



Draft Minutes

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Virtual | 19 September 2024

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair Emiel Brouckaert welcomed all participants. No apologies were received in advance of the meeting. The agenda was adopted.

Action points from the last meeting (28 September 2023, virtual)

1	Amendments to the RoP put forward by the ExCom have been approved by the GA with two opposing votes from EAA and IFSUA.
	Amendments were incorporated in the RoP and published.

2. Update DG MARE D3 – Julia Rubeck, Policy Coordinator MARE D3

The Chair welcomed Julia Rubeck who explained that the MARE AC team has been slightly enlarged. Richard Croft is still dealing with the financial aspects of ACs, and there is a new way of working internally with other units in terms of validation steps. Soumaya has come on board to support the MARE AC team specifically in relation to the reception of recommendations, liaising with other units, and organising Inter-AC meetings. Rubeck can therefore focus more on strategy and substance for the ACs. The CFP evaluation as announced by the previous Commissioner is an important step for the Commission. Any input from the AC is welcome specifically identifying what is and is not functioning. It also coincides with new mandate and the appointment of a new Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans. The CFP evaluation will be crucial for the new Commissioner to carry out his work. Any input from the NWWAC through public consultation/dedicated advice as well as the dedicated bilateral session at the upcoming meeting of the Horizontal Working Group on 10 October is welcome and useful.

Updating participants on the new Commissioner-designate Rubeck provided some background information to Costas Kadis from Cyprus. She mentioned that he is a biologist¹ by training, specialised in biodiversity and sustainable development and used to be Minister of Agriculture in Cyprus.

In terms of organisation of the college, it is the Commission's understanding that there will be six executive vice-presidents to whom Commissioners will report. The Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans would be reporting to Raffaele Fitto, Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms. Thalso is also to case for Commissioner-designate Apostolos Tzitzikostas, Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism, and Christophe Hansen, Commissioner for Agriculture and Food.

¹ Addendum after additional info: specialised in biodiversity and sustainable development. Cypriot Minister of Agriculture from 2018 to 2023, but extensive ministerial experience as he was also dealing with health, environment and education and culture.



DG MARE is currently preparing the Commissioner-designate for the hearing in Parliament. No date has been confirmed so far, though it is generally expected between mid-October - beginning of November.

All biographies and mission letters for the Commissioners-designate can be found [here](#).

Rubeck explained that the Mission letter provides an indication on the direction the work will take and recommended that members review same as well as Executive Vice-President Fitto's mission letter as well as Piotr Serafin's, Commissioner for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration.

She continued that the mission letter contains an indication of a new era of dialogue with citizens and stakeholders. The Commission can already build on the experiences over the past 20 years with some ACs. In addition, a new youth policy dialogue taking place every year was announced. To making the EU simpler and faster the simplification of the better regulation is important. Key words on the specific mission for fisheries and ocean include food sovereignty, implementation of the CFP, preparing a vision for 2040 on the perspective for fisheries sector, long term competitiveness and sustainability. This in addition to the evaluation of the CFP will guide DG MARE's work for the next months.

In terms of concrete timing, the Commissioner-designate is meeting with Director-General Vitcheva this week to prepare the hearing.

The mission letter also includes aspects relating to the external dimension on fisheries stating that the EU should retain international leadership and zero tolerance for IUU fishing.

Another announcement relates to the EU Oceans Pact that President von der Leyen already announced in July. This is supposed to be a wider initiative, and colleagues within Directorate A of DG MARE are getting ready to work on this and make sure it encompasses all sectors of the Blue Economy including fisheries. Rubeck added that Directorate A in DG MARE is responsible for EU Mission Ocean and will work on developing an EU Ocean Research and Innovation Strategy.

Also included in the mission letter is the feasibility of EU blue carbon reserves and ways to build business models for coastal communities. She confirmed that as soon as DG MARE has more information there will be opportunities to present to the AC on this.

Rubeck commented that a link with the Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth is envisaged, and that Commissioner-designate Kadis' Mission Letter mentions the need to contribute to the Climate Adaptation Plan.

The Mission Letter clearly encourages Commissioner-designate Kadis to be present in coastal communities across the Union in order to organise fisheries and ocean dialogues, i.e. work on EU Ocean Pact. The Commission is already used to discuss various aspects in a dialogue with the ACs on fisheries. However, the shape of this dialogue is as yet uncertain, it will encompass wider stakeholders, but the ACs will have a place in it.

