



## Minutes

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

#### Copa-Cogeca, Brussels & Interactio

Friday 06 March 2026

#### 1 Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed all participants to the meeting. The Secretariat outlined the meeting etiquette. Apologies were received from Dominic Rihan (KFO) and Bruno Dachicourt (ETF) ahead of the meeting. Proxies were appointed by D. Rihan and Suso Lourido Garcia (Puerto de Celeiro) who attended online. The agenda was adopted.

#### Action points from the last meeting (14 October 2025, online)

1	Members to send queries to the Secretariat following the dialogue with the Commission. <a href="#">Email sent 17 October, no responses received</a>
2	Change WG3 action points regarding organisation of a meeting for fishermen to organisation of a meeting of the FG Scallop to discuss latest developments <a href="#">Changed</a>
3	Remove HWG action point on financial aid for fishermen to attend extraordinary meeting on scallop management for discussion in FG Scallop and NWWAC management Team, as well as review with Commission financial services if needed <a href="#">Removed</a>
4	Secretariat to add update on the EU Atlantic Strategy to next HWG meeting agenda <a href="#">On HWG agenda yesterday</a>
5	Secretariat to add update on GNSBI to next HWG meeting agenda <a href="#">On HWG agenda yesterday</a>
6	Chair to address point on regionalisation at Inter-AC Brexit Forum including reference to lack of information on discussion of remedial measures in the Celtic Sea <a href="#">Addressed at Inter-AC Brexit Forum 21 October</a>
7	Chair to address at Inter-AC Brexit Forum under agenda item on MPAs the possibility of financial aid to EU vessels should the UK MPA measures be implemented in full <a href="#">Addressed at Inter-AC Brexit Forum 21 October</a>
8	Chair to address at Inter-AC meeting under agenda item on MFF the possibility of financial



	aid to EU vessels should the UK MPA measures be implemented in full
	<a href="#">Addressed at Inter-AC meeting 18 November</a>
9	Secretariat to continue formal membership drive targeting specifically eNGOs in the coming year
	<a href="#">ongoing</a>
10	Secretariat to circulate the draft joint-AC advice on AC functioning, provide information on the current state of play and ask members for comments
	<a href="#">Email sent 20 October, no replies received</a>
11	Secretariat to circulate information on the National Fisheries Profiles as published by DG MARE
	<a href="#">FYI Email sent 16 October</a>

## 2 Approval of action points from the Working Groups

### Working Group 1 – John Lynch, Working Group Chair

- 1 WG1/Secretariat to follow up on the Guidelines Note related to Technical Measures, which should be finalised by the end of March and sent to the AC by the Commission.
- 2 WG1/Secretariat to follow up on the Haddock Comprehensive Assessment Document, updates will be shared by the Commission.
- 3 Secretariat to keep WG1 updated on the ICES Rebuilding Strategy.
- 4 Secretariat to follow up on BIM Trials and invite BIM for a next WG1 meeting.
- 5 Secretariat to continue efforts to contact MARA and check again with the NWW MS TG to identify contact details for representatives or experts on subsea cable issues and invite them to the next WG1 meeting.
- 6 Secretariat to initiate members' consultation regarding Year 22 Work Programme.

### Working Group 2 – Irene Prieto, Working Group Chair

- 1 Secretariat to check for updates on the issue of Nephrops in the Porcupine bank for potential presentation during the next WG2 meeting.
- 2 Secretariat to follow up on the Guidelines Note related to Technical Measures, which should be finalised by the end of March and sent to the AC by the Commission.
- 3 Secretariat to keep WG2 updated on the ICES Rebuilding Strategy.
- 4 Secretariat to keep WG2 updated on Spurdog and BIM works, as well as on skates and rays through the dedicated Focus Group



- 5 Secretariat to await information from the Commission on hake and the query on the 2004 Regulation.
- 6 Secretariat to share more information – once available - on the registration for two ICES workshops taking place in October 2026: 1) Workshop on VME index; 2) Workshop on static gear impact.
- 7 Members to send to Secretariat queries for Simon Jennings following his presentation “Update on ICES work on VMEs”
- 8 Secretariat to initiate members’ consultation regarding Year 22 Work Programme.

