

## MEETING REPORT

### Joint PelAC/NWWAC Spatial Dimension Focus Group

**Date** : 25 March 2026  
**Time** : 10:00 – 11:15 hrs CET / 9:00 – 10:15 hrs IE/PT  
**Type meeting** : Online (Teams)  
**Chair** : Gonçalo Carvalho

#### 1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda

The Chair informed participants that two apologies were received. One from John Lynch and the other from Tim Heddema. The Chair presented the agenda to participants that was approved by the members.

#### 2. Follow-up on action items

The Chair presented the action items stemming from the previous meeting. The following action items were executed:

- The slides were to be distributed to participants
- Follow up with the Irish Presidency to obtain contact details for environmental administrations of the Northwestern Waters Member States group. If no response is received, escalate to the high-level group for further action. Identify the next presidency of the Northwestern Waters Member States group to ensure continuity in communications.
- Await feedback from the MPA Life project team in January 2025, when stakeholder engagement is expected to commence.
- Include the upcoming Commission study (on employment impacts of marine renewable energies and socio-economic effects on fisheries) in the next meeting's agenda
- Reach out to the NSAC and SWWAC to inform them that the Focus Group meetings will be opened to their members for observation purposes.

The following action items are still ongoing:

- The terms of reference were to be reviewed to formalise the inclusion of observers in the focus group Clarify approval procedures for the focus group, with a broader discussion planned during the Inter-Secretariat meetings in January to harmonize joint advice approval processes across Acs.
- Discuss among secretariats the possibility of organizing a joint event on MSP, independent of the focus group integration discussion.

The Chair informed participants that this work was still pending.





Mo Mathies informed members that a webinar with the Irish authorities on the designation of ORE, Ecological sensitivity analysis. She noted that she would come back to members with more information.

### **3. Socio-Economic Impacts of Developing Offshore Renewable Energy – Presentation by Tom Krusche, Socio-economic analyst, DGEMPL & Maja Lardot, Trinomics**

The Chair gave the floor to Tom Krusche to present the Commission's work on the socio-economic impacts of Offshore Renewable Energy. Krusche presented DG employment's organigramme and the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. He underlined that their role was to ensure that the principles are implemented in the green agenda and the Green Deal, ensuring that the green transition is a just transition.

A European Fair Transition Observatory was presented to be under development in DGEMPL. The objective of the observatory was to track and monitor the progress of the fair green transition in EU member States. He suggested sending a link to the PelAC and NWWAC once the website was available.

He noted that decarbonizing the EU was a key priority with EU initiatives being published to achieve it. The Clean Industrial deal, the Affordable Energy Action Plan and ORE deployment were mentioned to be key initiatives to achieve carbon neutrality.

Krusche recalled the context leading to the study, highlighting the European Court of Auditors' report where shortcomings in addressing socio economic challenges of ORE development on other sea users such as fisheries were identified.

Maja Lardot was given the floor to present the results of the study carried out by Trinomics. The approach to the study was divided into 4 steps. Firstly, a scoping analysis was carried out followed by the development of an analytical framework that could be used across several impacts. Trinomics collected data and analysed it noting that their focus was on 5 EU Member States: France, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland and Portugal. Using the data, they provided a set of recommendations focused on the dominant technology: offshore wind.

The analytical framework investigated specific impact areas such as environmental impacts, mainly on fishing resources. Economic impacts were focused on employment, the quality of employment, skills, social cohesion, public acceptance, and then other impacts such as health, local housing and the cost of living. The impacts were investigated during the construction, operation and demolition phase and for all affected stakeholders and vulnerable groups. The study relied on literature review, stakeholder consultations, and quantitative data analysis when data was available. This was the case mostly for employment data.

The study concluded that the impact of ORE on fishing resources was uncertain. It noted that the short-term impact related to access to fishing areas, the long-term impacts remain unknown. Moreover, the study noted the issue of isolating the impact of a wind farm from the entirety of the Marine environment. Diverging monitoring methods were also highlighted as a key limitation to understanding the impact of ORE on fishing resources.

Economic impacts were discussed based on future ORE development to meet the targets set by the EU for 2030. ORE is expected to contribute 133 billion euros to the EU GDP. The main beneficiaries of this contribution will be the ports and fishers are expected to face access restrictions. The impact on tourism will be limited, and local economies would experience different outcomes based on their activities.





For the fishing sector, ORE is expected to reduce access to fishing areas mainly for bottom contacting gears. Adaptation would be limited as licencing and financial burdens remain strong. Funding may be limited as banks may be hesitant to lend to declining sectors and compensation mechanism remain limited. Multi-use models remained anecdotal and limited to passive gears in wind farm zones.

