



DRAFT MINUTES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Zoom | 22 October 2024

1 Welcome and introductions

The Chair Emiel Brouckaert welcomed all participants. Apologies were received in advance of the meeting from Geert Meun, VisNed. The agenda was adopted with slight rearrangement of agenda points to accommodate various participants and the addition of two topics under AOB:

- Pauline Stephan wishes to address the ACFishMap
- Matilde Vallerani wishes to address the objectives of a Control Workshop.

Action points from the last meeting (03 July 2024, Ghent)

1	Members to send questions related to Director Donatella's intervention to the Secretariat for follow up with DG MARE
	Topics sent to Director Donatella 26 July, to be addressed under agenda item 3
2	Secretariat to restart the procedure for Chair designation and ask NWWAC members for Chair nominations.
	Call for nominations sent 19 July, to be addressed under agenda item 6
3	Members to send topics to be put forward to the NWW MSG at the upcoming meeting on 10 July to the Secretariat.
	Email sent 06 July, no responses received

2 Approval of action points from the Working Groups

Working Group 1

1	The Secretariat will share the updated choke spreadsheet and invite members to send their comments. The input received will feed the preparation of advice by the Focus Group Landing Obligation.
2	BIM will be invited to present on their recent trials on new gears in the Irish Sea at the next meeting of Working Group 1.
3	The following topics should be looked at to feed the agenda of the next WG meeting: implications of EU-UK management in the Irish sea and fisheries displacement due to marine protected areas and ORE.



Working Group 2

1	The NWWAC will continue the liaison with STECF on VMEs and members will remain available to contribute to STECF analysis with data and interviews.
2	The NWWAC should follow up on the Commission's response to the AC letter on technical measures in the Celtic Sea, taking into account the new ICES advice, discussion at STECF EWG 24-16 and the impact of vessels decommissioning.
3	The Secretariat will share the updated choke spreadsheet and invite members to send their comments. The input received will feed the preparation of advice by the Focus Group Landing Obligation.
4	The NWWAC should draft advice to the Commission on stocks that urgently need their assessments improved through benchmark exercises. A priority stock for this WG is sole 7h,j,k.
5	The management of the hake northern stock should be kept on the agenda of this Working Group.

The Chair pointed out the development of a draft Joint Recommendation on VMEs and up to now there has not been an official consultation of the AC. He felt that this could be raised under agenda item 4. Regarding action point 4 he added that some other issues were mentioned, and each WG needs to identify priority stocks for this advice.

Working Group 3

1	The FG Seabass will meet again to find a compromise solution on the advice while the AC Chair will also review the current draft to develop a more balanced version.
2	The Secretariat will get in touch with UK authorities regarding observing the Bass Management Group.
3	The Focus Group Scallop should meet again once results from the Irish trials are available.
4	The NWWAC should draft advice to the Commission requesting that the joint recommendation on squid is brought forward.
5	The Secretariat will share the updated choke traffic light spreadsheet for members to provide inputs and contribute to the preparation of advice.

Horizontal Working Group

1	The NWWAC will continue following the developments of the CFP evaluation project, waiting for DG MARE to provide more information on future consultations and on the contractor.
2	The Secretariat will share the list of points to be raised with ICES at MIAC and update explanatory paragraphs following comments from members.
3	The Focus Group Spatial Dimension will follow up on the presentation by Damien Haberlin and consider the drafting of advice on the Celtic Sea Ecological Sensitivity Analysis.
4	The Focus Group Control, Enforcement and Compliance will review the control regulation correlation table in view of the organisation of a multi-ACs workshop on the topic.



5	Focus Group Landing Obligation to address development of choke advice and other items raised in geographic Working Groups
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All action points were adopted.

3 Dialogue with DG MARE – Eva Carballeira, DG MARE Head of Unit C5

The Chair thanked both Eva Carballeira and Norman Graham for joining the ExCom members for an update who had also engaged with NWWAC members during the HWG meeting earlier this month. The Chair invited Carballeira to comment on the NWWAC advice on Fishing Opportunities 2025 and its relevance for the EU-UK negotiations. Also he asked if it would be possible to give an update on the questions addressed to Director Donatella after the July ExCom meeting.

