

Ms Charlina Vitcheva
Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
European Commission Rue Josef II 99
1000 Brussels
Belgium

Dun Laoghaire/Zoetermeer, 14 March 2022

Dear Ms Vitcheva,

Subject: Fuel provisioning affecting fisheries in the North Western Waters, North Sea and beyond

As you are aware, the COVID-19 crisis has caused severe disruptions in the fishing sector since March 2020. The industry welcomed measures adopted by the European Commission to ease the burden on the fishing industry from this crisis. However, recent days have seen the sector facing yet another emergency.

The war in Ukraine has led to an exponential rise in fuel prices. This, coupled with the interruption of food production in Ukraine, could have a major impact on European food security. Vessels remain tied up in many Member States as the increase in fuel prices makes trips to sea economically unviable for fishers. Several harbours have reported unavailability of any fuel over the past couple of days making any trips to sea impossible. This unavailability of fuel will result in reduced catches which can eventually lead to higher prices for seafood at consumer level and a potential shortfall of seafood supply within Europe.

Both the North Western Waters AC and the North Sea AC are fully aware that a direct subsidisation of fuel is not possible with regard to world market prices and competition law. However, similar temporary provisions established as per the COVID-19 subsidies could represent a possibility for supporting a large number of fishing companies through the current crisis. This situation has previously arisen in other branches of primary production, and small business owners both in commercial and recreational fisheries feel under continued threat. Crisis mode must not become the norm and an economically sustainable future must be ensured for the fishing industry in the medium and long term through creating increased economic and social resilience.

NWWAC and NSAC members call on the European Commission to urgently address this situation by creating specific aid schemes and ensuring speedy and constructive handling of aid schemes by Member States. The supply of fishing companies with fuel must be secured and a level playing field for European fishers must be ensured.



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North Western Waters Advisory Council
Dun Laoghaire, Ireland

North Sea Advisory Council
Zoetermeer, The Netherlands

NWWAC: mo.mathies@nwwac.ie
info@nwwac.ie

NSAC: tamarat@nsrac.org
admin@nsrac.org



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
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NOROCCIDENTALES



NSAC

North Sea Advisory Council

The NWWAC and NSAC would like to emphasise the urgency of this issue and kindly ask that this is addressed by the Commission at the earliest convenience.

Thank you for your attention on this matter. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Emiel Brouckaert
NWWAC Chairman

Kenn Skau Fischer
NSAC Chairman



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