



NWWAC Minutes

Focus Group Control, Enforcement and Compliance

Tuesday, 31 March 2026

Online on Teams

1. Welcome and introductions

Arthur Yon, Focus Group Vice Chair welcomed the participants. A. Yon chaired the meeting in absence of the FG Chair. Apologies from Patrick Murphy and Geert Meun were received. The agenda was presented and members agreed to change the order of the agenda to address as first topic agenda items 3. The Secretariat displayed a slide outlining the code of conduct for the meeting.

Action points from the last meeting (8 September 2025)

1	Letter to Commission: Agreed to draft a joint AC letter on the legislative stakeholder consultation process. Once the draft advice is ready, NWWAC Secretariat will contact other ACs. Completed.
2	Develop a NWWAC Advice on the Commission Delegated Act, which includes NWWAC recommendations on boarding ladder measures. Completed.
3	Joint AC work: Secretariat to coordinate with PELAC on possible joint advice regarding the implementing act. PelAC was not in the position to contribute to this joint advice. The NWWAC Secretariat then invited Focus Group members to express their interest in drafting it, but no expressions of interest were received. It was therefore decided to abandon the advice.
4	Follow-up workshop: Group to support organisation of a further workshop with control experts, Commission, EFCA, and Member States. In progress.
5	Possible additional meeting: depending on progress with documents, a short extra FG meeting may be convened before advice submission. Not necessary.

2. Open discussion on the challenges that the sector is facing due to the Control Regulation's measures entered into force in 2026

The **Vice Chair** explained that members would have discussed the challenges the sector is facing following the Control Regulation measures that entered into force in 2026. He recalled that the NWWAC Secretariat shared in early January the document titled "NWWAC overview of measures under the Control Regulation coming into force on 10 January 2026". He informed that the discussion would have been structured around the articles referenced in it, and in particular those articles that has been previously suggested priority articles. The Vice Chair invited members to raise any other issue if needed.



Ilaria Bellomo explained that it was essential to have this discussion at that moment, stressing that the outcomes of the exchange would actively contribute to the preparation of the upcoming workshops with both the NWW MS Control Expert Group and the Commissioner's Control Unit. She underlined that gathering participants' views, experiences, and the challenges they encountered was a fundamental step, as these insights would directly feed into the workshop's content and direction. She added that minutes would be taken throughout the meeting and that, once the discussion concluded, they would jointly decide on the most appropriate way to proceed.

- Record catch data for each fishing operations in the e-logbook for vessels >12m (Arts. 14, 15 and 15a)

John Lynch noted that the requirement to record catch data for every single fishing operation was generating significant difficulties on board, especially for skippers working on vessels such as beam trawlers and scallop vessels, which haul far more frequently than others. Even for Nephrops trawlers hauling four times a day, he explained that the obligation represented an excessive burden and was, in his view, disproportionate to operational realities. He described the measure as overly demanding and questioned its purpose, emphasising that it was written in a way that made compliance extremely difficult, if not nearly impossible, for many operators. He recalled that this concern had already been raised during the previous workshop with the Commission and stressed that it should once again be treated as a priority issue during the next discussions.

The **Vice Chair** agreed with the concerns that J. Lynch raised, stating that he shared the view that the requirement was not realistically applicable, particularly for scallop trawling or for any fishing operation occurring at intervals shorter than three hours. He explained that, in many cases, the skipper was needed on deck to assist with sorting the catch, leaving no available time to complete the mandatory electronic entries. He pointed out that this situation could even create safety issues, as spending extended periods behind a computer during intense operational activity could compromise the skipper's ability to supervise the crew and manage the vessel safely. He concluded that the obligation, as currently designed, was impractical and posed operational and safety concerns.

Aodh O'Donnel expressed his full support for the concerns that had already been raised, emphasising that the issue deserved to be firmly challenged. He stated that the requirement created an excessive administrative burden and was simply too difficult to manage in real operating conditions.