Carballeira was pleased to attend this meeting, explaining that her time was unfortunately limited due to her engagement with the Coastal States negotiations in London. She commented on the breadth of NWWAC recommendations in the Fishing Opportunities advice and specifically referred to the expressed concerns regarding the scientific advice. She reiterated that the Commission understood the concerns of the industry as well as the challenges ICES faces. The Commission needs to pay particular focus on the scientific underpinnings of its decisions, and their robustness. Fishing opportunities should be based on best (and good) scientific advice, and the data for commercial fishing in terms of catches, allocation and fishing effort are key input parameters for most ICES assessments. Because of this strong inter-dependency the Commission encourages close cooperation between the fishing sector and scientists, for example via MIAC and MIACO.

In all of this the Commission also has a legal framework to respect, and the need to balance environmental concerns. She felt it is becoming more of a challenge to balance the competing demands for economic viability for fishing communities and the imperative of economic sustainability to ensure the long-term health of the marine ecosystem. She added that the situation in the Celtic Sea is particularly problematic with little improvement expected over time, and insisted on the need to focus on rebuilding stocks.

While technical measures have been discussed for a long time, it is more difficult now for the Commission in the new setting under the TCA which combines an overarching international structure where the Commission represents the Union, but also needs to work within the regionalization process to have inclusive outcomes but to improve the process so that the decision-making can be agile. She felt the Advisory Councils have played a big part in creating a funnel for developing policy. Additionally, the UK is advancing on its own via the FMPs, and she urged the NWWAC to contribute to all relevant consultations.

Referring to the upcoming negotiations she emphasized that there would be no surprises regarding the EU position. The Commission's decision will be based on scientific advice while using as much flexibility as possible within the existing legal framework; adding that where the stock advice is for 0 catch, mixed fisheries would be taken into account aiming for a by-catch TAC. This will be done in close coordination with the Member States.

Carballeira added that many Advisory Councils are increasingly focusing on ecosystem-based fisheries management and that the Commission will put an emphasis on this going forward in collaboration with the stakeholders.



She continued to explain the state of the work regarding the incoming Commissioner. At this point the transition is being prepared. A hearing at the European Parliament is scheduled for 06 November. Voting in the college is envisaged for end of November. The new portfolio is a recognition of the importance that the Commission attaches to fisheries with an overarching mission to ensure that the sector remains sustainable, competitive, and resilient while upholding the level playing field for European fisheries. One of the flagship actions is the accomplishment of an European Ocean Pact. This is currently being developed and stakeholder involvement via ocean dialogues is key. The idea is to have a holistic approach to the oceans boosting the blue economy and ensuring food governance and sustainability. The discussions will address for example be marine spatial planning, and reconciling the need of nature, protection, and offshore renewable energy amongst others. The new Commissioner will have to work with many other commissioners in particular, environment, energy, and trade.

Regarding the CFP evaluations she recalled that MARE D3 is holding dialogues with all relevant ACs. The objective is to finalise the evaluation within the next 12 months. A public consultation will be held between December and February. It is a complex exercise looking into the operation of the CFP over the past 10 years and its performance and how it is working in the context of emerging needs and changes.

The Chair thanked Carballeira for her intervention and opened the floor for questions.

Patrick Murphy thanked Carballeira and referred to spurdog where individuals above 110cm cannot be landed. He explained that according to a scientist protecting the larger females and catching the smaller ones while they may not survive in certain fishing methods will need to be reevaluated. He expressed his concern regarding the future of the fishing industry in light of the decline of certain stocks and wondering if a socio-economic assessment would be carried out as part of the TCA and the swapping between Member States. He felt that the Irish industry has gone from a healthy place to a negative place and the impacts of Brexit have been catastrophic and impacted the financial viability. He added that the impacts from MPAs are as yet unknown and the adding of ORE into this space increases the concerns. He wondered if food security or energy would be weighted higher in future policy.