### **Working Group 3 – Manu Kelberine, Working Group Chair**

- 1 Secretariat to follow up on the Guidelines Note related to Technical Measures, which should be finalised by the end of March and sent to the AC by the Commission.
- 2 Secretariat to keep WG3 updated on the ICES Rebuilding Strategy.
- 3 Focus Group Scallop to continue monitoring developments regarding the multi-annual strategy for scallops and await receipt of the scientific report.
- 4 Focus Group Sea Bass to follow up on the sea bass allocation tool and examine the possibility of AC input.
- 5 Secretariat to follow up on the ICES productivity study mentioned at the MIRIA meeting in January 2026.
- 6 Secretariat to follow up on the EU-UK meeting on UK MPAs (to be confirmed by the Commission).
- 7 Members to send questions to the Secretariat for Annemiek Hermans following her presentation on “The effects of electromagnetic frequencies (EMF) on flatfish in the context of the TenneT project”.
- 8 Secretariat to monitor work of MEDAC and CC SUD on the definition of small-scale coastal fisheries.
- 9 Secretariat to initiate members’ consultation regarding Year 22 Work Programme.

The Chair informed participants that Falke de Sager, Belgium Fisheries PO was appointed as new Vice-Chair to this group.

### **Horizontal Working Group – Alexandra Philippe, Working Group Chair**

- 1 Members to send queries to Secretariat following all presentation during the meeting.



- 2 Points raised by members during WG meetings on EU-UK discussions to feed into next Inter-AC Brexit Forum meeting on 13 March.
- 3 Focus Group Landing Obligation to draft brief advice following update of choke table as it is a key deliverable under the Year 21 Work Programme.
- 4 AC to review questionnaire regarding Atlantic Strategy/Atlantic Action Plan scheduled for circulation by CINEA later this year.
- 5 Secretariat to keep informed regarding Atlantic Strategy stakeholder conference in September 2026.
- 6 Secretariat to provide GNSBI contacts to PelAC Secretariat for presentation to Focus Group Spatial Dimension.
- 7 Secretariat to invite Jerome Broche, DG MARE control unit, and Commissioner's cabinet to next meeting of FG Control on 31 March.
- 8 Secretariat to evaluate members' interest in establishing a Focus Group to follow ICES work with specific focus on annual MIRIA, MIAC and MIACO meetings.
- 9 Secretariat to follow up with DG MARE regarding the possibility of having brief bilateral discussions following advice submission for smoother processing.

All action points were approved.

### 3 Dialogue with DG MARE – Fabrizio Donatella, Director DG MARE C

The Chair welcomed Fabrizio Donatella to the meeting and thanked for his availability.

Director Donatella opened by expressing pleasure at the continued interaction with the Advisory Council, noting that the Commissioner remains highly committed to stakeholder engagement as a core pillar of his mandate. The Commission values the North Western Waters Advisory Council specifically for its broad range of interests and its ability to address both immediate and long-term issues, such as pelagic stock consultations and post-Brexit challenges. A significant point was made regarding the practicalities of this cooperation. Director Donatella noted that resources and time are limited on both sides, necessitating a pragmatic approach to interactions and recommendations.

He outlined that the Commission has launched a comprehensive evaluation of the CFP Regulation to assess its impact and functioning. This assessment is guided by five bureaucratic but essential criteria: efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, coherence, and EU added value. The aim is to foster an open dialogue, acknowledging that the Commission's evaluation may differ from that of stakeholders. Key milestones include the publication of the final report by the end of April 2026. This report will incorporate external studies, including research on the landing obligation, to determine if the CFP remains "fit for purpose." The findings will provide an



evidence-based foundation for informed decision-making and the development of a long-term implementation strategy.

Closely linked to the CFP evaluation is the "Vision 2040" initiative, a specific directive from President von der Leyen to the Commissioner. This project aims to establish a framework for the future of the fishing, aquaculture, and processing sectors. Key areas of focus include:

- **Market Dynamics:** Analysing consumer demand and addressing the sector's current level of import dependency.
- **Labour and Workforce:** Reflecting on generational renewal, addressing impediments to entering the profession, and exploring opportunities for diversification and reskilling.
- **Infrastructure and Innovation:** Ensuring the hardware of the industry is modernised and establishing viable financing for innovation.