Sander Meyns explained that they had already informed the Flemish authorities that per-haul registration was unworkable and unsafe aboard their vessels. In Belgium, he noted, work was actively underway to develop an automatic connection between the on-board scales and the electronic logbook, allowing the system to record the required information without manual data entry from the skipper. He added that the authorities had agreed to introduce a grace period



without penalties until this automated solution became fully operational. He then asked the others about the situation in their respective countries and whether similar automatic links between scale data and the e-logbook were being developed elsewhere.

The **Vice Chair** explained that he had no information regarding similar developments in France. He indicated that he was unsure whether any of his French colleagues had updates on the matter.

A. O'Donnell explained that he also was not aware of this system being implemented in Ireland.

Dominic Rihan explained that he was also unaware of any such developments in Ireland and that no discussions of this kind were taking place with the national control authority. He noted that exchanges with the authority were rarely constructive, as the approach tended to focus solely on enforcing and implementing the regulation as written, without engaging in dialogue on practical solutions or operational challenges.

J. Lynch explained that he had no knowledge of any such initiative being developed in Ireland and confirmed, echoing the previous intervention, that cooperation of this kind was not encouraged by the authorities. He added that they did not have that level of collaboration with their control services, but nevertheless considered that any potential solution was worth examining.

S. Meyns explained that he could prepare a written overview of the work being carried out in Belgium and send it to the Secretariat, as he was convinced that the automated system they were developing offered a genuine solution to the current difficulties. With this system, he noted, the administrative burden for skippers would disappear entirely, since all data recorded by the scales would transfer automatically into the electronic logbook. The only task left to the vessel owner or skipper would be to verify the information, and after twenty-four hours they would simply need to review the details and submit the logbook with a single action. He stressed that, under the current manual per-haul requirements, the process was unworkable, but believed that the automated system could be operational within three months. Until then, he added, Belgium would not impose fines. He then asked whether other countries were already issuing penalties to skippers who were unable to comply with the per-haul data-entry obligation.

The **Vice Chair** indicated that he was not aware of any fines being issued at that stage, noting that it was still early in the implementation process and that there might still be room for authorities to adjust their approach.

D. Rihan acknowledged the proposal and agreed that the automated system described could indeed be an effective solution for larger vessels with sufficient space on board to accommodate the necessary equipment. However, he pointed out that such an approach would not be workable for many smaller vessels, where limited space made the installation of additional systems impractical. He emphasised that, while the Belgian initiative was clearly valuable and likely to resolve many of the existing problems in that specific context, it would not address the challenges faced by the smaller segments of the fleet, which would require alternative solutions.

J. Lynch explained that he fully understood how an automatic link between scales and the electronic logbook could function effectively for catches that were retained on board. However,



he pointed out that the primary purpose of the relevant article of the regulation was linked to discards and the requirement to report last-catch data for discard analysis. He therefore questioned how an automated logbook system would handle information related specifically to discards and asked whether such a system could accommodate this type of reporting. He addressed the question directly to S. Meyns, asking if there was a way for the automated process to capture discard data as well.

S. Meyns noted that he would have needed to check internally and would have come back on this and on the discard issue.

The **Vice Chair** explained that he wished to add a point from the perspective of control authorities, noting that in France they were considering the possibility of requesting exemptions for certain types of fisheries in order to avoid the obligation to record catch data for every fishing operation. He recalled that, as previously discussed, the requirement was not workable for several métiers and that exploring exemptions might offer a more realistic and operationally feasible approach.

Tituan Lecompte added that the difficulty was even greater for passive-gear fisheries, where defining a single fishing operation was far less straightforward. For these métiers, he explained, identifying the precise moment at which one “operation” begins and ends was not always clear, making it extremely challenging to record the required information in the way the regulation demanded.

