



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

North Western Waters Advisory Council

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

2026



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

1. Introduction to NWWAC & purpose of the Communication Strategy Document

The North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC) is a representative and legitimate European Union (EU) fisheries stakeholder body, legally recognised as an organisation pursuing an objective of general European interest. Established in Ireland in 2005 under the framework of the 2002 Common Fisheries Policy, the NWWAC's core mission is to bring together stakeholders from across five EU Countries – Belgium, France, Ireland, Spain, the Netherlands – to advise the European Commission (EC) on fisheries management issues concerning the North Western Waters (NWW) – ICES areas VI and VII.¹

The NWWAC regularly issues advice, either on its own initiative or in response to requests from the EC and relevant Member States (MS), covering all matters related to fisheries management. It serves as an open forum for dialogue between the fishing sector, including both industrial and small-scale fleets, as well as representatives from the catching, processing, and trade union sectors, and other interest groups (OIGs) such as environmental NGOs, consumer representatives, recreational anglers, and wider civil society.²

The NWWAC is designed to balance broad stakeholder participation with effective decision-making. All members form part of the General Assembly (GA), which meets annually and appoints the Executive Committee (ExCom). The ExCom oversees the organisation's work, coordinates the advisory process, and approves all recommendations submitted to the EC and MS. To address the complexity of the NWW region, the NWWAC operates through three geographically focused Working Groups, each covering specific ICES areas. These enable targeted stakeholder engagement and technical input in the preparation of area-specific advice. For more complex or cross-cutting issues, temporary Focus Groups are established to carry out in-depth analysis. The NWWAC functions in three official languages – English, French and Spanish – and is supported by a Secretariat responsible for coordinating members' work and providing operational and administrative assistance.³

As an advisory body to the EC and the MS, the NWWAC is a central point in the communication between stakeholders and fisheries managers. The NWWAC engages pro-actively with its target audiences to provide relevant and expedient information in an efficient manner.

This document outlines a strategy to ensure that any communication activity is aligned with the objectives of the NWWAC. As a living document, the communication strategy will clarify the organisation's priorities, target audiences, and resources and be revised and updated periodically, following approval by the ExCom.

¹ The NWWAC is one of eleven EU Advisory Councils (ACs). Find out more about how the Advisory Councils work: <https://youtu.be/2-n6qCBknHo>

² Find out more about NWWAC membership: <https://www.nwwac.org/about-nwwrac/membership.1608.html>

³ Find out more about the NWWAC Structure: <https://www.nwwac.org/about-nwwrac/structure.1607.html>

2. Purpose, Vision and added value of the NWWAC

Mission

The NWWAC brings together representatives from the fisheries sector and other interest groups to provide balanced, evidence-based advice to the European Commission and Member States on the sustainable management of fisheries in the North Western Waters.

Vision

Participatory, sustainable, and fair fisheries management that considers long-term environmental, economic, and social needs.

Organisational Objectives

- To facilitate constructive dialogue between the fishing industry, civil society, scientists, and policymakers.
- To deliver timely and relevant technical and policy recommendations on fisheries management.
- To ensure broad and inclusive stakeholder participation across the North Western Waters region.
- To support the effective implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy through stakeholder-led advice.

Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

Through inclusive participation and a collaborative approach, the NWWAC delivers high-quality, consensus-driven advice that directly informs EU fisheries policy and contributes to sustainable marine resource management.

Value Proposition

The NWWAC is the only EU-recognised body that provides structured, consensus-based advice from a balanced membership representing both the fisheries sector and other stakeholder interests in the North Western Waters.

3. Communications objectives

The communications objectives of the NWWAC are designed to support and reflect its overarching mission, vision, and organisational goals. They provide a framework to ensure clear, consistent, and strategic messaging that reinforces the NWWAC's role as a trusted and representative advisory body in EU fisheries policy. These objectives are divided into primary and secondary categories and encompass both external and internal communications.