Ports and logistics were the economic winners with the extent of the benefits varying on a case-by-case basis. High jobs creatin can be expected as ports will serve as construction, assembly, operating and monitoring bases. This potential required significant infrastructure investments to support the new supply chain. Smaller fishing or tourism reliant ports might see limited direct benefits.

The impact on employment was forecasted for 2030, 2040 and 2050. By 2030 180,000 jobs were expected to be created in the ORE sector, and 120,000 jobs extra by 2050. Creating in the vicinity of the actual offshore wind farms seemed limited, with the employment impact being spread out over the whole country or EU. A lack of research on the potential employment impact on fishers explained the lack of employment assessment on fisheries.

The quality of employment was also presented as higher than in the overall economy, with high wages and benefits, stability, full-time and permanent positions. Over time, the predominant jobs created will be linked to operation and maintenance. In 2030 mostly jobs in construction and installation were created whereas in 2050, the jobs were for operations and maintenance. It was noted that construction and installation jobs were described as temporary. Difficult working conditions with low share of women employees, low union representation and reliance on international recruitment practices were expected.

Jobs in the ORE sector required post-secondary education with a high number of employees needed. 70% of direct jobs were technicians. The lack of training initiatives available in EU Member States was noted, with a need to investigate re and upskilling for fishers.

The study identified other impacts. New tourism products have emerged: boat tours, info centres, guided walks around ORE parks.

However, the risk remains significant in highly tourism-dependent coastal towns, especially if onshore infrastructure is poorly planned. The construction phase showed a boost in local economies with benefits fading over time. The public perception was generally positive, especially when climate benefits were communicated. Local populations of coastal towns opposed the deployment due to fear of destruction of ecosystems, landscape disturbances, disruption of tourism or negative impacts on human health. Negative perception from fishers was due to limitations of traditional fishing grounds. Overall, ORE was perceived as a priority over the fisheries sector.

Lardot discussed the study's findings on skills. Working in the ORE sector required mostly a secondary education, with over 70% of jobs being technician jobs. Training in certain Member States was available, she highlighted the need to have training tailored to the ORE sector with standardisation at European level being a plus. Further investigation on the feasibility of reskilling and upskilling for fishers was needed, stressing the existence of regulatory and technical barriers.

Lardot concluded her presentation with a list of recommendations made by the study. The recommendations were focused on five key areas: employment opportunities, up and reskilling, stakeholder engagement and participation, funding, and Maritime Spatial Planning.





For Maritime Spatial Planning, the study recommends the integration of assessment of socio-economic impacts as part of the Socio-Economic Assessments and the Environmental Impact assessments, Improved methodologies for monitoring of ex-post impacts and systematic monitoring of ORE impact upon fishing stocks and populations.

Employment opportunities recommendations were to develop cross-sectoral classification frameworks tailored to ORE for economic and social data. Facilitation of the assessment of local employment impacts through regional level data collection and ensuring continuity in the ORE sector through economic diversification and increased training plan availability was suggested. The study also recommended including job residency, workforce diversity and employment continuity in planning and bidding processes for ORE projects. The methodologies of assessment and employment forecast for the impact of ORE should be transparent and harmonised across the EU.

For up and re-skilling, identification and classification of relevant occupations and skill creation was needed into a unified EU taxonomy for offshore renewable energy occupation and skills. Standardisation of trainings was pointed out as a key point, including on soft digital and English language skills. The study highlighted the need to involve social partners when developing education and training courses. The Commission noted that they would work to map training capacities through geospatial databases of training providers.

On stakeholder engagement, Lardot noted the importance of forums such as the ACs that promote independent and transparent stakeholder engagement. She underlined the importance of educating the public on ORE development.

She concluded by suggesting that compensation schemes should be available for fishers and local communities to allow further adaptation in changing environments. Investments in port infrastructures, training and reskilling subsidies were needed.

The Chair thanked Lardot and Krusche for their presentation and opened the floor for questions. He inquired about whether the number of jobs created could be considered as cumulative.

Lardot confirmed that the number of jobs created could not be considered as cumulative.

The Executive Secretary wished to know if the study concluded on an estimation of number of jobs that were lost.

Lardot responded that the study expected a number of jobs created, she clarified that they however expected the factor of increase to decrease over time.

Solène Prévalet raised a question about the assumptions of ORE deployments in GW used in the study, she noted that the Hamburg declaration had planned 300 GW in the North Sea.

Lardot responded that for 2030, the study used a 60 GW assumption, but that an assumed capacity of 388 GW had been used for 2050.

Krusche took the floor to ask participants how their sector had been impacted by ORE development and whether it was seen as an opportunity or as a threat.