- Separate stowage of demersal catches subject to multiannual plans (Art. 44)

The **Vice Chair** explained that, in discussions held at the French level, it had become clear that the requirement was not practically applicable, particularly because of the very limited space available on board many vessels. He noted that, for fleets landing twenty to forty species or more, it was extremely difficult to separate catches precisely enough to comply with the per-operation recording requirement. Beyond the logistical constraints, he emphasised that there were also safety considerations, since crews had to maintain vessel stability and could not rearrange catches extensively while at sea. He added that, in some cases, vessels were obliged to return to harbour earlier than planned in order to preserve certain species, leaving even less time and space to perform the detailed sorting required by the regulation. He recalled that the regulation empowered the Commission to adopt delegated acts establishing exemptions for certain diverse stocks. In his view, this presented an opportunity to request that only a minimum, limited number of species be included in the scope of the per-operation reporting obligation. Such an approach, he argued, would help avoid the impracticalities associated with the current article and offer a more workable solution for the fleet.

Franck Le Barzic recalled that forty-five stocks had been identified under the Western Waters Multiannual Plan and noted that this figure clearly demonstrated the impossibility of separating catches to the level required by the regulation. He underlined that an analysis would therefore be



needed to reduce the number of species concerned by the obligation, in line with what had already been discussed. He also noted that the administration also told them that the exemption could apply in the UK waters.

- Weighing of fishery products (Arts. 60 and 60a)

D. Rihan explained that most of the difficulties they were facing related primarily to pelagic fisheries. While the requirement posed challenges across different segments, he noted that the situation was far more problematic for pelagic species than for demersal ones. He described the extent of the issue, pointing out that problems connected to marginal-tolerance rules and weighing obligations at landing sites were already well documented. The sector was dealing with multiple summonses issued against various vessels, alongside pending court cases and appeals, which collectively created a highly complex and disruptive environment. He highlighted that, in practice, fishers in Ireland were being instructed to record figures that did not reflect the actual catches, as a direct consequence of the way the rules had been implemented nationally. This had resulted in a situation that he characterised as chaotic and deeply problematic. He reiterated, however, that these major difficulties were concentrated mainly in the pelagic fleet rather than in the demersal sector.

J. Lynch explained that one of the issues currently affecting vessels concerned the obligation to record catches below fifty kilos and the implications this had for the margin of tolerance. Previously, he noted, small quantities of five or ten kilos did not need to be entered in the logbook as a separate catch. Although these amounts still had to be included in the landing declaration and were deducted from the vessel's quota, they were not subject to the margin of tolerance requirements, since they did not appear as individual entries in the logbook. He pointed out that the new approach was generating difficulties and had the potential to create significantly more problems because of the ten-percent tolerance rule. Including these very small quantities in the logbook meant that they now fell under the margin-of-tolerance calculations, which placed vessels at risk of non-compliance for discrepancies that had previously been irrelevant. He stressed that this shift was already causing complications and could escalate into a major issue if not addressed.

A. O'Donnell explained that the main difficulties they were encountering in the pelagic sector related not only to weighing requirements but also to the sampling procedures currently in place. He noted that they were working with the control agency to bring the matter back to EFCA, with the aim of having those sampling procedures revised and adjusted to something more realistic and workable for the fleet. He added that another important focus was the effort to move towards a census-based weighing system, where records would rely on the actual packed-out weights rather than on sampling. The current sampling-based system, he emphasised, produced inaccurate results and therefore needed to be replaced with a method reflecting real quantities.



The **Vice Chair** added that similar difficulties also existed within the demersal fleet, particularly for shellfish. He explained that these species naturally lose a significant amount of water between the moment they are caught and the following day, resulting in a weight loss of around ten percent. This inherent loss created major complications for applying strict weighing and tolerance rules, since the discrepancy was not related to inaccurate reporting but simply to natural dehydration, making compliance extremely difficult under the current regulatory framework.

A. O'Donnel explained that certain provisions of the current system resulted in the destruction of products, particularly when frozen-at-sea fish had to be defrosted in order to comply with sampling requirements. He stressed that the sampling plans needed to be adapted to account for this issue, as the existing procedures were not suitable for products that were frozen on board and risked compromising both product quality and the economic value of the catch.