Primary Communications Objectives

These high-level goals align closely with the NWWAC's mission and strategic purpose. NWWAC communications will:

- **Support stakeholder-inclusive decision-making** by ensuring that NWWAC advice is clearly communicated, visible, and accessible to EU institutions, Member States, and the broader policy community.
- **Reinforce the legitimacy and credibility** of the NWWAC as an evidence-based, balanced, and representative advisory body.
- **Promote transparency** in the development and delivery of advice, making processes and outputs understandable and available to a wide audience; as well as servicing the above goal of underscoring and promoting legitimacy.
- **Strengthen members' and stakeholder engagement** by actively encouraging participation from members and a diverse range of actors, including underrepresented groups.
- **Position the NWWAC as a thought leader** in collaborative fisheries governance, sustainability, and stakeholder dialogue.

Secondary Communications Objectives

These operational goals support the delivery of the primary objectives and ensure effective day-to-day communication:

- **Enhance internal communication** between members, Working Groups, Focus Groups, and the Executive Committee to facilitate efficient information flow and collaboration.
- **Improve visibility and outreach** through clear, timely updates on the website, newsletters, and digital platforms.
- **Build recognition and understanding** of the NWWAC's unique role among external stakeholders, including new members, media, academia, and the general public.
- **Ensure consistent branding and messaging** across all communication channels and materials.
- **Support knowledge exchange** by promoting events, publications, and cross-sector dialogue, both within and beyond the fisheries community.

Interrelation between internal and external communication

For an organisation such as the NWWAC, internal and external communication objectives are strongly interconnected. Clear and timely internal communication underpins the production of credible, well-informed advice, which in turn strengthens the NWWAC's external voice. Similarly, feedback and developments from the external environment must be effectively shared and discussed internally to inform the work programme and stakeholder priorities.

4. Our target audiences

The NWWAC engages with a range of audiences, each with specific roles, interests, and information needs. Effective communication depends on understanding these differences and tailoring messages accordingly. While all stakeholders are important, for the purposes of strategic communications, audiences are broadly divided into **primary** and **secondary** groups based on their level of engagement and influence on the NWWAC's core work.

Primary Audiences

These groups are most directly involved in the functioning and impact of the NWWAC and are therefore the priority for communication efforts.

NWWAC Members	As both contributors and recipients of the NWWAC's work, members are central to its success. Communication aims to inform, engage, and encourage active participation in meetings, consultations, and advice development. Members need clear, timely, and accessible information about work programmes, opportunities for input, and outcomes of their contributions.
European Commission (DG MARE)	As a key recipient of NWWAC advice, the Commission requires communications that are evidence-based, relevant, and well-structured. The primary objective is to demonstrate the legitimacy, added value, and technical quality of the NWWAC's consensus-based recommendations.
NWW Member States Group	Member States play a critical role in EU fisheries governance and are direct users of NWWAC advice. Communications should foster trust, ensure transparency of process, and highlight the relevance and timeliness of the advice provided.

Secondary Audiences

These stakeholders are important for broader influence, visibility, and collaboration, though they are less directly involved in the core advisory process.

Scientific Bodies	Including ICES and other research institutions, these organisations contribute to and benefit from the scientific foundation of NWWAC advice. Communication should focus on promoting data exchange, clarifying stakeholder perspectives, and identifying areas for collaboration, where fishers' local knowledge is valued and considered.
Other Advisory Councils	As peer organisations, other ACs are important partners in shared challenges, joint advice, and knowledge exchange. Communication with them should promote consistency, alignment, and coordination, particularly on cross-cutting issues.



European Parliament	While not a direct recipient of advice, the Parliament plays a key role in shaping EU fisheries policy. Communication should aim to raise awareness of the NWWAC's work, demonstrate the value of stakeholder-led advice, and build recognition among MEPs.
EFCA	EFCA (European Fisheries Control Agency) is a relevant institutional stakeholder in enforcement and control matters. Communications should be technical, focused, and coordinated around shared topics of interest such as compliance and joint operations.
General Public and Civil Society	Although not the primary audience, increased transparency and public visibility can enhance the legitimacy and accountability of the NWWAC. Communication here should be accessible, informative, and demonstrate the NWWAC's contribution to sustainable fisheries management and inclusive governance.