She concluded that the way forward is for DG MARE to prepare the Commissioner-designate for the hearing, and to start its work as soon as possible afterwards aiming at 1 November. This depends on the Parliament's decision regarding validation of the Commissioners-designate followed by which the whole college needs to be validated by the Council before work can commence.



The Chair thanked Rubeck for the comprehensive overview and opened the floor for questions.

Patrick Murphy expressed concern about all the work submitted by the NWWAC to the Commission and wondered how it is used. He welcomed opportunities for more interaction and asked if that meant that the AC would have more involvement with the Commission so that its advice is fully taken into account and adopted.

Rubeck responded that DG MARE is adapting its organisation because of the CFP evaluation and also readapting its way of working following the priorities from the new Commissioner. For the moment nothing is changing in relation to the functioning of the ACs. In terms of working together and taking advice into consideration, DG MARE is currently working on streamlining this by increasing contact points in the hopes of strengthening this process. Currently several units are dealing with the NWWAC's topics, but all colleagues are working with the AC's advice in order for it to be included in policy making. This includes joint letters with other ACs. DG MARE is also working on changing the set-up of the Inter-AC meeting scheduled for 04 October and trying to streamline the morning session to ensure questions to Director-General Vitcheva can be properly replied to following brief interventions from all ACs. She encouraged NWWAC members to streamline their questions for this interaction. The afternoon session will more open and include an exchange with the director of MARE D and D3 head of unit. It is hoped that this will lead to more clarity regarding upcoming steps on the functioning of the ACs.

Dominic Rihan enquired regarding the envisaged silo set-up of the new college and specifically where environment is sitting in the college.

Rubeck felt that this silos system would not be too rigid and would rather express the hierarchical organisation of colleges. Each team would be more than just a silo and working under the same vice-president. She did not think that DG MARE's relationship with DG ENV is going to change, and no instructions have been received on any changes at service level. In her opinion this was simply the political organisation of the college.

Executive Secretary Mo Mathies intervened to clarify the strategic content for the upcoming Inter-AC meeting on 04 October and the NWWAC Horizontal WG meeting on 10 October. Referring to the Inter-AC invitation letter and agenda emailed out to all members, she explained that the Inter-AC 04 October will mainly address the functioning of the ACs under the Delegated Act that came into force two years ago. During the HWG meeting on the 10 October, a 90 min segment has been scheduled with DG MARE to discuss CFP evaluation specifically.

3. Annual report from the NWWAC Chair

Slides can be found [here](#).

The Chair presented an overview of the work completed in Year 19 and provided an outlook on the work envisaged for Year 20. The NWWAC Work Programme for Year 20 can be found [here](#).

The GA endorsed the ratification of the report for Year 19. The Work Programme for Year 20 was ratified via electronic procedure prior to submission to the European Commission in May 2024.



Murphy complimented the Chair and the Secretariat for the great undertaking and hoped the Commission could see how dedicated this AC is.

Looking ahead at the NWWAC plenary meetings, Mathies explained that in order to secure Dublin Castle as a meeting venue, a request must be made two years in advance. For financial Year 21 (01 October 2026 – 01 September 2027) she proposed to rearrange the sequence of in-person vs online meetings and hold the October 2026 plenary meetings in Dublin with the March 2027 plenary meetings therefore online.

Mathies added an update on the ACFishMap tool and presented the results of the survey on its usage launched in July. Members are invited to contact the Secretariat with additional feedback on suggestions.

4. Report on the budget

Mathies provided an overview of the budget for Year 19 and an outlook for Year 20. Slides are available [here](#).

The GA endorsed the ratification of the final budget for Year 19. The budget for Year 20 was ratified via electronic procedure prior to submission to the European Commission in May 2024.

5. Report on membership

Mathies provided an overview of the NWWAC membership composition in Year 19. Slides are available [here](#).

6. NWWAC Company update (Secretariat)

- Directorships

Mathies explained that NWWAC long term directors Michael Keatinge and Sean O' Donoghue resigned towards the end of this financial year. Under Irish company law the AC needs to appoint new directors. Therefore, the Secretariat sent out an email asking for expressions of interest on 09 August. The Secretariat received responses from Conor Nolan and Sara Vandamme. Mathies welcomed both to the meeting and thanked them for their interest in becoming NWWAC Directors. She then asked the General Assembly to confirm their appointment.