- The implementation of the CATCH system (Arts. From 12a to 12e)

The **Vice Chair** explained he aimed to move quickly on the issue, as it had already been discussed extensively across several Advisory Councils, particularly within the MAC, where it had become clear that the catch-certificate system created a substantial administrative burden for all involved. He noted that, more recently, there had been indications – at least in France – that Producer Organisations might soon be authorised to act under a power of attorney from operators, allowing them to sign certain documents on their behalf for exports to the UK, for example. He described this as a positive development, even though it was not yet in place and no timeline had been formally confirmed. Nonetheless, he expressed hope that such authorisation would be granted as soon as possible.

S. Meyns explained that in Flanders they were working on a system similar to the one being developed in France, and noted that the Netherlands was already applying such an approach. He said that information sessions were currently being organised for vessel owners, during which they could complete the necessary registrations together with the authorities, as the TRACES and catch-certificate procedures were quite complex. Under this system, each buyer had to be approved once by the vessel owner, after which the administrative process became straightforward and no longer posed difficulties. He added that two more information sessions were scheduled for that week, with the aim of having the entire fleet registered. Given that Flanders counted only fifty-five vessels, he considered the process manageable and anticipated having a clearer picture the following week of whether all vessels had successfully completed their registration. He also asked how the registration is going in France and he noted that he heard that in Netherlands is going quite well.

The **Vice Chair** explained that, in the case of his Producer Organisation, progress would inevitably be slower, as all 150 members first needed to create their individual accounts and then establish the necessary link with the PO. He noted that, given this requirement, the system was unlikely to



become fully operational in the near future, even if he still hoped it might advance more quickly than expected. He then turned to the Irish representatives to ask whether they had any updates regarding the system or whether they were facing similar issues.

D. Rihan acknowledged that there were many issues in Ireland as well, but explained that, given the way Irish Producer Organisations functioned and how the national quota system was structured, the situation there was quite different from what was being developed in Belgium, the Netherlands, or France. He noted that Ireland was still far from implementing anything comparable. In his view, the main difficulties arising from the catch-certificate system would fall more heavily on cooperatives, processors, and buyers rather than on POs, simply because of the way responsibilities were distributed within the Irish system. He added that this did not mean Ireland would avoid the challenges faced elsewhere; on the contrary, he was certain that the same problems reported in other countries would also emerge in Ireland, particularly given the volume of products exported to and through the UK. He anticipated that this would likely lead to numerous complications. However, because Irish POs were not directly involved in most buying and selling activities, they had less visibility over these operational processes and therefore encountered or observed fewer day-to-day difficulties compared with other countries' POs.

T. Lecompte explained that in France work was underway on the possibility of introducing an omnibus regulation that would allow certain targeted modifications to be made to the Control Regulation. He noted that the intention was to concentrate on a few key elements, such as the requirements related to separate storage on board and the rules concerning the transmission of landing declarations. These were identified as particularly important points that could benefit from clarification or adjustment within the broader framework of control measures.

- Serious infringements (Arts. 89a, 90, 91, 91a, 91b)

D. Rihan warned that, with respect to serious infringements – particularly those linked to the marginal-tolerance rules – Ireland was heading toward a situation in which multiple vessels would end up tied to the quay. He explained that the tolerance system was nearly impossible to comply with, especially for pelagic vessels, although demersal fleets were also increasingly affected. As a result, he anticipated that a significant proportion of the Irish fleet could face penalty points leading to immobilisation. He described this prospect as deeply concerning, noting that if the intention of the regulation was to create such outcomes, it would be a regrettable direction for the sector. He added that the current list of serious infringements had become so expansive that almost any action could be considered a major violation, leaving operators in an untenable position.