Carballeira responded that the spurdog fishery had been closed until 2 years ago. Reopening this fishery included adopting a TAC based on scientific advice. She explained that the maximum size limit had already been contained in previous legislation in order to deter directed fishing of aggregating females and to protect pupping females. She acknowledged that industry wish to review and discuss these measures. As part of the SCF the EU is embarking on discussions with the UK and scientists regarding the various aspects to stress test the current measures and ensure that they are adequate to protect pupping females.

Norman Graham added that a lot of work has been carried out on spurdog with various interactions in the SCF technical group. BIM and Cefas are cooperating on studies regarding survivability and alternatives for the protection of pupping females are welcome. Spurdog is vulnerable to overexploitation due to the slow growth. He added that ICES has been asked to look at different scenarios.

Carballeira referred to the balancing of food security and protection and explained that the MSP Directive will be revisited in the coming year, mentioning also the Greater North Sea Basin initiative and learnings from that process. She felt that it was important to remember that in these discussions,



fisheries organisations and ACs play a role.

Referring to MSP John Lynch stated that he was encouraged to hear that this would be on the agenda for the new Commissioner. He commented that in current work there is very little consideration given to the socio-economic impact of wind parks or MPAs on fisheries. He felt it should be an obligation that for any designation the cost to the fishing industry should be fully assessed in order to establish if the effort can be moved from one area to another are without having an impact on another fishery or another stock. In addition, he explained that fishers understand the max size for spurdog but explained that it was a non-quota fishery prior to collapse. Now the stock is rebuilding and the TAC is set according to ICES advice and felt if the quota is managed the stock will not be overfished.

Carballeira was not certain that when impact assessments are carried out any displacement of fishers was evaluated, however, this would be the responsibility of the Member States. While fisheries may not be the most economic sector its importance for the coastal areas is critical. She explained that under the Marine Spatial Planning Directive Member States have to take into consideration relevant interactions of activities and uses. ([2014/89 EU](#), Art 8 paragraph 2).

The Chair referred back to the NWWAC advice on fishing opportunities 2025 and mentioned the discussions in the Council. One topic he felt had not been commented on, which was important for discussions with the UK, is the possibility of using information coming from the ACs stating that there is more than simply the headline advice.

Carballeira stated the Commission has an obligation to base its decisions on scientific advice and to reach MSY (by 2020). Deviating from that, the Commission can use the Multi Annual Plans and embed this in the positions in particular when there are TAC constraints within the stocks. The UK may decide that this might not work, for example in the Celtic Sea where stocks are critical. It is not possible to ignore headline advice, the Commission has to stick to the legal framework. The courts acknowledged that bycatch TACs can be set, and the Commission will continue to push the Member States for more information and elements when discussing the TAC constraints to argue the case of socio-economics. For this, data is needed. All information that may be useful for discussions is always welcome. When applying the MAPs, concerns exist regarding their implementation. The focus should be on how stocks can be recovered and rebuilt, and discussions with ACs are critical here.

The Chair explained that considering aspects other than headline advice is not only related to socio-economics. it also relates to the information available at vessel and fleet level which is missing to some extent. In his opinion the legal obligation to use the best available scientific advice does not mean only headline advice, but the obligation to use advice of the highest quality.

Carballeira explained that the Commission tries to push for the cooperation between the scientific community and the fishing sector as it can be seen that the sector is contesting the sciences. She felt that this does not help building trust.

Graham explained the Commission set up several extensive symposiums on how fishing data is being collected which is quite a complicated area. He felt that a lot of the information that is being collected is fed into the scientific process. He added that structures are in place at EU level to enable dialogue on this, for example MIACO.

