

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

19 April 2023, Vigo

Participants:

Advisory Board representatives: Glenn Douglas (BSAC), Mihaela Candea-Mirea (BISAC), Iván López Van der Veen, Manuela Iglesias (LDAC), Alexandra Philipe (MAC), Tamara Talevska (NSAC), Ángela Cortina (NWWAC), Daniela Costa (ORAC), José Beltrán (PELAC and representing SWWAC)

Administrative Board representatives: Braka Tarandek (Croatia), Zoltán Román (Hungary), Michae Finn (Ireland), Marvin Seguna (Malta), Bjorn Callus (Malta), Ancuta Kazimirovicz, Marian Avram (Romania)

European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA): Susan Steele (ED), Pedro Galache (HoU 3), Mario Santos (HoU 2), Cristina Morgado (U2), Patricia Sánchez Abeal (HoS P&C), Miguel Nuevo (HoS JDPs & RC), Clara Fernández (HoS Med & BI S)

1. Introduction and state of play

The EFCA Executive Director (ED) welcomed the Advisory Board representatives and thanked the members of the Administrative Board present at the meeting. She announced a survey to ensure the views are gathered on the preference for intercalating online and physical meetings or having them hybrid.

Advisory Councils (ACs) state of play

The ED gave the floor to the ACs representatives to present their activities since the last Advisory Board meeting in October 2022.

BSAC highlighted the big role of recreational fisheries (cod and salmon) in the Baltic Sea and demanded more attention. He indicated that eel is a big concern in the Baltic, and not only in the Baltic, and stressed the importance of control and enforcement in these fisheries. Since the levels of control have a direct impact on the BSAC, they appreciated all efforts from EFCA, including the chartering of the 3 OPVs and the presence in the Baltic Sea. The BSAC would also appreciate the opportunity to make a visit to one of the EFCA vessels during a port call in the Baltic. He appreciated the preparation of the introduction of new gear in the flatfish fishery.

Regarding the landing obligation (LO) implementation, he said he was looking forward to the LO compliance evaluation report being prepared by BALTFISH with the assistance of EFCA as well as the joint workshop on the implementation of the LO in the Baltic to present and discuss the results. He thanked EFCA for hosting the next BSAC Ex Com meeting in the headquarters in Vigo and wished for the good cooperation to continue.

EFCA ED thanked him warmly and stated she was looking forward to the upcoming meetings with BSAC. Regarding the proposed visit to an EFCA OPV she indicated that it would be looked into depending on the planning of the vessels for the second half of 2023.

BLSAC pointed out that there is still tension in the area and the Black Sea AC is trying to continue its work and to advance on the different topics.

They had issued a recommendation on digitalisation, focusing on creating the necessary infrastructure and highlighting the need to embed new innovations in order to support also the decarbonisation. She also referred to the recreational fisheries, a potential commercialisation of the catches, more reporting, control and monitoring is needed.

On Climate change and invasive species, several studies were presented in the Black Sea AC. Some of the fishermen are interested how this will affect their traditional catches, and what opportunities this can bring for aquaculture for instance. Following the GFCM working group on the selectivity of the fishing gear, they are trying to improve the gear use. On the development of wind farms, it was mentioned the importance to have a discussion as part of the maritime spatial planning.

She pointed out the need to organise a meeting with RO and BG fisheries authorities and EFCA, to clarify rules, legislation and procedures that can be applied for the economic exclusive zone access to ensure a common vision.

EFCA ED took note of all the initiatives presented by the Black Sea AC and indicated that EFCA would be glad to cooperate and participate in any meeting that can be organised. Regarding the recreational fisheries, EFCA mentioned that currently the JDP only cover two species, this might change soon and EFCA will be looking to cooperate with the members states to tackle those activities.

LDAC congratulated EFCA for the three new chartered offshore patrol vessels, its MoU with the European Environment Agency and the steady progress of the work within the framework of the European Coast Guard cooperation.

They also announced their coming events: LDAC Executive and General Assembly on 24 May (Stockholm) and the event on "The External Dimension of the European CFP Today and Tomorrow: present challenges and Future Opportunities" with a specific scientific panel on the impacts of climate change to biodiversity in international waters and long distance fisheries to be held on 25 May (Stockholm), EFCA is welcomed to participate.