- Other challenges

D. Rihan asked how the new gear-marking requirements were being applied in France and Belgium, noting that the regulation now obliged operators to mark pots, trawls, dredges, and multiple components of the gear, including buoys and ropes. He remarked that it was difficult to understand the underlying purpose of these provisions, which were generally presented as measures linked to waste management and recycling. Using the example of larger crab vessels – which could deploy up to 50,000 pots – he stressed that the regulation would require an equivalent number of tags to be attached to gear already in the water. He pointed out that even for vessels using fewer pots, such as 3,000, the cumulative cost of tagging could be extremely high, given that a single tag could cost around five euros. He added that the situation became even more problematic because gear loss was inevitable, meaning that vessels would automatically fall into non-compliance as soon as tags detached or disappeared. This would expose operators to serious infringements once again, further compounding the difficulties associated with the regulation. He therefore described the implementation of these gear-marking obligations as unrealistic and disproportionate. While one might argue that the objectives relating to recycling or traceability were understandable, the practical implications for fleets were unreasonable. He asked whether these requirements were already being enforced in Belgium or France, noting that although no such cases had yet occurred in Ireland, the issue was expected to arise shortly and would undoubtedly create significant challenges.

A. Philippe intervened to clarify that she did not have any specific information to contribute on the implementation of the gear-marking rules, but wished to ask whether operators did not already have an obligation to mark their fishing gear under the Single-Use Plastics Directive, or whether this requirement existed only within the framework of the Control Regulation.

D. Rihan clarified that the gear-marking requirement he was referring to was an additional obligation introduced under the new Control Regulation and not something that had previously been required. He assumed that it might be linked to the Single-Use Plastics Directive, but noted that the connection was unclear. He reiterated that, while one could understand the environmental objective behind such measures, the practical implementation remained extremely difficult to justify. He stressed the obligation to mark every cut end and multiple components of the gear placed an excessive and disproportionate burden on vessel owners. Although not every part of a net had to be tagged, the scope of what did need to be marked was so extensive that the overall requirement became unworkable. He reiterated that he struggled to understand the purpose of imposing such a demanding system, especially when far simpler and more practical approaches could achieve the same objectives without imposing such non-practical obligations. He explained that whenever these concerns were raised, there was rarely any acknowledgement of the practical difficulties involved. He recalled that long-standing regulations on buoy marking had already been a source of concern, and these had been discussed repeatedly, both within Advisory Councils and at national level. He noted that the legally required buoys themselves posed significant risks, as they were unwieldy and dangerous to handle. He mentioned that there had even been cases in Spain where crew members had been



lost overboard while working with these buoys, underscoring the serious safety implications of the current rules. Complying with the legislation, he stressed, was not only unsafe but also extremely costly, particularly when vessels had to construct or modify equipment to meet the regulatory specifications. He concluded by emphasising that there was never any real dialogue with the industry on the practical implications of these gear-marking requirements. He explained that measures were simply introduced by control authorities without meaningful consultation, leaving operators to deal with obligations that were unworkable, unsafe, or disproportionately costly. In his view, this was yet another example of how the system had gone wrong, imposing rules that failed to reflect the operational realities of the fleet.

S. Meys explained that, in Belgium, the structural gear-marking obligations would apply from January 2027, including the specific requirements just mentioned regarding the need to mark every seam or segment of each trawl with the vessel's registration letters and number. He added that Belgium expected to begin working on the national implementation of these rules during the second half of 2026. Given the scale and impracticality of the obligations, he suggested that it would certainly be possible for the NWWAC to issue a collective statement highlighting that these requirements were unfeasible in practice, noting that such a step would be well justified.

The **Vice Chair** proposed to consider this issue as an action point and to develop a related NWWAC advice.

3. Discussion on the recent NWWAC Advice and Commission responses

Similarly to what Patrick Murphy presented during the recent Horizontal Working Group meeting in Brussels, the Vice Chair outlined the latest NWWAC advice on control and the Commission's response. The Vice Chair invited members to express their views and feedback.