The Commission has recently published a call for evidence (23 February) and encourages stakeholders to provide input that looks beyond immediate crises toward a shared long-term perspective.

Director Donatella recalled that the Commission is currently preparing the Ocean Act, which will serve as a milestone for implementing the Ocean Pact. This will involve a revision of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive to ensure greater consistency with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). He emphasised that these instruments should no longer be viewed in isolation. Addressing the spatial squeeze caused by the proliferation of national and local maritime initiatives is a priority for the upcoming period.

Relations with the UK remain a primary focus for 2026. Intensive work is ongoing regarding the rebuilding of depleted stocks in the Celtic Sea and the Channel, multi-year strategies for King Scallops, and managing the decline of brown crab stocks. The Commission is finalising explanatory notes on these measures but noted that UK implementation has been delayed by internal statutory processes. Additionally, the Commission is closely monitoring the UK's rollout of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) and measures within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). It also facilitated exchanges between the Member States and UK authorities on these matters, which proved useful in enhancing UK's understanding of EU stakeholders' concerns.

Negotiations for the future Multiannual Financial Framework are underway to ensure predictability for the sector. The proposed financial structure includes:

- **Cohesion Funding:** Approximately €453 billion reserved for territorial and social cohesion, which includes fisheries-related regional partnerships.



- **Direct CFP Support:** A minimum of €2 billion ring-fenced for the implementation of the CFP, sustainable aquaculture, and marine conservation.
- **EU Facilities:** Approximately €11.5 billion of the wider EU facilities available for scientific advice, data collection, and control (formerly known as "direct management").
- **Innovation and Diplomacy:** Support from the European Competitiveness Fund and roughly €200 billion in global instruments for ocean diplomacy and the fight against IUU fishing.

The new structure is intended to offer Member States more flexibility to tailor budgets to local needs. Director Donatella concluded by reiterating the Commission's commitment to bringing the importance of fisheries policy to the attention of all relevant EU institutions and thanking the AC for their ongoing support.

The Chair thanked Director Donatella and opened the floor for questions.

**Jean-Marie Robert** thanked Director Donatella for the intervention, noting that the sector currently finds itself at a significant crossroads that will shape the future of EU fisheries. He observed that a clear tension has developed at EU level, pitting economic and social priorities against environmental objectives. Looking ahead, he expressed his hope that the role of fisheries in protein production would be given greater weight, particularly as the global population continues to expand. Turning to the Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Directive and its inclusion in the forthcoming Ocean Act, J.M. Robert voiced concerns regarding the approach of DG ENV. He suggested that there appears to be a move toward restricting bottom trawling across all habitats, regardless of whether the practice actually has a demonstrable impact in those specific areas. Consequently, he urged DG MARE to intervene and provide a more balanced perspective regarding management and regulation. Finally, he addressed the outcomes of the previous CFP revision, specifically the implementation of Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY). While acknowledging MSY as a noble target intended to benefit everyone, he argued that it has not delivered the anticipated results. He cited the Bay of Biscay as example, where quotas remain low or continue to decrease annually without what he considers a clear explanation. To rectify this, he called for a reflection on the mechanisms of stock functioning, including the impact of predation, and insisted that ICES should be central to this scientific investigation.

**John Lynch** thanked Director Donatella outlining that the fleet is ageing without much generational renewal. It has absorbed several shocks in the past years and is possible facing another fuel crisis now. These could affect the ability of the fleet to replace itself and to retain new entrants into the industry. Adding to this the Vision 2040 and the implication of rebuilding stocks and technical measures which are necessary but have an economic impact on the fleets



and the sector “Where in the financial framework would supports be included for this work to be done for the fleet to maintain a balance until there is more sustainability?”

**Durk van Tuinen** supported the previous speakers point and added that there are a lot of goals for the fleet in the future. A lot of times there are restrictions on the MFF for larger vessels with rules for over 24m fleet. He called for finance for bigger vessels for example for new engines.

