



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/D3/AS

Subject: Joint NWWAC/NSAC advice on social aspects in fisheries

Dear Mr Brouckaert, dear Mr Skau Fisher,

I wish to thank NWWAC and NSAC for your joint letter of 20 December ⁽¹⁾, advising the European Commission on an important aspect of the Common Fisheries Policy: its social dimension.

Your framework document arrived very timely in a period where the social aspects of EU fisheries are entering a new phase. This is prominent in the recently published Communication on the functioning of the CFP⁽²⁾, which we have shared with all Advisory Councils in view of our exchange on 9 March.

The CFP Communication highlights the importance of the social dimension of sea fisheries; it assesses how the CFP has been functioning on this aspect and what efforts are still needed in order to reap the full potential of the CFP. The document also complements the challenging points that you have highlighted in your joint letter.

With this letter, I would like to react to four of the points you have raised.

⁽¹⁾ our reference Ares(2022)8854060.

⁽²⁾ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp_en

Mr Emiel Brouckaert
Chairman
North Western Waters Advisory Council
emiel.brouckaert@rederscentrale.be
Crofton Road c/o BIM Dun Laoghaire
Co. Dublin A96 E5A0
IRELAND

Mr Ken Skau Fisher
Chairman
North Sea Advisory Council
ksf@dkfisk.dk
Louis Braillelaan 80
NL-2719 EK ZOETERMEER
THE NETHERLANDS

1. **Safety (and training) first:** In February 2023, the Commission actively participated in the discussions for the revision of the International Maritime Organisation's Convention on standards of training, certification and watchkeeping for fishing vessel personnel (STCW-F) and its Code. This reflects our strong interest in the revision of this important Convention; although the Commission cannot itself ratify this or any convention, it actively encourages all coastal Member States to do so, and we count on your support in passing this message to our stakeholders. As explained in the CFP Communication, the Commission will consider proposing, after the adoption of the revised STCW-F, a directive to ensure its correct transposition into the EU legal order and will assist Member States to accelerate ratification of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) conventions.
2. **Fishing capacity:** I am aware that the Gross Tonnage and Engine Power ceilings are considered by some stakeholders as factors jeopardising the energy transition and technological investments. While it is important to look at this angle, it should be noted that several Member States have a margin between the active capacity of their fleets and their fishing capacity ceiling. Therefore, the first priority should be for Member States, as of 2023, to increase the transparency and flexibility of their fishing capacity management, in cooperation with the sector, and to facilitate its possible reallocation where it is needed for structural investment on board, including with EU and national financial support where eligible. In addition, we are very interested to hear concrete ideas on how to further support the increase of vessel safety, comfort and fuel economy whilst ensuring that the fishing capacity will remain the same.
3. **The more data, the better:** Through the *STECF's expert working group Social Data in Fisheries (EWG 22-14)*, the Commission continues efforts to have methodologies further developed for the collection and analysis of social data in fisheries. STECF is also asked to further align its efforts with those from ICES and the Regional Coordination Group (RCG ECON) and ensure that the work of the two bodies is complementary and not overlapping. The work of ICES' *WGSOCIAL* takes place in Q2 and STECF's *EWG Social Data in Fisheries* convenes in Q4. The different timing of the two meetings provides scientists and policy makers with sufficient time to reflect and coordinate the research activities on this topic. The next report of the EWG 22-14 will be available ultimately by April 2023. The Commission is looking forward to receiving this report in order to use its results and support the actions announced in the CFP Communication.
4. **Social dialogue:** The Commission is actively engaging also with the Social Partners in Sea Fisheries through the sectoral social dialogue. The social issues that you have rightly raised in your letter, faced by our EU fisheries, within and outside European waters are also discussed there. You can rely on us to be there also for the next meetings and I strongly encourage my colleagues to continue the dialogue, in the context of the official dialogue meetings as well as beyond through ad hoc and informal exchanges.

The social aspects of the CFP are and will continue to be essential to the social, economic and environmental sustainability of our sea fisheries sector and I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation in this area as well. Furthermore, if you organise a joint meeting on this subject, my services will be happy to attend and discuss your

concerns. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact the functional mailbox of the Advisory Councils MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

Charlina VITCHEVA

c.c.: Mo Mathies mo.mathies@nwwac.ie
Matilde Vallerani matilde.vallerani@nwwac.ie
Tamara Talevska tamarat@nsrac.org
admin@nsrac.org