- [Joint NWWAC, PeIAC and NSAC Advice on the implementation of the EU Fisheries Control Regulation \(23.05.2026\)](#) / [Commission response to Joint NWWAC, PeIAC and NSAC Advice on the implementation of the Control Regulation \(05/02/2026\)](#)

No direct response to the Multi-AC queries to DG MARE following workshop on 20 February. According to the Commission a clerical error occurred which meant their system showed this correspondence to have been sent in November last year, but nothing was received by the three ACs.

In their reply, the Vice Chair noted that it is worth highlighting again that the Commission confirms that the detailed advice, covering: compliance risk assessment, harmonised REM measures, electronic reporting, small-scale fisheries tracking, infringements, landings and weighing protocols, Margin of Tolerance, engine power monitoring, EMFAF accessibility, Article 44 on demersal catch separation – was considered in drafting the delegated and implementing acts adopted before January 2026. The Commission also highlighted the February 2025 workshop as



a very useful example of collaboration to solve implementation challenges, and express openness to a second joint AC workshop organised in the same format.

I. Bellomo highlighted that, regarding the AC request for a consolidated version of the revised Fisheries Control Regulation, the Commission – in their response – clarified that: it is not within the Commission’s mandate to prepare it, the responsibility lies with the Council Secretariat and the Publications Office, the next official consolidation update is expected in 2026 after new provisions enter into force. She noted that the consolidate update entered into force on 10 January.

D. Rihan asked whether any progress had been made regarding the organisation of a meeting or workshop with the Member States’ Control Expert Group. He recalled that the Commission regularly insisted that stakeholders should liaise with their Member States, yet the functioning and visibility of this group of control experts remained unclear. He therefore sought clarification on whether any steps had been taken to establish contact or to advance the organisation of a dedicated workshop with this group, given the important role it was supposed to play.

Mo Mathies provided a brief update, explaining that the PelAC Secretariat was currently handling the matter. She said that contact had been established with the French representatives in the Member States group, as France held the presidency of the South Western Waters Member States Group. The intention, she noted, was to organise the workshop either jointly with, or back-to-back with, the meeting of the South Western Waters Advisory Council, which was planned to take place in Paris in May or possibly June, with the precise date still to be confirmed. She added that EFCA was involved in the process and that communication had also taken place with Susan Steele. She concluded by saying that they hoped to have more concrete information soon, but for the moment there were no further updates.

J. Lynch recalled that, in the Commission’s reply, it had been suggested that another workshop could be organised, and he stressed that this opportunity should not be overlooked. In his view, the Advisory Council needed to proceed with such a meeting, even if it were held online, because failing to do so might give the impression that no issues remained. He noted that, during the previous workshop, the Commission had not acknowledged any of the concerns raised, despite the numerous points brought forward on the day. He added that none of those concerns appeared to have been reflected in either the implementing or delegated acts. For this reason, he felt it was essential to reiterate the difficulties posed by the Control Regulation through a further direct exchange with the Commission.

I. Bellomo outlined the ongoing plans for two workshops: the first with the Control Expert Groups of both the North Western Waters and the South Western Waters, as previously mentioned, and the second mirroring the workshop organised the previous year with the Commission’s Control Unit. She noted that work on the organisation of these events was progressing, but that timing had become a significant obstacle. She recalled that M. Mathies had contacted the Commission to arrange a full-day workshop, possibly in May, but the Commission had indicated that such timing could not be accommodated. As a result, the Control Unit was now attempting to organise



the workshop back-to-back with the next Inter-AC meeting, which was likely to take place in July. The workshop would again be held jointly with the other Advisory Councils and would follow a structure similar to that used in the session held in February of the previous year.