**Director Donatella** acknowledged that the concerns are critical inputs for the ongoing consultation process. He agreed that the discussion regarding MSY is particularly significant. Since MSY was established as a legal objective and a cornerstone of the reform over a decade ago, the Commission has been reflecting on its implementation. He noted that scientific understanding has improved considerably over time, and the Commission is now questioning whether science providers should continue to deliver advice in the same traditional manner. He explicitly stated that the Commission should not shy away from this debate, which extends beyond just ICES to include the entire scientific community. He observed that scientists themselves have begun raising these questions, and the Commission is committed to ensuring that this interaction involves more than just public administrations. In response to the challenges faced by the fleet, Director Donatella explained that these issues are being integrated into the current design and negotiation of future financial instruments. This includes discussions on the limitations of public support based on vessel size and the necessity of funding for implementing technical measures, such as more selective gears. He emphasised that these matters should not be viewed in isolation and linked them directly to the upcoming evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and the specific study on the landing obligation. While acknowledging that generational renewal and the ageing of the fleet are essential components of the Vision 2040 debate, the speaker suggested that these concrete elements must first be examined within the context of the forthcoming CFP evaluation. The speaker concluded by apologising for not providing further detail at this stage, explaining that the Commission is currently in the preparatory phase of the process, but reiterated that they are fully committed to addressing these complex issues head-on rather than avoiding them.

**Patrick Murphy** thanked Director Donatella for joining and outlined how important these direct interactions between the AC and DG MARE are. With the changing landscape experienced by the sector, for example regarding climate change and stock health, he emphasised how vital job creation and generational renewal is critical. He stressed that sovereignty of the food source in the EU is essential and a level playing field for all operators should be implemented. He agreed with the MSY approach and should be retained, however, there has been a large loss due to the setting of lower levels over the years. He wondered if this is going to meet the requirements of rebuilding stocks. He added that the geopolitical impacts are critical and rising fuel costs are worrying.

**Manu Kelberine** also thanked Director Donatella for all the information he provided during his intervention. Referring to bottom trawling he focussed on UK MPAs and several stage three



MPAs in the Channel which were designated to preserve gravel or sand. He felt that maybe the while Channel then needed to transformed into and MPA and that this was just one argument to defend the fisheries interests in the negotiations.

**Emiel Brouckaert** thanked the Director for his continued involvement with the AC. He commented that things are moving quickly and highlighted a recent development regarding the UK's request to delay the implementation of agreed technical measures. He questioned whether the EU would coordinate its own timeline to ensure that EU fishers are not required to implement these measures earlier than their UK counterparts, thereby maintaining a level playing field. A second concern was raised regarding potential discrepancies in the technical records between the two jurisdictions. Specifically, he pointed to a 30% implementation threshold that exists within EU regulations but is notably absent from the UK's documentation. He expressed hope that the guidance currently under preparation would address these inconsistencies to ensure fair competition and regulatory alignment. Regarding the scientific basis for these measures, he noted that the depletion of certain stocks serves as the legal trigger for new technical interventions under the TCA quota regulations. However, many fishermen, particularly those targeting flatfish in the English Channel, have provided contradictory evidence suggesting that the depletion is not as severe as reported. Consequently, he urged for continuous and close monitoring of stock levels to allow for management that adapts to the actual situation on the water. Finally, the discussion turned to the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and its relationship with the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) evaluation. He asked if there were options to secure specific funding or amend the MFF structure now to ensure that financial resources are immediately available to act upon any legislative changes or requirements that may emerge once the CFP evaluation is finalised.

**Director Donatella** started by addressing the potential for a high-fuel crisis. He emphasised that the Commission is monitoring the situation closely and relies heavily on stakeholder data to understand the real-world impact. Similarly, the data provided regarding the ageing of the fleet and the need for renewal was noted as impressive and vital information, particularly as the Commission develops its Vision 2040 strategy. On the subject of MPAs, he assured the group that the Commission is actively monitoring UK decisions to ensure they remain in line with the TCA. He credited technical interactions and stakeholder input with successfully influencing Defra in the past. However, he clarified that the Commission cannot act in isolation; it is essential for those directly affected to respond personally to public consultations and calls for evidence. He described the boundary between the Commission's mandate and stakeholder action as a grey area and argued that a pragmatic, collaborative approach is more productive than strictly defining where one starts and the other ends. Regarding the delayed implementation of technical measures, he confirmed that this is a recent development brought to the attention of Member States only this week. He explained that not all agreed measures would be delayed, as some can be implemented quickly through licensing conditions while others require lengthier statutory processes. For instance, measures in the Celtic Sea might



still be implemented by the UK without delay. The Commission is currently identifying which measures require a few months' postponement and is evaluating how to maintain the effectiveness of these recovery efforts. He acknowledged the importance of a level playing field and reaffirmed that while the timing is being debated, the substance of the original agreement remains unchanged.