Jean-Marie Robert referred to the discussion around MSY explaining that setting quotas is difficult especially for shared stocks with the UK. He felt that with the current CFP, fishing mortality had to be lowered considerably, which was not easy, but fishing organisations accepted this approach as it was



explained that biomass would increase and stocks would be stable. However, these promises are not being kept. Some stocks, for example gadoids, are more vulnerable to impacts of climate change, but he felt what is being forgotten is that the food chain at sea includes all species. So by increasing the biomass of some stocks, this will thus have an impact on other stocks. These intra-species connections seem to not having been explored over the past years, and without the scientific evidence available, this cannot be followed up politically. In his opinion ICES is making its outlook based on certain hypotheses instead of what can be seen at sea. Fishing organisation do not wish to criticize ICES just for the sake of it, however, he felt that the headline advice should be considered in a broader approach including the socioeconomic impacts.

Carballeira responded that a focus can be seen in the recommendations from the ACs on fisheries management, ecosystem-based management approach, and added that this holistic approach should not focus on just one stock but on several stocks in their habitats. This was the underlying reason for publishing the Marine Action Plan. The Commission would like to consider both science and all other elements including the other policies to establish that all priorities are being considered.

Murphy commented that a lot of changes and legislation have come in recently but felt the industry across Europe is in decline. "Does Europe see a future for the fishing industry?" The impacts of changes that Europe is going to imposing on the fishing industry are not being evaluated. Referring to pollack he felt that it was impossible to rebuild the stock because the advice is based on the landings. "If the landings are reduced to 0, how can the stock be built up again?" He added that it takes approx. 5 years to any information to be accepted by ICES. Environmental changes are happening so rapidly now without being properly assessed that he feels the industry will not have a chance to catch up. "The socio-economic changes have to be assessed before they happen."

Carballeira explained that with the CFP evaluation this is the time for the ACs to make their voices heard. She added that there are always tensions in the sector while acknowledging the challenges. While scientific work can always be improved, the work of ICES is the best available. Going forward, climate change and biodiversity are among the main concerns and the EU has numerous targets to achieve. She added that a holistic approach is needed. Socio-economics is part of the discussions but data and indicators are needed. If a stock is in a critical stage, setting a higher TAC is not going to save the fishery. She felt that especially in the Celtic Sea the situation is not going to improve in the short term.

The Chair noted that Manu Kelberine's request to take the floor could not be accommodated because of the lack of time and asked if written questions could be submitted following this meeting.

ACTIONS:

- NWWAC to put forward to the Commission ideas on changes in management principles, for example spurdog.
- FG Spatial Dimension to prepare advice on obligation to have an impact analysis on fisheries in Member States' designations of windfarm areas.
- Members to submit additional questions for DG MARE to the Secretariat for written response.
- AC to follow up on necessary responses to UK FMPs consultation.



Questions to and written response from the Commission after the July ExCom meeting:

1. Director Donatella stated that topics for the next Commissioner with fisheries competence to look into would be International Issues, Blue Economy Context, the Marine Action Plan and the Implementation of the CFP. Could he elaborate on what he means with the Blue Economy Context?

The mission letter of the COM-DES puts a strong focus on a holistic approach to the ocean and promoting the blue economy in general (not just fisheries). He is tasked to develop a long-term vision for competitive, sustainable and resilient fisheries sector and other blue economy sectors. Maritime spatial planning, co-use and multi-use of marine space by design takes center stage, to develop all blue economy sectors in a sustainable manner and avoid a competition for space (e.g. between fisheries and offshore wind), but instead achieve shared benefits across sectors developing side by side

2. Dominic Rihan commented 'It is one industry' on the Fishers Of The Future initiative and linkage with the status of the stocks that the Commission more and more considers it necessary to differentiate big boats and small boats. What is Fabrizio's view on this statement?

The Fishers of the Future is a foresight study which provides valuable input into future reflections. The study will be finalized early 2025. At this stage the Commission is carrying out an evaluation of the CFP Regulation which will look at all angles of the CFP implementation including, where relevant the different rules that apply to small scale fisheries and the rest of the fleet.