M. Mathies expressed clear frustration with the situation, explaining that despite repeated commitments from the Commission, the organisation of the workshop had made no real progress. Although the Control Unit had initially indicated willingness to move forward, it later confirmed that it could not allocate a full day and would offer only a half-day session, which she found highly disappointing given that all Advisory Councils wished to participate more actively than the previous year. She noted that such limited time would not allow for meaningful discussion, especially as some ACs required dedicated slots for their own issues. She clarified the coordination was being carried out almost entirely by the Advisory Councils. The main obstacle was the difficulty of aligning the schedules of the Commissioner and the Director-General, which had prevented confirmation of a date for both the ACs meeting and the Control Workshop. She had already informed them of the need to avoid the 6–8 July period due to NWWAC meetings. She added that interpretation arrangements remained uncertain, and no formal date had been proposed. However, the Control Unit had asked the ACs to prepare a consolidated list of topics for discussion, similar to the process used the previous year. She stressed that none of the detailed questions submitted after the last workshop had ever received a response, and this issue would need to be raised again. She concluded by saying that the Secretariat was doing everything possible to secure the workshop, but that progress now depended entirely on the Commission’s senior management. In the meantime, the ACs needed to finalise their questions so they would be ready once a date was finally set.

A. Philippe offered a reflection on how the Advisory Council might approach its discussions on control, noting that these issues were repeatedly raised and that fishers continued to experience significant difficulties. She recalled that, whenever the Commissioner was asked about possible adjustments, the response tended to be that the Control Regulation had already been under discussion for five years and could no longer be reopened. In her view, this should not deter the Advisory Councils from requesting revisions or small amendments where necessary. She suggested that, listening to the difficulties surrounding the organisation of the workshop, it might be useful to distinguish between two categories of issues: those that required adjustments at the implementation level, and those that stemmed from fundamental problems in the wording of the regulation itself. She acknowledged that if most of the concerns indeed originated from the regulation, then pursuing amendments would clearly remain essential. However, for the workshop with DG MARE, the focus was likely to be more on implementation rather than on changes to the legal text, as regulatory amendments fell more within the remit of the Commissioner’s cabinet. To ensure that the workshop produced concrete and useful outcomes, she stressed that the Advisory Councils should be well prepared to address implementation challenges and propose solutions that would help make the regulation workable in practice. This, she explained, was the line of thought she wished to share. She added that supporting an omnibus regulation might indeed be worthwhile but emphasised that this was only one aspect of the problem. At present, she said, there were vessels facing immediate difficulties, and it was



important to identify what could be improved through implementation measures in the short term. She believed the workshop could play a crucial role in addressing these practical issues and helping to find workable solutions for the fleet. She encouraged the group to distinguish clearly between what required legislative change and what could be resolved through better implementation, noting that any operational solutions that could be put forward would be valuable. She also admitted feeling somewhat pessimistic about the prospect of reopening or amending the regulation after so many years of negotiation, but stressed that this made it all the more important to focus on what could realistically be achieved now.

D. Rihan replied that he agreed fully with Alexandra’s remarks. While the group could spend endless time trying to address issues through implementation tweaks, the core difficulties stemmed directly from the regulation itself. All problems observed in the implementing and delegated acts, he explained, arose from flaws already embedded in the main regulatory text. If any meaningful progress was to be made, those fundamental elements would need to be changed. He added that the Commission would continue to respond with the argument that the regulation had taken six or seven years to negotiate and could not be reopened, a line they had heard repeatedly. Nonetheless, he felt Alexandra’s point remained entirely valid: the regulation itself required correction if the sector was ever to move forward.

I. Bellomo added that they would then try once again to get in touch with the Commission and possibly with DG MARE AC to determine the best way to organise the workshop. At the same time, she noted that the workshop with the Commission would involve the other Advisory Councils as well, meaning that they would also need to consider how to structure their own contribution and whether the approach they intended to take would need to be followed or coordinated with the other ACs.

M. Mathies intervened again to clarify that, once the workshop was finally confirmed, its content would need to be agreed jointly by all Advisory Councils and the Commission. She noted that this would be a fairly complex exercise, as all issues would have to be consolidated and fitted into the limited time available — three and a half hours if the LDAC was allocated the half-hour it had requested. She explained that she had already begun gathering points from the other ACs and encouraged the group to start compiling the items they wished to raise, so that a coherent structure could be prepared in advance. Many of the concerns discussed within this group, she added, were shared across the other ACs, meaning that the process would resemble the MIAC exercise, where positions had to be aligned collectively, with some matters possibly being included instead in a written submission. She stressed that one point that must be raised during the workshop was the fact that, following the previous session, the Commission had invited written questions but had never responded to any of them.