They reported on the ongoing work:

- Continued to work within different RFMOs domain, e.g. ICCAT, IOTC, NAFO WCPFC and worked extensively on the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Treaty.
- LDAC is actively involved in reshaping the role of the EU in the context of the North East Atlantic multilateral negotiations for fisheries management in post-Brexit scenario.
- They are planning to approve a joint advice has been issued with the MAC on the need for harmonised import controls between Member States to prevent the products of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing from entering the European Union market.
- They referred to the side event at the HALIEUTIS Conference with DG MARE on the contribution of SFPAs to Africa's national development.
- Ongoing work with FAO, AFRIFISH, ECOFISH, ATLAFCO-COMHAFAT.
- On social and labour issues, they highlighted the need to bring the social side to all aspects of international fisheries and to enhance the whole European Union fleet. They called for equal access to the markets and standards for all.

They are working on a piece of advice on working with Morocco to improve fisheries governance and resilient fishing communities including improvement of technical aspects of the implementation of the protocol of the current SFPFA (that will expire in July), aspects related to the fight against IUU fishing and capacity building in Morocco with coastal communities.

EFCA ED thanked the LDAC for the comprehensive information and the invitation to the event on Climate change. She reflected that considering all the available reports, Climate change is not only impacting high seas but also other sea basins as already pointed out by other ACs.

MAC referred to the different advices issued:

- Joint advices in cooperation with the LDAC on China Distant Water Fleet and on Harmonised import control to prevent IUU products to enter the EU market. The MAC called to work on the relation between the EU and China, asked for more transparency and to strengthen import controls. With reference to harmonised import controls, the MAC pointed out the existence of differences in the implementation of the control of import fish products, and also, the level of inspection of the catch certificates, eventually leading to a potential for IUU fishing products to enter EU markets. The MAC called for an agreement and application of standardized risk analysis criteria along the EU, together with the exchange of good practices and training. In addition, the MAC highlighted that they have asked the Commission to provide together with EFCA further support to MS authorities on how best to implement the EU IUU regulation and also the catch system.
- On the LO, they have not observed any effect on the market, but they have an issue to find solutions for the catches below the minimum conservation reference size. On control, it has been noticed by the fishery operators that there is occurrence of regular control, inspection and enforcement activity by public authorities.
- On the disturbances in the market of fisheries and aquaculture products due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- On an EU framework for a sustainable food system.
- Suggestions of studies to be integrated in EUMOFA Work Programme.

EFCA ED showed appreciation for the information provided on the MAC activities and pointed out to the PECH Committee report on China as well.

NSAC thanked EFCA for hosting the meetings of the NSAC in 2022 and for the openness of EFCA to take part in the discussions. She mentioned the workshop they organised on the functioning of the LO in January in Brussels and the webinar on climate change. She also announced another workshop coming up on 3 May in Brussels on Marine Spatial Planning.

Moreover, NSAC explained that their advice on decarbonisation of the fishing fleet has been now presented to DG MARE. She highlighted the NSAC-NWWAC social aspects Focus Group, where gender issues, education, operational health and safety are discussed. She also reported that they are busy now with the advice on the LO exemptions for 2024 and beyond, on the MAP advice, and on the response to the fisheries package of the Commission, especially the banning of trawling in MPAs.

EFCA ED thanked for the overview and offered all ACs the possibility to use EFCA facilities to host meetings and to get a closer look to the work of EFCA.

NWWAC remarked the fact the NWWAC is achieving 18 years of work. They thanked EFCA for the participation and presentation in the recent Executive Committee meeting of the NWWAC in Santiago de Compostela on 15 March 2023.

The good collaboration with NSAC, PELAC and MAC was emphasised. It was indicated that their focus group on the LO has now updated the choke prediction tool. It was reminded EFCA that the NWWAC would welcome a joint workshop to discuss the results of the LO compliance evaluation being undertaken by the NWW MS Regional Group with the assistance of EFCA.

It was also indicated they would appreciate some information about the MS REM Pilot Projects being undertaken in the NWW area.