5. Methods

5.1 Email Communication

Email remains the primary tool for direct communication with NWWAC members and key institutional contacts. It ensures timely delivery of meeting invitations, agendas, draft advice, consultation and approval procedures, and key updates. Members contacts are organised in different distribution lists according to the role they have (GA or ExCom member) and the group they are part of (working groups, focus groups, etc.). In this way, the message can reach a specific target audience who holds a stake in the information communicated or has to be involved in a consultation. This method is particularly important for maintaining structured communication with the European Commission, Member States, scientific bodies, and Working Group participants.

Key strengths:

- Direct, reliable and widely accessible
- Supports formal documentation and record-keeping
- Crucial for internal coordination and consultation processes

5.2 Meetings

Meetings are a core method for facilitating structured dialogue, knowledge exchange, and consensus-building within the NWWAC. The organisation holds three main rounds of annual meetings, including the geographic Working Groups, the Horizontal Working Group and Executive Committee, one meeting of the General Assembly, as well as additional ad hoc meetings depending on the needs of Focus Groups. These are chaired by the relevant groups' Chairs and Vice-Chairs, with logistical and administrative support provided by the Secretariat.

Interpretation is routinely offered during the main annual meetings to ensure inclusiveness across the NWWAC's three working languages (English, French, and Spanish). For other face-to-face meetings, interpretation may be arranged subject to funding availability and venue capacity.

Given the wide geographic distribution and busy schedules of members, scheduling in-person meetings can be challenging. To improve accessibility and frequency, the NWWAC makes regular use of online formats such as webinars, adapting also to the post-pandemic scenario.

Key strengths:

- Enabling inclusive, transparent dialogue and decision-making
- Supporting relationship- and trust-building among stakeholders
- Facilitating technical discussions and consensus on advice
- Webinars offer flexible, cost-effective alternatives to in-person meetings

5.3 Website (www.nwwac.org)

The NWWAC website serves as the central hub for information, document access, transparency, and visibility. It hosts meeting documents (minutes, presentations), advice papers, public consultations, organisational information (i.e., meeting date, time, venue, agenda), and multilingual content in English, French, and Spanish. All this information is regularly updated by the Secretariat, who also notifies members when a new document is uploaded.

Key strengths:

- Public-facing, accessible 24/7 and always updated to ensure relevant and transparent information
- Supporting transparency, trust, and accountability
- Valuable for general public, media, new stakeholders, and institutional partners
- Enables archiving and open access to NWWAC outputs

5.4 Monthly Update

The Monthly Update is a regular communication tool that keeps members informed and engaged. Issued at the end of each month since December 2019, it provides a concise summary of ongoing and upcoming NWWAC activities. Distributed as a PDF (with other formats under consideration), it is available in the three official NWWAC languages: English, French, and Spanish.

Content includes:

- Correspondence updates with the European Commission, Member States Group, European Parliament, and scientific bodies
- Overviews of recent and upcoming meetings, including participant lists and open calls for expressions of interest
- Status of pending actions and advice under development
- Links to relevant reports, studies, or stakeholder initiatives

Key strengths:

- Maintaining regular, structured engagement with members
- Keeping members informed and involved through a concise, accessible format
- Enhancing transparency and coordination across activities
- Encouraging participation through clear calls to action (e.g. surveys, registrations)
- Reinforcing a sense of community and shared purpose among stakeholders
- Providing a comprehensive overview of organisational activity in a single, easy-to-navigate document

5.5 LinkedIn

The NWWAC opened a dedicated LinkedIn page in March 2025. As a professional social media platform, LinkedIn is used to raise awareness of NWWAC activities, share advice and events, and promote the organisation's role in EU fisheries governance. It is a growing channel for reaching broader policy audiences, peer organisations, NGOs, academics, and potential new members.