Finally, Director Donatella addressed the monitoring of stock depletion and the future of the MFF. He noted the importance of translating fisherman perceptions and data into management decisions. Regarding the MFF, he admitted it is premature to discuss specific amendments or new funding mechanisms before the CFP evaluation is published. While he could not confirm the creation of a permanent crisis mechanism, he acknowledged that such elements must be part of the upcoming discussions. He closed by agreeing that the pace of change in the industry is accelerating, making continuous dialogue more necessary than ever.

**The Chair** sought clarification regarding the MSFD as it is an important topic for this AC which has made a recent submission also identifying proportionality in relation Descriptor 6. The AC is worried about the threshold setting and how this is set up within the MSCG which is mainly driven by DG ENV. She wondered where DG MARE has input in this process of threshold setting. Within the revision of the MSFD the AC is concerned that these thresholds may become binding though no assessment have been carried out. The relation between MSP and MSFD could be enhanced through the work on the Ocean Act. She commented that during the ETP high-level event it was implied that an amendment could be made to EMFAF for energy transition purposes, yet in the framework of the EMFF it is less clear where the transition of the seafood sector sits. She added that the AC submitted advice technical and remedial measures to DG MARE and referred to a felt crisis of regionalisation. She felt that AC involvement could be enhanced has currently this is slightly blurred due to Brexit.

**Director Donatella** acknowledged that the aftermath of Brexit has placed many aspects of EU fisheries policy, including its institutional structures, under a significant stress test. While the system has largely passed this test, certain challenges remain difficult to manage, particularly the integration of regionalisation with decisions that must be coordinated with the UK. He noted that the international negotiation framework, involving Member States, the Council, regional groups, and Advisory Councils, requires a fine-tuned approach to defining joint recommendations. There is currently no perfect solution to create a consistent system that meets all objectives while allowing the same pace of consultation found in EU-only management contexts. Consequently, tensions and difficulties are expected to persist, requiring a continued pragmatic outlook. One major lesson learned by the Commission is that the internal and external consultation requirements mean the timeframe from initial preparation to the final outcome is now much longer. He suggested that they may need to explore starting preparations much earlier, though this is not always feasible. Rather than seeking a solution through legal amendments to the CFP, he urged for a more innovative and collaborative way of working together. While regionalisation must be respected, the challenge



lies in adapting the implementation process to current realities. Regarding other specific issues, he noted the stakeholder desire for amendments to the financial framework but could not offer further commitment beyond previous statements. Finally, on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, he acknowledged the concerns raised and confirmed that DG MARE is now working much more closely with DG Environment than in the past. This cooperation is particularly focused on the preparation of the Ocean Act, ensuring that as Maritime Spatial Planning is addressed, health and safety considerations are also integrated into the assessment of the marine environment.

**E. Brouckaert** noted that the AC only learned today that the UK is requesting a delay in the performance or implementation of certain measures. He suggested that this development should be added to the list of points to be raised at the upcoming Inter-AC Brexit Forum to ensure the maintenance of a level playing field between the two parties.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to add issue of delayed implementation of technical measures by the UK to topics to be raised by Chair at the upcoming Inter-AC Brexit Forum on 31 March.

#### 4 Dialogue with NWW MSG – Eveline Smith, Dutch presidency of the NWW Member States Group

Slides can be found [here](#).

The Chair welcomed Eveline Smith, Dutch presidency of the North Western Waters Member States Group (NWW MSG) and thanked her for availability to present the work programme.

Eveline Smith apologised for not being able to join in person due to conflicting engagements. She introduced the work of the NWW MSG stating that for the first six months of 2026 the Netherlands is holding the presidency and will be followed by France in July.