3. Director Donatella announced an STCW-F evaluation. Some Member States (such as Belgium) have already very strict legislation / rules based on STCW-F and the ILO C188, as also reflected in an EU Directive. On a national level, fisheries sector reps and the competent authorities are in regular contact around this. How will these national procedures and the stakeholder involvement be taken into account?

The Commission is currently undertaking a baseline study to understand the current situation in each Member States. This study will provide the basis for the way ahead. The Commission is fully committed to the Better Regulation requirements and will carry out an impact assessment before it issues any legislative proposal.

4 Dialogue with NWW MSG – Dirk Van Guyze, Flemish Government, Agency for Agriculture and Fisheries

Dirk van Guyze thanked the Chair for the invitation and explained that so far here technical group meetings have been held addressing several issues:

- Lemon sole *de minimis*: This is an important issue for Belgium and has been discussed for a long time. A first proposal was submitted in May 2024 but evaluated negatively by STECF. The Commission then decided to not move head with a delegated act and encouraged the MS to develop further details to address STECF concerns. A new draft has been developed under the lead of Belgium focussing on the socio-economic aspects. He explained that raising selectivity is very difficult in this case. For this reason the difference between the sole and lemon sole fisheries needed to be clarified in more detail. The new JR will be submitted to the High Level Group on 24



October and then to the Commission in order that STECF can assess this at their upcoming meeting in November. It is hoped that a delegated act will be implemented as soon as possible in 2025.

- Joint Recommendation on minimum mesh size on squid: This draft JR was initially started as a NWW/North Sea regional recommendation, but there were too many differences, so two different JR's were put in place, one for the North Sea and one for the NWW. The NWW also decided to raise the mesh size to 80mm, but with certain exemptions. Although the STECF advice was very short, the COM decided not to go ahead with a delegated act for the NWW. The regional group added more information for a new JR, but seemingly this new draft is not included in the agenda for the next STECF meeting. This means that there is currently an imbalance between the North Sea and the NWW as there is no JR for the latter. The NWW regional group is exploring alternatives to ensure a level playing field.
- JR on VMEs: Spain asked for an exemption for longliners to operate in VMEs. The draft was submitted in the SWW MS and the NWW MS. There is a lot of pressure on the High Level Group to agree this on 24 October, however, the technical group only had first view last week. Spain wishes to add this to the STECF meeting in November. Van Guyze also mentioned that the NWWAC seems to not have been consulted as part of this work.
- Two Joint recommendations were submitted to the Commission in form of letters, one regarding the prolongation of the technical measures in the Celtic Sea until the end of 2025, and the second addressing the prolongation of technical measures regarding seabream until the end of 2025.

The Chair thanked Van Guyze for providing this overview. He added that the NWWAC advice for lemon sole has not changed, and no new advice is being prepared for input for the JR. He noted in particular the potential lack of level playing field between North Sea and NWW regarding squid. He explained that it would be impossible for the NWWAC to follow its procedure regarding the JR on VMEs due to the short deadline, however, he would give the floor to the Vice-Chair of WG2 who is dealing with this topic.

Robert commented that at the French level no contact had been made with the administration regarding the VME and was not sure what could be achieved in such a short period of time regarding the proposed JR on VMEs. He added that three gears are being impacted by the VMEs and regarding the first definition one for the main criticisms is that out of the 87 areas, two thirds are made up of buffer zones specifically for bottom trawling. So these areas are not VMEs but buffer zones regarding bottom trawling. He felt that there was no reason to implement a prohibition to longlining in these buffer zones. He felt it would be interesting to raise the question on the nets and longliners and being more specific on these gears.

Manu Kelberine commented on the JR on minimum mesh size for squid that fishers would be disappointed as this was a recommendation stemming from the industry. In relation to red mullet he asked if there was a date for the recommendation.

Dominic Rihan referred to the ICES revised advice on the VMEs and KFO's view on this advice. He felt that KFO's view should be looked at in combination with a Spanish request.

Van Guyze replied to Rihan's comment that this is work for the AC. He noted the disappointment regarding the lack of inclusion of the JR squid in the STECF meeting. The red mullet MCRS is not yet on



the agenda of the MSG.

