents as the tool is continually updating and improving the platform.

**PELAC** informed the Chair Sean O'Donoghue has retired and the new Chair is Esben Sverdrup-Jensen.

The work since April 2024 comprises:

- Mainly dealing with the ICES advice.
  - o Northeast Atlantic MAC benchmarks
  - o Irish Sea and Celtic Sea HER due to issues with mixing of the two stocks
  - o Requested coordination and harmonisation of horse mackerel stocks

- Published fishing opportunities document for 2025. Big concern for EU on the stock assessment for MAC with the advice being reduced by 22%, while other coastal states are setting higher TACs. Similar picture for atlanto-scandic HER and WBH. Would like that COM take measures to ensure that catches of these 3 stocks shared with coastal states are fished within what is sustainable. COM has been informed.
- Set up a working group on implementation of ecosystem approach to fisheries management. Implementation of control regulation issues will be included here.
- Implementation of revised control regulation also a concern and trying to see which the best approach to be involved in the discussions for preparing implementation of new measures coming in 2026 and 2028. Request that demersal and pelagic fisheries are not taken together and specific measures for pelagic fisheries are taken. Joint workshop of ACs and COM on control regulation was mentioned and welcomed.
- New focus group on fish welfare.
- Requested to have the July meetings in Vigo, hosted at the EFCA headquarters, which was welcomed by the EFCA ED.

The **SWWAC** informed they are hosting its next working group on October 23-24 in Madrid/online. The SWWAC mentioned a workshop on the CFP revision requested with the Commission, after the SWWAC replied to the consultation in May 2024.

The main topics raised are:

- Cetacean bycatch: The SWWAC follow very closely this topic, despite having difficulties to find consensus, encouraging dialogue and sharing scientific knowledge. A delegated act, which includes a month-long closure of the Bay of Biscay is being studied by the EP, and the decision is expected to be made early December 2024.
- Octopus: The dedicated NWWAC focus group is finalizing an advice suggesting better scientific cooperation, in particular on the impact of climate change, and also, better control on imported and local fisheries. Also trying to find consensus on a harmonized minimum size (from 750g to 1 Kg).
- VMEs: The SWWAC keeps a steady flow of information to and from its members and the Commission. They welcome the launch of the STECF socioeconomic study for which they are intending to play a role.
- CFP revision: The SWWAC published the advice as early as May 2024. They will meet the EC next week during a dedicated workshop to keep the discussion open. SWWAC members are welcoming this revision procedure and are hoping it will lead to concrete upgrades.
- Thank for the workshop on the LO workshop we did in April.

**BISAC** informed they we have worked on five recommendations:

- Fleet modernisation, decarbonisation, and sustainability of fisheries in the Black Sea.
- Efficiency and State Aid and challenges of fisheries in the Black Sea.
- Ghost gear to reduce bycatch
- Marine aquaculture in the Black Sea.
- Small scale fisheries challenges and data collection, recreational fisheries and registration of IUU in the Black Sea. They want to support small scale fisheries. The most important aspect is the modernisation and the enhancement of cooperation among authorities. They do not have good communication between fisheries agencies, and more involvement in decision making of fishing communities.
- Ministerial orders have not been issued

EFCA ED thanked for all the interesting information shared.

## **2. The draft Single Programming document: Multiannual work programme 2025-2029 and Annual work programme 2025**

EFCA ED gave a general update of the status of the Joint Deployment Plans, which are going according to the plan, the state of play of the international projects, the work on Remote Electronic Monitoring, the Weighing project and the plans for the 20-year anniversary.

The Annual Work Programme for 2025 was presented, with its multiannual objectives:

1. Enhanced coordination of fisheries monitoring control and surveillance
2. Promote compliance through an effective and harmonised application of Union inspection procedures
3. Assist the EU in its international dimension in accordance with article 30 of the CFP Regulation
4. Provide support to EU authorities including in Coast Guard functions

The main new tasks are the activities under the new Objective 7: Innovation and preparation of the revised fisheries control regime and the preparation and implementation of possible new projects in Western (WASOP), Central Africa and Southwestern Indian Ocean (SWIOP) (p.m.) under Objective 6.

The preparation and launching of the procurement of the Chartered Fisheries Offshore Patrol vessels will be a growing task next year.

## **3. Rotation of the Advisory Board representative in the Administrative Board of EFCA**

From 2 March 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. The AC endorsed the EFCA proposal.

## **4. AOB**

EFCA ED thanked everyone for their participation and hard work and said she was looking forward to receiving them in Vigo next Spring.