She then provided an overview on the current work programme, including:

- Joint Recommendation Brown Crab: This work is being carried out in collaboration with the Scheveningen Group and a first draft is expected end March/ beginning of April.
- Joint Recommendation Red Mullet: Under discussion regarding the introduction of a MCRS.
- NWW Memorandum of Understanding: These rules for internal working of the MSG have not been updated since Brexit and work is ongoing.
- Relationship with the UK: The MSG is aligning and collaborating with the Commission on relevant aspects. Technical measures in the Celtic Sea and in the Channel are being discussed with the UK.



- Possible request for extension of technical measures for Red Seabream: These have been in place for several years and will end this year. The MSG will discuss if these can be extended for another year.
- Landing obligation NWW discard plan 2028: Work will commence on the new discard plan. Current exemptions are in place until 2027 and new extensions need to be submitted by May 2027.
- Engagement with NWW Control Expert Group: engagement with this group as needed.

E. Smith also addressed the NWWAC Letter to the North Western Waters Member States Group “Amendment to the Technical Measures Regulation for reopening the Channel scallop stock recovery area on the first Monday after 15 October” outlining that the MSG already had a brief discussion. Multiple MS are interested in exploring if the regulation can be amended and further discussions will be held at the next meeting on 16 March.

The Chair thanked E. Smith for this overview and opened the floor to questions

**Durk van Tuinen** referred to the planned JR for brown crab and potential additional measures. He commented that a distinction should be made between directed fisheries as well as fisheries where brown crab occurs as bycatch only.

**E. Smith** confirmed that this request has already been noted.

**E. Brouckaert** referred to the FG Brown Crab which should take the previous comment on directed fisheries/bycatch into account when preparing advice.

**Geert Meun** explained that Director Donatella had provided an update on the delay in introducing technical measures by the UK. He was wondering if the MSG was aware on this.

**E. Smith** confirmed that this news was just received by the MS and was hoping that this would be discussed on 16 March within the NWW MSG meeting.

**J. Lynch** asked if the MS can follow up on the topic of subsea cables and possible guidelines for interaction with fisheries.

**E. Smith** acknowledged that the NWWAC has raised this topic several times and explained that this is not within the remit of the Ministry represented in the MSG. They have reached out to the relevant Ministry who is looking for clarification on the issue in order to better address the query.

**J. Lynch** welcomed the news of engagement with the relevant Ministry and felt that the development of some guidelines is vital for both industries as interactions are only going to increase.



**P. Murphy** explained that a point raised previously related to the implementation of the control regulation and that concerns are experienced in the same way by MS and stakeholders. He added that the obligation to report after each haul is highly onerous on vessel owners and operators for which actually an additional member of crew would be needed for whom there is no space on board. He also expressed a second concern regarding UK MPAs and the ban on bottom trawling. He wondered if the MSG is investigating the impact regarding fleets in various Member States.

**E. Smith** outlined that control issues need to be taken up with the Control Expert Group and acknowledged that these concerns are raised by many stakeholders. She referred to the planned workshop between the ACs and the CEG. On MPAs she explained that the MS take into account the effects experienced by MS and part of the dialogue with the UK.

**Mo Mathies** provided details regarding developments on the organisation of the two planned workshops on control. She mentioned that DG MARE is looking into organising the a workshop between the ACs and the control unit in conjunction with the next Inter-AC meeting. However, they are experiencing internal coordination issues die to the fact that both the Commissioner as well as the Director-General wish to attend and have competing diaries making it difficult to identify a suitable date. In relation to the joint workshop with the Member States Control Expert Group she commented that the PelAC had advised that a suggestion had been made by the MSG to involve EFCA in the organisation of this workshop. The PelAC has now contacted EFCA on behalf of the relevant ACs to see if this organisation can be brought along speedily.

**ACTION:** NWWAC to develop advice on the issue subsea cables following identification of suitable Focus Group for carrying out work.

**ACTION:** Focus Group Brown Crab to include considerations regarding directed fisheries and bycatch fisheries for brown crab and planned advice development.

## 5 Ocean Board – Helena Abreu Vieira Rodrigues, DG MARE A.2

Slides can be found [here](#).