It was announced that the georeferenced tool for fisheries management in NWW (GIS tool) delivered during the meeting in Santiago is available.

EFCA ED thanked the NWWAC. She mentioned she has used the GIS fishing management tool herself and found it very useful and interesting. EFCA remarked that we are in cooperation with the NWW CEG regarding a joint workshop on the LO as soon as the LO compliance evaluation report is concluded. Appreciate the support from NWWAC.

CCRUP thanked EFCA for its collaboration and participation on control and IUU issues presented in the different meetings.

They adopted the following recommendations:

- On IUU fishing in French Guyana. French Guyana members keep telling them that they need vessels and surveillance at sea to help them to save their food supply, their biodiversity, and to ensure the safety of their fishermen. They call this kind of illegal fisheries "Piracy". They claim that there is a lot of IUU industrial fishing in their waters.
- Energy transition in the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector;
- The importance of empirical knowledge of the Outermost regions- the case of Mayotte
- Improving the scientific knowledge and the assessment of deep-sea demersal stocks, in Outermost regions.

In 2023, they are planning to do a revision work about IUU fisheries in the Outermost regions, to be presented in their meetings scheduled in September.

She asked EFCA if there were any activities planned in the Outermost regions sea basins, namely in Indian Ocean, Caribbean, French Guyana.

EFCA ED confirmed EFCA support within the JDP domain, and EFCA engagement to contribute to the Outermost regions AC meetings. With reference to the deployment of EFCA's OPV, this would require a prior change in the SCIP.

PELAC mentioned the workshop on the implementation of the LO organised by NSAC. He highlighted the work of the focus group on the 3 horse mackerel stocks (together with the SWWAC) and mentioned an upcoming workshop on energy transition.

He informed they are in the process of reviewing and discussing the advice on the JR for the LO exemptions from 2024 and asked EFCA for an update on the LO compliance evaluation progress.

He also appreciated the participation of EFCA in the meetings of PELAC and hoped this cooperation will continue.

EFCA ED indicated that energy transition is a concern for all of us. EFCA further explained that the updated LO compliance evaluation is concluded and pending the decision on publication by the MS regional groups. EFCA further explained that a joint workshop will be organised to present and discuss the results.

SWWAC informed about a Bluefin tuna advice being prepared for ICCAT meeting. They are concerned about fishing closures. They are also taking part on the process and drafting advice on the LO exemptions for 2024 and beyond.

EFCA ED thanked the SWWAC and indicated it was a pleasure to participate in the online meeting of the SWWAC GA last year, and that hopefully she will be able to participate in the next presential meeting. EFCA gave an update of the work on the LO compliance evaluation in line with the updates given to other ACs.

2. EFCA's Annual Report and 3. EFCA's Single Programming Documents (SPD): Draft SPD 2024

Following the presentations on the two documents, some exchange of views took place:

- The LDAC representative thanked EFCA for the good job and for the interest in the ACs issues.
- NWWAC inquired about the issue with mesh sizes and the contradicting regulations, highlighting that it was a very critical issue in the Celtic Sea. Another NWWAC representative asked about the safety of inspectors to come on board fishing vessels.
- EFCA Unit 2 replied that we are all concerned about this complex legislation and waiting for the Technical Measures implementing rules to resolve these problems. On the second question the EFCA HoU 2 explained that the inspectors and patrol vessels' captains are very much aware of safety issues and have the experience to properly assess these situations.

4. Raising Awareness on Advisory Councils

Following the letter addressed from the Advisory Councils to the Commission in February 2023 on the request of raising awareness of the Advisory Councils, EFCA offered cooperation to promote their work on EFCA's social media channels and website, and asked ACs to be proactive in sending the information they found interesting to EFCA audience.

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

The current Advisory Board representative is the LDAC and the alternate, the CCRUP until 1 March 2024. From 2 March 2024 until 1 March 2025, the representative will be the CCRUP, and the alternate, the NSAC. The ACs endorsed the EFCA proposal.

6. AOB

The ED closed the meeting by thanking all ACs members for their participation and that the EFCA will continue to support and work with them.