Mo Mathies explained that the Secretariat had received the draft JR on VMEs from the Belgian presidency of the NWW MSG.

Van Guyze felt it would be best to circulate it to the WG members so that they could review if it was relevant. He added he could make the point that the NWWAC and PelAC were not consulted and that this should be identified in the JR.

The Chair commented that it would be impossible to provide a reaction to the High Level Group and that this should be noted. He added that the additional points raised by previous speakers are important and that WG2 should develop work on this. He thanked Van Guyze for the suggestion to put forward at the High Level Group that the AC was not consulted. Further advice on the VMEs needs to be developed.

Robert agreed with previous speakers and that compliance with the stakeholder consultation process is vital. He suggested to refer at the NWWAC advice on VMEs i2023 and felt that it might be useful to remind the MSG of this work.

Rihan supported Robert's intervention and added that looking ahead and taking into the recently published advice by ICES.

The Chair suggested as an action point that the Secretariat should circulate the draft JR and that it needs to be clearly communicated to the High Level Group that the AC was not properly consulted. Additional work in WG2 should be carried out on this topic.

Van Guyze stated that an adapted version for the JR VME was circulated this morning to the members of the NWW MSG. This will be sent to the NWWAC Secretariat for circulation.

ACTION: Secretariat to circulate information relating to the Joint Recommendation VMEs to members, follow up the comment on ACs not being consulted in the JR and plan follow-up of VME advice in WG2.

5 Election of NWWAC ExCom Vice-Chairs

The Chair recalled the Rules of Procedure for appointing Vice-Chairs and explained that a proposal was received from a member to postpone the appointment of these until a new Chair has been appointed. He added that alternatively Vice-Chairs could be appointed now, and this could be reviewed in March.

Robert was in favour of the proposal as the appointment of the Vice-Chairs will depend on the appointment of the Chairs. This means that 6 months are still ahead for the current set up and the French delegation would propose to keep the current arrangement in place until March.

There were no objections to this proposal so Vice-Chairs will be appointed in March once the new Chair has been appointed.

ACTION: Vice-Chair elections are postponed until March 2025.



6 Presentation of nominated candidates for NWWAC Chair position

The Chair provided an overview of the process with the call for nominations sent in July and a deadline of 19 October. Three nominations were received, and nominees will introduce themselves to the members of the ExCom at this meeting who will then be asked to ratify the nominees. Following this, application forms will be sent out and an Evaluation Committee will be set up. Applications will be evaluated and the best candidate for the position will be determined. The result will be presented to the ExCom in March 2025 for endorsement.

Francis O'Donnell thanked the Chair and explained that he currently works for Inland Fisheries Ireland which protects freshwater fish in Ireland as well as Atlantic Salmon and European eel. He explained that before joining IFI he was working the IFPO representing the pelagic and inshore sectors. Prior to that he was a control agent for the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority. Overall he has spent over 30 years in fisheries management. He commented that regardless of his nationality he would be impartial and represent all members of this AC neutrally. He has a strong interest in marine commercial fisheries and comes from a coastal community.

Alexandra Philippe introduced her background including eight years working as parliamentary assistant in the Committee on Fisheries. She is currently an active member in eight ACs and holds Vice-Chair or Chair positions in the NWWAC and NSAC. She believes that the AC plays a key role for EU fisheries connecting stakeholders from different backgrounds including industry and NGOs. Her vision for the AC includes prioritisation and rationalisation of the workload, inclusivity of all stakeholders especially regarding the 60/40 balance, and NWWAC external representation and communication. She added that she is completely neutral, which is of course the role of the Chair, has experience in the European institutions and participated in all the trilogues of the CFP. She also has three years' experience in several ACs which could assist the exchange of good practices. Finally, she added that as the OIG Vice-Chair she has already been attending with the current Chair official meetings for the NWWAC.