- [NWWAC Advice on the Commission Delegated Regulation of 27.8.2025 related to Control Regulation and on Boarding Ladder Safety and Material Standards provisions \(16.10.2025\)](#)

Response received in form of an email text (18/02/2026): *“Concerning your advice in October on the Delegated Act, we are grateful for the observations provided, as the views from operators are valued. Please note that the draft act was open for feedback during the summer of 2025, adopted by the Commission in August, and subsequently published in November 2025 following scrutiny by the European Parliament. By the time your advice was received, the procedure was at a very advanced stage and the act had been adopted.”*

The Vice Chair noted that the response in this format is not sufficient, and we require a more formal reply in the usual document form.

I. Bellomo clarified the sequence of events regarding the advice submitted on 16 October, explaining that what was most important was not the submission date itself but the content of the advice. She recalled that the Advisory Council had taken the feedback provided by Member Organisations to the Commissioner and compared it with the first draft of the delegated act published by the Commission. This comparison was included in the advice and showed clearly that most of the points raised by stakeholders had not been taken into account in the delegated act. For this reason, when the Commission responded by email stating that the Advisory Council’s advice had not been considered, her understanding was that the Commission had also not taken into account the feedback originally provided by the organisations directly to them. She emphasised that this was an important point to highlight, even though the advice had been submitted on 16 October, after the delegated act had already been published. She added that another key element of the advice concerned the boarding letter, which again had not been considered in the Commission’s Delegated Regulation.

- [Joint ACs Letter "Towards improved consultation with Advisory Councils and stakeholders on Control Regulation" \(03/11/2025\)](#) / [Commission response to Joint ACs Letter "Towards improved consultation with Advisory Councils and stakeholders on Control Regulation" \(05/02/2026\)](#)

The Vice Chair explained that, according to the Commission, a clerical error occurred in relation to this document, meaning that the Commission system showed this correspondence to have been sent in November last year, but nothing was received by the NWWAC. In addition, the response was then sent out only to the NWWAC excluding the other 5 undersigning ACs. The NWWAC Secretariat have notified the Commission of this error and contacted all involved ACs with this response. The NWWAC Secretariat then received a response from the Commission that an update is not necessary, thus the NWWAC uploaded on website the response as it is.

The Vice Chair then noted that in their response, the Commission encourages ACs to provide concrete ideas or operational experiences regarding practical aspects such as timing, costs, and implementation challenges. They specifically mention the successful multi-AC workshop of



February 2025, and express willingness to repeat similar formats. For efficiency and better use of resources, the Commission encourages joint AC meetings/workshops to gather input more effectively

4. Discussion on the next steps

This point has been addressed in agenda item 3.

5. AOB: Approval of the Terms of Reference

Members reviewed and approved the updated Terms of Reference.

6. Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

1	FG members to provide the Secretariat with any additional input following the discussion held during the meeting.
2	FG members to develop advice on the challenges related to the marking of gears.
3	Secretariat to prepare the meeting minutes and compile the key points and challenges identified, to inform the two upcoming workshops — one with the MS Control Expert Group and one with the DG MARE Control Unit.
4	Secretariat and FG members to continue engaging with the NWW MS Control Expert Group and the DG MARE Control Unit regarding the organisation of the two workshops.

The Vice Chair concluded the meeting, thanking the FG members for their participation and the Secretariat.

Participants

NWWAC members		
Franck	Le Barzic	OP COBRENORD
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Dominic	Rihan	KFO
Alexandra	Philippe	EBCD
Irene	Prieto	OPPF4
Arthur	Yon	FROM Nord
NWWAC Secretariat		
Ilaria	Bellomo	Fisheries Strategy & Administration Officer
Mo	Mathies	Executive Secretary