The Chair welcomed Helena Rodrigues and thanked her for joining members at short notice

Helena Rodrigues and explained there is not much information available yet and that an open call for participation is currently available.

She outlined that the European Ocean Board was formally established by Commission Decision C(2026)593 on 5 February 2026 to support the ongoing implementation of the European Ocean Pact. Functioning in tandem with supporting tools such as the Ocean Pact



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Dashboard, the Board serves a multifaceted role focused on providing strategic guidance to the European Commission. Beyond advising on the general execution of the Pact, the Board delivers targeted opinions on specific maritime matters at the Commission's request and fosters high-level, cross-sectoral dialogue among diverse stakeholders. It is designed to complement, rather than replace, existing sectoral bodies, such as regional sea conventions, the European Blue Forum, and various Advisory Councils, by offering cross-cutting advice that bridges the gaps between Member State expert groups.

The composition of the Board is restricted to a maximum of 25 EU-level stakeholder organisations, rather than individuals acting in a personal capacity, to ensure broad representation across maritime and ocean-related sectors. To qualify for membership, an organisation must demonstrate extensive competence at the EU level and maintain geographical representativeness across the various maritime regions and sea basins of the European Union. Furthermore, each member organisation must be represented by a high-level official of appropriate seniority to ensure the Board's influence remains significant.

Regarding its operational structure, the Board meets at least once per year on European Commission premises under the leadership of the Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans, Mr. Costas Kadis, who serves as the Chair. The term of the Board is set for a maximum of five years, a duration intentionally aligned with the current Commission mandate to ensure administrative continuity.

**The Chair** thanked H. Rodrigues for these details and asked for clarification of AC participation in this Board. M. Mathies added that the Commissioner had mentioned in his intervention that ACs can participate in the Board and that a rotational system similar to the EFCA Advisory Board has been discussed informally.

**H. Rodrigues** explained that observers can participate in the Board and that experts are also invited on certain issues. DG MARE has received the submission from the ACs and is currently reviewing and preparing a response. Organisations need to apply for membership by the deadline of 10 March, however, the Commissioner can invite observers directly. A rotation system is within the guidelines of the functioning of the Board,

The Chair opened the floor to suggestions by members regarding participation and felt that DG MARE should

**P. Murphy** wondered if the deadline for applications could be extended.

**H. Rodrigues** stated that the call was announced a month ago within the Commission's rules. No extensions are expected as the first meeting is scheduled for 31 March.

**J.-M. Robert** outlined that he was not convinced that a rotation system would be suitable. He felt it should be one organisation proposing one member. He felt it should be normal that all



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ACs should be able to participate in the meetings as observer but was less favourable regarding the AC to be a direct member. However, he felt that the EBCD should be a direct member.

**The Chair** thanked J.-M. Robert for this suggestion and acknowledged the doubts regarding the rotation system. She felt that it was important to note that ACs are the main bodies representing fisheries and OIG interests but understood that it was a technical problem regarding membership. She concluded that the AC could express its interest in being added as observer. However, should DG MARE set up a rotation system the AC will of course participate.

Members agreed that the NWWAC should apply for observer status.

**H. Rodrigues** noted the expression of interest regarding observer status and will report this back.

**ACTION:** NWWAC to apply for observer status at Ocean Board.

## 6 Midterm review of the NWWAC performance review (Secretariat)

Slides can be found [here](#).

The Secretariat provided an overview of the actions taken to address the recommendations made in the NWWAC Performance Review in Year 18 (2022 – 2023).

A discussion ensued regarding the participation of member organisations in AC meetings with the Secretariat expressing its disappointment at the low turnout for this round of meetings in Brussels despite the high-level in person participation from the Commission. Members felt that it was not a reflection on the Secretariat's work who should not carry the burden of ensuring engagement of member organisations. Rather, active engagement is the responsibility of each member organisation, and some may be content in following the activities of the AC only via the emails and website. It was noted that the lack of responses from the Commission and in particular the lack of transparency regarding the impact of AC advice could be a contributor to the disengagement of member organisations. The high level of Commission engagement in this round of meetings was noted and Brussels put forward as a potential location for future meetings to ensure continued in person attendance of Commission representatives in the future.