Key strengths:

- Extending NWWAC visibility beyond its core audience
- Enhancing engagement with other Advisory Councils, civil society, and the European Parliament
- Supporting credibility and professional image of the organisation
- Allowing tracking and analytics for reach and engagement

5.6 WhatsApp Group

The NWWAC WhatsApp group serves as a rapid and informal communication channel for members, allowing timely updates, reminders, and exchange of information related to meetings, documents, and ongoing activities. The group is managed by the Secretariat and members can receive messages instantly but do not post in the group, ensuring clarity and consistency in communication.

Key strengths:

- Immediate and direct communication with members, complementing formal channels such as email and the website, and preventing information overload or miscommunication
- Facilitates quick clarification and coordination on meetings, documents, or urgent developments
- Supports engagement and awareness among members in a simple, accessible format



5.7 Methods summary

Method	Purpose	Key Audiences	Strengths
Email	Direct delivery of information, draft advice documents, invitations, and consultations.	NWWAC members, European Commission, Member States, scientists.	Timely, formal, widely used, essential for coordination and consultation.
Meetings	Enable dialogue, discussion, and consensus-building across the membership.	Members, institutional partners.	Facilitates interaction, decision-making, trust-building; face-to-face or online; interpretation possible.
Website	Central hub for public information, document access, transparency.	General public, members, institutions, media, potential stakeholders.	Permanent, accessible, multilingual, transparent, supports trust and visibility.
Monthly Update	Regular digest of NWWAC activities, open calls, events, and news.	Members, observers, institutional partners, extended network.	Engaging, consistent, easy to read, encourages ongoing participation and awareness.
LinkedIn	Promote activities, raise awareness, reach broader policy and stakeholder audiences.	Other ACs, NGOs, European Parliament, academics, wider civil society.	Professional reach, enhances visibility and legitimacy, analytics available.
WhatsApp Group	Facilitates quick clarification and coordination	NWWAC members	Supports engagement and awareness among members in a simple, accessible format

6. Campaigns and Tactical Communications

• The “NWWAC Member Spotlight Campaign”⁴

The NWWAC Secretariat has launched on 14 November 2025 a Member Spotlight Campaign showcase on LinkedIn the work and commitment of NWWAC members. Through a series of LinkedIn posts, the goal is to present short profiles of our member organisations, highlighting not only their role within the NWWAC but also the important work they do and their commitment to the sustainable management of fisheries resources in the North Western Waters. This initiative aims to increase public awareness of the NWWAC’s mission, strengthen understanding of the diverse expertise within our Advisory Council, and recognise the collective efforts of our

⁴ Example: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7440019509253677056> ; <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7432791767672000512>



members in promoting responsible and sustainable fisheries both across the EU and in the NWWAC remit areas. The information was collected through a short questionnaire prepared using Google Forms, available in English, French, and Spanish. Responses could be submitted in any of these three languages.

In addition to regular communication activities and to the Member Spotlight Campaign, tailored communication campaigns may be required for major events, significant milestones, or priority topics. These campaigns will be planned, assessed, and developed on a case-by-case basis to ensure the most appropriate approach, timing, and level of visibility depending on the scale, relevance, and impact of the specific initiative.

- **ICES TAC Advice Overview for the North Western Waters Area:**

A key tool developed by the NWWAC Secretariat in early 2026 to help members monitor changes in ICES advice for stocks of relevance to the North Western Waters region over time. By bringing together current and previous advice in a clear and accessible format, the tool allows users to quickly identify trends, compare annual recommendations, and better understand the scientific basis underpinning fisheries management decisions. Beyond supporting members' technical work, the overview also strengthens communication by making complex scientific information easier to access, interpret, and share with stakeholders, thereby promoting greater transparency and informed discussions throughout the advice.