The Chair welcomed Nolan and Vandamme and thanked them for their availability.

Jean-Marie Robert expressed his happiness about the availability and willingness of two quality people who are willing to take on the responsibilities and act as directors of the company. However, in his view it is somewhat unfortunate that no current Irish AC members came forward. The advantage of having Nolan and Vandamme is the objective vision and external view they bring. However, they are not AC members. He was unsure whether there is any requirement for a member



to be director and support the Secretariat. In any case, he agreed without hesitation to the appointment of Nolan and Vandamme.

Mathies clarified the role of the directors, who are only involved on the company side of the AC. They are not involved on the active day-to-day activities nor in the delivery of the work programme. Directors are in place under Irish company law. She added that directorship is open to all members, not just Irish members.

The Chair recalled the historical setup of the AC and its close involvement with BIM which for the first number of years had not necessitated the appointment of Directors as this only came into play once the AC became a separate entity, independent from BIM.

Murphy asked if there is a maximum number of directors a company can have.

Mathies replied that there is no limit, and that it has been suggested that the AC invites a BIM representative back onto the Board of Directors, or potentially a Marine Institute representative. She then added that if Nolan and Vandamme are confirmed today, this will be notified to the Company Registration Office as soon as possible and backdated to today.

Both Nolan and Vandamme expressed their gratitude to members for putting their trust in them and felt excited about being involved in the NWWAC again.

- Approval of Financial Statement through AGM

Mathies explained that the financial statement is going to be approved by the AGM, not by the GA, as powers were devolved two years ago due to the fact that the AC does not need the financial statement any longer for the balance request to the Commission. Considering the amount of time needed for audit and thus the need to have another General Assembly in December or January, the GA gave the power to the AC Management Team to represent the NWWAC at the AGM under Irish company law and to approve the financial statement once it is finished.

7. AOB

Geert Meun asked for an update on the procedure and next steps for the NWWAC Chairmanship following the discussions had at the plenary meetings in July 2024.

The Chair explained that indeed the procedure started earlier this year to achieve a confirmation at the July Executive Committee for the new Chair to start on 1 October. Unfortunately, the July Executive Committee was not successful in that regard and the process has been restarted. This means that candidates are requested to file their candidacy by 19 October. Candidates will be asked to present themselves at the next meeting of the Executive Committee on 22 October. Then there will be an official application by candidates to be reviewed by an Evaluation Committee, to be approved by the Executive Committee upon proposal by the Secretariat. Based on the scoring agreed in the AC rules of procedure, the Evaluation Committee will put forward a nomination to the Executive Committee which will approve it at its meeting in March 2025.



8. Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted (Chair)

The Chair concluded that while there are no specific action points from this meeting, he felt that the NWWAC should examine the mission letter for the Commissioner-designate for Ocean and Fisheries, and other mission letters taking into account the new silo approach explained by Rubeck.

9. Participants

NWWAC members	
José Beltran	OPP-7 Burela
Emiel Brouckaert (Chair)	Rederscentrale
Juan Carlos Corras Arias	FREMSS
Enda Conneely	IIMRO
Bruno Dachicourt	ETF
Louis Gustin	CRPMEM Hauts de France
Gérald Hussenot	Blue Fish
Manu Kelberine	CRPM de Bretagne
Jesus Lourido Garcia	Puerto de Celeiro SA OPP77
John Lynch	ISEFPO
Llibori Martinez	IFSUA
Geert Meun	VisNed
Patrick Murphy	ISWFPO
Aodh O'Donnell	IFPO
Alexandra Philippe	EBCD
Corentine Piton	France Pêche Durable et Responsable
Irene Prieto	OPPF4
Dominic Rihan	KFO
Jean-Marie Robert	Pêcheurs de Bretagne
Pauline Stephan	CNPMEM
Dominique Thomas	OP CME MMN
Durk van Tuinen	Nederlandse Vissersbond
Damien Venzat	COBRENORD
Arthur Yon	FROM Nord
Experts & Observers	
Conor Nolan	
Julia Rubeck	DG MARE
Sara Vandamme	
NWWAC Secretariat	
Mo Mathies	Executive Secretary
Matilde Vallerani	Deputy Executive Secretary