Jean-Marie Robert explained that for the past 15 years he has been working within the fisheries sector. He stated that voters in elections are used to political candidates who make promises but lack the will to make these promises come true. He felt that declaring in his candidacy that everyone has great ideas and contributions and that everything would be taken into account by the Commission would not be true to his nature as he realizes it is not possible to make this a reality. In his opinion the added value of the AC is the familiarity among members. He recalled the July proceedings related to appointing a new Chair and why his organisation had not been able to support the Irish nomination. He referred to social media coverage regarding Irish POs' statements about Relative Stability and a redistribution of quotas. This could result in his (PO's) members ending up with less fishing opportunities. While he understands that the Irish POs intentions are to achieve results for their members, he cannot get a mandate to support a candidate who is reported to have intentions to go against the interest of the members of his own PO. He pointed to the historic relations between Irish and French fishers in the shared fishing areas. He would understand that reciprocally the Irish representatives may not welcome his candidacy but wanted to be as transparent as possible. In addition, he retains the view that the next Chair appointment should avoid competition between the applicants. "Six months are available to pick a new Chair." During previous chair nominations, internal discussions have been held to reach an agreement on one candidate and hopefully such consensus can be reached ahead of this election too. He felt that as members of the ExCom it might be useful to meet and agree on one applicant only.



The Chair thanked all three candidates and asked the members of the Executive Committee to ratify the nominees in order to continue the application process. He added that the deadline for applications will be set by the Secretariat which will also mean the end of opportunities for informal discussions.

John Lynch expressed his dismay at the comments made by Robert in relation to his person and the Irish fishing industry. He stated that his work in the AC has always been impartial and representative of the AC. He recalled it was suggested that the process was the problem when his nomination was discussed in Ghent and Robert had specifically questioned his ability. However, today, Robert stated that Lynch would use the position to acquire additional fishing opportunities for his members. Lynch clarified that he has never gone beyond the legal opportunities available. He concluded that he could not recommend the ratification of this candidate based on these conditions.

Murphy felt that Lynch was stating facts and that this AC had been damaged by the discussion in Ghent and what has been said this morning. He enquired what the procedure was around the objection made by Lynch regarding the ratification of the candidates.

Robert apologised but felt that his statement was not fully understood. He wanted to convey that in Ghent the division of opinion was already clear before and during the meeting. He also felt that it would not be a good idea to ignore the elephant in the room. Coming back to Lynch's reply he clarified that he never doubted Lynch's integrity as potential Chair of the AC. His point did not refer to Lynch personally but to activities carried out outside of the NWWAC. He apologised if this had been misunderstood. He never doubted that Lynch would have followed the impartiality rules. However, when one becomes Chair of the AC, this person does not work as Chair every day but also benefits from the aura of the Chair whose voice is louder within the European institutions. This would have given more power to approaches that could go against Robert's own vessels. He expressed that he would understand that his application may be rejected, but his priority is honesty.

Kelberine indicated that in Ghent the main issue that was spotted at the time was procedural. He felt that it would be possible to ratify the current nominees, and work could be carried out to agree on one application.

José Beltran explained that he is attending as observer and agreed with the previous speaker that the previous problem identified in Ghent had been procedural and the candidates had not had the opportunity to introduce themselves to the ExCom. He believed all three nominees are excellent and would represent the AC well. He suggested an alternative formula could possibly be found where there is a rotation between the Chair and Vice-Chairs for example.

Lynch agreed to move ahead with ratification based on majority decision but felt that the personal comments made by Robert earlier still required an apology.

Rihan explained that the issue persisted in that how the Irish POs could operate within the AC if the suspicions by Robert were at the forefront.

The Chair stated that in July the Secretariat had explained that the Rules of Procedure could be changed but that no proposals were received. He asked ExCom members to ratify the three candidates who presented themselves.

Members of the Executive Committee ratified all three nominations.



ACTION: Secretariat to initiate next steps in the procedure for the appointment of a new AC Chair

ACTION: AC needs to make an effort in addressing conflict within the AC to reestablish trust and cohesion.