In line with the requirements of Commission Delegated Regulation 2022/204 amending Delegated Regulation 2015/242 (OJ L 34, 16/2/22) EC, the next performance review is due to be carried out in Year 23 (2027-2028). Procurement will begin during the next financial year.



**The Chair** added that the NWWAC's management team continuously discusses the engagement of members which is why she intervened in each WG meeting to outline the need for prioritisation and direct engagement of members in advice drafting for increased ownership. Both the Commission and the AC have limited resources so a practical way forward to optimise efficiency is essential. She agreed that the lack of transparency regarding advice uptake within the Commission is likely to have led to disengagement. It is essential to identify areas in which the AC can have the most impact, for example technical and remedial measures and Joint Recommendations with the Member States. She welcomed the suggestion made previously to engage directly via a brief call or online meeting with the Commission services after advice submission to speed up the review and response process. She commented that the enhancement in communication with the Commission at this round of meetings was impressive and largely due to the fact that the meetings were held in Brussels. However, as an organisation with members from various regions she felt that holding meetings in the various regions was important.

## 7 NWWAC Work Programme and Budget Year 21 – state of play (Secretariat)

Slides can be found here.

The Secretariat provided an overview of key deliverables achieved under the Year 21 Work Programme as well as an update on the Year 21 budget.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to canvas members regarding meeting location suggestions for Year 22. No question were raised.

## 8 AOB

The Secretariat raised the two following points:

- Advice on implementation of Control Regulation: This document went into fast-track approval on 04 March and has now been approved. The NSAC will be informed in order to update the letter with the NWWAC logo and mention in the text.
- Common approval procedure for joint AC advice: M. Mathies explained that due to the increase of joint advice submissions between two or more ACs, a common approval procedure is deemed beneficial to streamline the work between the Secretariats. At the last Secretariats' meeting in Copenhagen on the fringes of MIAC and MIACO, the Secretariats agreed to develop a procedure with the NWWAC Secretariat taking the lead.



## 9 Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

The Chair thanked all representatives as well as the interpreters, all experts who joined over the past two days for their participation, as well as Copa-Cogeca for the use of their facilities.

**M. Mathies** explained that the AC will have to decide on meeting locations for 2027 and suggested to canvas members electronically. Once suggestion was to hold a round of meetings again in Brussels in order to allow Commission representatives to attend in person.

- 1 Secretariat to add issue of delayed implementation of technical measures by the UK to topics to be raised by Chair at the upcoming Inter-AC Brexit Forum on 31 March.
- 2 NWWAC to develop advice on the issue subsea cables following identification of suitable Focus Group for carrying out work.
- 3 Focus Group Brown Crab to include considerations regarding directed fisheries and bycatch fisheries for brown crab and planned advice development.
- 4 NWWAC to apply for observer status at Ocean Board.
- 5 Secretariat to canvas members regarding meeting location suggestions for Year 22.

## Participants

NWWAC members	
Emiel Brouckaert	BFPO
Manu Kelberine	CRPM de Bretagne
John Lynch	ISEFPO
Geert Meun	VisNed
Sander Meyns	Rederscentrale
Patrick Murphy	ISWFPO
Alexandra Philippe (Chair)	EBCD
Irene Prieto	OPPF4
Jean-Marie Robert	LPDB
Durk van Tuinen	Nederlandse Vissersbond
Arthur Yon	FROM Nord
Experts and observers	
José Beltran	OPP-7 Burela
Thomas Brégeon	DG MARE
Bruno Dachicourt	ETF
Fabrizio Donatella	DG MARE



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Gérald Hussenot Desenonges	MIM
Marina Illuminati	MEDAC Secretariat
Franck Le Barzic	COBRENORD
Jésus A. Lourido Garcia	OPP-77 Puerto de Celeiro
Llibori Martinez Latorre	IFSUA
Corentine Piton	France Peche durable et Responsable
Dominic Rihan	KFO
Eveline Smith	Ministry for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, The Netherlands
<b>NWWAC Secretariat</b>	
Ilaria Bellomo	Fisheries Strategy & Administration Officer
Mo Mathies	Executive Secretary