6.1 Headline messages

Feedback from the NWWAC Members (Source: Member Spotlight Campaign on LinkedIn)

The NWWAC is a key component of EBCD's work, as it provides a platform where the fisheries sector and the conservation community come together to find common ground. This reflects the very core of EBCD's vision — to seek compromise and avoid unnecessary polarisation. EBCD is therefore highly appreciative of the NWWAC's efforts to promote science-based decision-making and stakeholder engagement, both of which lie at the heart of EBCD's mission. – EBCD

The NWWAC gives us the opportunity to make the voice of producers heard by the European Commission in a formal setting and also allows us to discuss fisheries management with all stakeholders in the European Union. – COBRENORD

Being a NWWAC member gives our PO the opportunity to better monitor regulatory, scientific, and strategic developments affecting fisheries in the area. Participation in working groups allows us to compare positions with other stakeholders (POs, NGOs, institutional actors) and promote consensus building. Membership in the NWWAC enhances our visibility at the European level, enabling us to contribute to advisory opinions considered by decision-makers and to defend our members' interests in a concerted, sustainable manner. – FROM Nord



7. Additional Considerations

7.1 Communications Risks

A proactive approach to identifying and mitigating risks supports clarity and trust in all communication efforts. Below is an overview of potential risks and corresponding mitigation measures:

Risk	Mitigation
Misinterpretation or misrepresentation of NWWAC advice	Ensure clarity and context in all published documents and media posts. Use of accessible language and additional outputs (i.e. social media / explainer posts)
Low engagement from members or stakeholders	Strengthen regular touchpoints (e.g. Monthly Update) and highlight participation opportunities proactively Use communications methods to create mutual benefit for members – i.e. Through proposed profile series
Delays in members' feedback	Send timely reminders, clarify deadlines, and simplify input processes
Delays in information sharing	Maintain internal timelines and contingency plans for communications delivery
Language or accessibility barriers	Provide multilingual materials

7.2 Use of Languages

As a multilingual organisation, the NWWAC operates in English, French, and Spanish. Official communications, meeting documents, and key publications are translated into all three languages wherever feasible. Tone and language should remain professional, neutral, and inclusive, reflecting the NWWAC's status as a non-political advisory body. Jargon and technical terms should be explained where needed to ensure accessibility across diverse stakeholders.

7.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring the performance of communication tools helps ensure they remain relevant and effective. Each channel should be reviewed periodically using the following indicators:

Channel	Indicators
Website	Visits, document downloads, time on page
Email / Updates	Open rates, click-through rates, member feedback
Meetings	Attendance levels, participation, post-meeting feedback
LinkedIn	Follower growth, post reach, engagement metrics
WhatsApp Group	Follower growth, feedback on usefulness

A brief internal review should take place annually, with findings used to refine communication practices as needed.



8. Sign-off procedure

The NWWAC Secretariat will lead the drafting and delivery of day-to-day communications outputs, including website updates, social media posts, workshop announcements, and regular member information. Routine materials may be prepared and issued directly by the Secretariat without additional approval. Where communications relate to sensitive issues, formal positions, key policy developments, advocacy topics, or messaging that may have reputational implications, the Secretariat will seek input and sign-off from the Chair, as appropriate. In these circumstances, decisions on escalation will be made on a case-by-case basis in line with proportionality, timing and impact. For larger campaigns or major strategic communication moments, additional consultation and agreement with Chair and Vice-Chair may also be required.

9. Conclusion

This communication strategy provides a practical framework to support the NWWAC in delivering on its mission to promote inclusive, transparent, and evidence-based stakeholder input into EU fisheries policy. By aligning key audiences, objectives, and communication tools, it ensures that the NWWAC's work remains visible, accessible, and relevant. Effective communication strengthens relationships, builds trust, and reinforces the NWWAC's role as a vital link between stakeholders and EU institutions. Regular tools such as the website, social media, Monthly Updates, and meetings help maintain engagement and ensure advice is well understood and considered. A key goal is to attract new members by promoting the value of participation and showcasing the AC as a transparent, balanced, and collaborative forum. Clear, consistent messaging will support outreach and highlight the benefits of contributing to consensus-based fisheries management.

Finally, this strategy is intended as a living document, adaptable to changing needs, technologies, and policy developments. Ongoing monitoring and review will ensure it continues to support the NWWAC's strategic priorities into the future.



NWWAC Meetings in Vigo (Spain), July 2025