7 NWWAC Work Programme and Budget Year 20 – state of play

Mathies provided a brief overview of the key achievables of the Year 20 work programme. She suggested as an action that WG and FG chairs should review the work programme and take note of the objectives agreed with the Commission relevant to their respective groups.

Murphy commented that the Focus Groups in the Work Programme as part of the meeting organisation should be mentioned as this is an important part of the Secretariat's work.

ACTION: Members to review Work Programme and ensure that appropriate action is taken on the items identified.

8 AOB

Pauline Stephan referred to the ACFishMap explaining that French members were eager to develop such an interactive map. It was felt that it was unnecessary to develop a separate map but that additional information was needed for the French industry. Therefore, other ACs should join this project. She was wondering if other members could propose this in the ACs that they are members of and that possibly Member States could support this financially.

The Chair noted this call and would revert with a Belgian industry view. He would leave it to the other members to establish if they wish to bring this forward in other ACs.

Mathies commented that the Secretariat made presentations to several other ACs following publication of the tool in 2022/2023 including financial details for joining the tool. She offered assistance should this be required.

ACTION: Members to revert to either the Secretariat or Stephan directly to establish if their country is interested in developing this in other ACs.

Matilde Vallerani explained the background to the proposed control workshop and explained that the FG Control would meet next week to develop this further.

Murphy recalled the discussions held in Copenhagen in January as the enforcers clarified that the law would be enforced without interpretation. He asked that members put forward their own applicable parts of this subject are put forward for discussion at the workshop. Referring to the correlation table he asked for feedback from all members.



9 Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

1	AC to consider ideas to protect spurdog females.
2	AC FG to prepare advice on obligation to have an impact analysis on fisheries in Member States' designations of windfarm areas.
3	Members to submit additional questions for DG MARE to the Secretariat for written response
4	AC to follow up on necessary responses to UK FMPs consultation.
5	NWWAC to put forward to the Commission ideas on changes in management principles, for example spurdog.
6	FG Spatial Dimension to address socio-economic assessment of developments within MSP.
7	Secretariat to circulate information relating to the Joint Recommendation VMEs to members, follow up the comment on ACs not being consulted in the JR and plan follow-up of VME advice in WG2.
8	Vice-Chair elections are postponed until March 2025.
9	Secretariat to initiate next steps in the procedure for the appointment of a new AC Chair.
10	AC needs to make an effort in addressing conflict within the AC to reestablish trust and cohesion.
11	Members to review Work Programme and ensure that appropriate action is taken on the items identified.
12	Members to revert to either the Secretariat or Stephan directly to establish if their country is interested in developing this in other ACs.

Kelberine stated that his question was on the cumulative impacts of the regulations that apply to the sector. He felt that this could possibly be addressed within the CFP evaluation.

The Chair commented that this query would be included in the written submission to the Commission under action point 1.



Participants

NWWAC ExCom members	
José Beltran	OPP-7 Burela
Emiel Brouckaert (Chair)	Rederscentrale
Gérald Hussenot Desenonges	Blue Fish
Manu Kelberine	CNPMEM
Jesus Lourido	OPP77
John Lynch	ISEFPO
Patrick Murphy	ISWFPO
Corentine Piton	France Pêche Durable et Responsable
Alexandra Philippe	EBCD
Irene Prieto	OPPF 4
Dominic Rihan	KFO
Jean-Marie Robert	Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne
Arthur Yon	ANOP
NWWAC observers	
Franck Le Barzic	COBRENORD
Llibori Martinez	IFSUA
Pauline Stephan	CNPMEM
Experts and observers	
Tetyana Albers	DGAMPA
Eva Carballeira	DG MARE
Norman Graham	DG MARE
Eileen Harmey	DAFM
Francis O'Donnell	IFI
Dirk van Guyze	Flemish Government, Agency for Agriculture and Fisheries
NWWAC Secretariat	
Mo Mathies	Executive Secretary
Matilde Vallerani	Deputy Executive Secretary