Falke de Sager responded that ORE were seen as a big risk of fisheries. She stressed that objectives in terms of ORE development had been agreed that would limit access to fishing grounds. In addition, fishing grounds were also impacted by the designation of Marine Protected Areas. She regretted





the lack of meaningful stakeholder engagement in Spatial Planning, and the lack of fishing access inside windfarms.

Edward Farrell agreed with de Sager's comments on the lack of effective consultation. He noted the issue in Irish Designation of ORE where renewable developments and MPAs have separate processes despite being discussed within MSP. Fishing was not considered as a constraint in the process as they considered that fishing could be held everywhere.

Prévalet highlighted that fishers were impacted by the reduction of access to fishing grounds but also by the impacts on resource and environments.

De Sager noted that due to the energy crisis, compensation measures were reduced to reach energy sovereignty, highlighting the difference in priority given to ORE development over fisheries.

Krusche welcomed the comments and informed members that the outputs of the study had been circulated to the European Court of Auditors and that a response was expected.

#### 4. Maritime Spatial Planning Revision – Exchange of views to prepare a joint response

The Chair gave the floor to the Executive Secretary to present the state of play of the discussion.

The Executive Secretary noted that the slide had been prepared based on the presentation given by Felix Leinemann during the NWWAC's Horizontal Focus Group. He noted that the MSP revision process was unclear apart from the fact it would be included in the European Ocean Act. He noted that the PelAC and the NWWAC had jointly and separately provided advice to the Commission on this matter and that a new advice could be drafted based on these inputs.

Farrell took the floor to highlight the importance of ensuring that the MSP process is done jointly between all maritime activities and not separately.

Louise Roche responded that the Ocean Act would be built on the revision of MSPD and on an alignment with the MSFD. She noted that the second implementation report of the MSPD would be published at the end of April.

The Executive Secretary suggested that the Secretariat would draft an advice based on the previous list of PelAC, NWWAC and joint advice. The results of the study on the socio-economic impacts of ORE development would also be included in the advice.

Alexandra Philippe noted that the Ocean Act consultation would open soon and that the AC's advice on the act would likely include feedback on the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive as the revision is set to be a key part of the Act. She also highlighted that alignment with MSFD would be sought in the Act and should be part of the discussion. She expressed willingness to work on the drafting of such document.

The Chair agreed with the suggestion from Philippe and closed the agenda item.





## 5. Any Other Business and close of meeting

- UK Stage 4 MPAs and the Crown Estate's work on fisheries data and offshore wind

The Executive Secretary informed members that he had circulated an invitation from DEFRA and the Commission on stage 4 MPAs in the UK and the Crown Estate's work on fisheries data and offshore wind. The meeting invitation has been circulated.

- Irish MPA-Life update

Farrell provided members with a short update on the work of the Irish MAP LIFE project. It is a nine year project with the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment leading it, and with University College Cork, University College Dublin and Galway University involved. The project has been tasked with doing the ecological sensitivity analysis that will feed in the national work. The project will work to include fishing activities layers in the analysis and ensure that the impacts on fisheries are covered. He expects to be able to provide an update on this topic at a later stage.

- NWWAC-PelAC Webinar on the Irish National DMAP and Ecological Sensitivity Analysis

Mo Mathies informed members that a dedicated webinar would be held with the Irish Department on the designation of ORE areas, the Ecological Sensitivity Analysis for the designation of MPAs and an additional presentation on coexistence between fisheries and Renewable energy parks. The date of the webinar would be circulated to members at a later stage.

## 6. Action items

Action No.	Action	Responsible party
1	Send a link to the European Fair transition observatory once made available.	Secretariat
2	Circulate the invitation to the UK Stage 4 MPA meeting	Secretariat
3	Inform the members of the date of the online webinar on the Irish DMAP and Ecological Sensitivity Analysis	Secretariat
4	Plan a presentation of the Latest MSP implementation report once it is published	Secretariat
5	Draft an advice on MSP, MSFD and the Ocean Act based on previous advice and previous presentations	Secretariat





## 7. Meeting participants

First name	Last name	Organisation
Alexandra	Philippe	European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD)
Ana	Silva	FPA
Celine	Frank	European Commission
Chloé	Pocheau	SWWAC
Dominic	Rihan	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation Ltd.
Edward	Farrell	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation Ltd.
Falke	de Sager	BFPO
Gonçalo	Carvalho	Sciaena
Irene	Prieto	ANASOL
Kenatea	Chavez-Hey	ANOP
Louise	Roche	European Commission
Maja	Lardo	Trinomics
Mo	Mathies	NWWAC
Niels-Herman	Osholm Johansen	DFPO
Paul	Thomas	PeIAC
Solène	Prévalet	FROM Nord
Tom	Krusche	DGEMPL

