

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

24 October 2022, hybrid meeting: Vigo and online

CONCLUSIONS

Participants:

Advisory Board representatives: Glenn Douglas, Jarek Zielinski and Guillaume Carruel (BSAC), Mihaela Candea-Mirea (BISAC), Vanya Vulperhorst (LDAC), Guus Pastoor and Pedro Reis Santos (MAC), Marzia Piron ((MEDAC), Kenn Skau (NSAC), Mo Mathies (NWWAC), Fabiana Nogueira (ORAC), José Beltrán (PELAC) and Chloé Pocheau (SWWAC)

Administrative Board representatives: Dobrin Lechev (BG), Yiannos Kyriacou (CY) and Georgios Fleris (GR)

European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA): Susan Steele (ED), Pedro Galache (HoU 3), Mario Santos (HoU 2), Cristina Morgado (U2), Patricia Sánchez Abeal (HoS P&C), Miguel Nuevo (HoS JDPs & RC), Clara Fernández (HoS Med & BI S)

1. Introduction and state of play

The meeting was opened by EFCA Executive Director (ED) warmly welcoming the Advisory Board representatives, both in the meeting room and online, and thanking the three members of the Administrative Board present at the meeting (Cyprus, Bulgaria, and Greece).

Advisory Councils (ACs) state of play

The ED gave the floor to the ACs representatives to present their activities since the last Advisory Board meeting in April 2022.

CCRUP thanked EFCA ED for the message addressed to the CCRUP members during the meetings in Mayotte. She highlighted the need to reinforce control within the IUU framework. In this respect, the CCRUP is working with the MAC.

Since the last Advisory Board meeting several recommendations have been approved on:

- the process of establishing Marine Protected Areas (MPA) in the Outermost Regions;
- the analysis of the aquaculture situation in the Outermost Regions;
- the Atlantic tuna fisheries – EU updated conservation and control measures for ICCAT;
- possible studies on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems in all the Outermost Regions.

CCRUP asked whether the mandate of EFCA has been amended to operate in Outermost Regions. EFCA ED pointed out that EFCA would be very happy to contribute more when additional areas/species are embedded in the SCIP decision. For the time being the support is focused on training to Member States authorities.

PELAC also highlighted the problems they are facing with the increasing fuel prices. They raised the following points:

- The importance of negotiations with the UK post BREXIT.
- Proposals for TAC and quotas have not yet reached an agreement. They are concerned about the situation in the North Atlantic with Third Countries setting up quotas unilaterally putting in danger the management of stocks.
- Regret that fishing opportunities are based on economic data from 2 years ago. Better alignment of scientific data to current STECF projections is necessary.
- Regarding the landing obligation (LO), and the COM finding that bycatches remain high in mixed fisheries, once again the PELAC highlighted the evaluation of compliance with the LO for MAC fisheries, and indicated they are expecting news from the regional MS groups regarding the outcome of the latest evaluation.
- Important that the energy transition meets the needs of the fisheries sector and is based on profitability.
- PELAC wants to be part of the ICES process to incorporate information from stakeholders. The main stocks under the PELAC's remit were reviewed and immediate action against NO and FO was requested.
- Continue to work with other ACs on issues of common interest.
- Appreciated the participation of the European Commission, ICES and of course EFCA in the meetings of PELAC and hoped this cooperation will continue.

EFCA ED indicated that energy transition is a concern for all of us.

MAC highlighted the low supplies and higher prices, consequence of the increasing fuel prices and of subsequent lower numbers of landings. Demersal fisheries are particularly impacted by this. Apart from the fishing vessels operations, higher energy cost impacts also factories and processing plants due to up to triple the cost of operations. He explained that the combination of a post COVID scenario with the war in Ukraine has created a situation of disrupted market flows, including also labour shortages both in fishing vessels and factories. Russian fish is 20-30% of the supply of whitefish to the EU, and there are a lot of problems and logistic issues. Luckily in the mid to long term there is a positive prediction from FAO indicating 2-3% increase on the market for seafood.

He indicated that on the annual report for the implementation of the LO, the main priority for them was to avoid or minimise unwanted catches and prevent the creation of a market for undersized fish. At the moment there was no major problem caused by landings of undersized fish and illegal market for those. He thought that fisheries control and inspection activities should find synergies with other types of control.

He also said that IUU fishing is being discussed in every meeting of the MAC. They wrote the European Commission to request info about the catch certification scheme and received a reply and are studying it currently.

EFCA appreciated the comprehensive information provided, especially on the Ukraine war impacts.

BLSAC informed that despite the situation in the area, the work of the BLSAC has continued without hiccups on a hybrid mode. During the year the fishing activity decreased due to the risk of finding mines at sea. Currently the main reason for the decrease is the fuel cost.

One of the main topics that is being followed up in the BLSAC is the impact of the Maritime Spatial Planning in the Black Sea on the fisheries sector. The BLSAC has issued recommendations on the

minimum reference size for the conservation of *mullus barbatus* in the Black Sea and on the fishing gear regulations in the Black Sea.

BLSAC welcomed EFCA to participate in their meetings together with ANPA and IARA.

EFCA ED referred to the overall high impact of the prices and showed her support and sympathy to the communities most affected by the Ukrainian war.

LDAC apologised for the absence of the LDAC secretariat.

A summary of all the LDAC meetings that took place since the last Advisory Board meeting was presented. It was also mentioned that there were several LDAC meetings on going in Brussels.

Since the last EFCA Advisory Board meeting, in April 2022, the following activities were highlighted:

- the LDAC participated in the survey of the 5 Year Independent External Evaluation of EFCA;
 - the advice issued for NAFO 44th Annual meeting; the advice for ICCAT is in the pipe line;
 - on the Focus Group on regional fisheries management for small pelagic and other species in West Africa, the first meeting was organised at the end of October. The meeting was focused on multilateral cooperation, the need to improve science on the stocks and management and control measures in that area looking into the different possibilities at RFMO level and working on a draft advice;
 - on the post Brexit scenario, 2 Joint- ACs letters related to the engagement of the ACs in the Specialised Fisheries Committee were addressed to the European Commission;
 - the LDAC statement submitted to UN, 2022 UN Ocean Conference;
 - on the social side and labour issues, a letter was sent to the Commission requesting the designation of European fishers as essential workers, and the LDAC issued an advice on the Social Dimension of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements.
- Currently the LDAC is:
- working on an advice on China's global distant fleet and the role it has in the EU fleet and market;
 - discussing an advice to improve fisheries governance and ensure resilient fisheries communities in Morocco;
 - following up on the RFMOs and providing advice when needed;
 - discussing internally on the findings of the Court of Auditors report on the EU action to combat illegal fishing and a study recently published by DG MARE, and the potential input to be provided by the LDAC;
 - working regularly with other organisations, e.g. FAO, ECOFISH, and strategic partners, such as ATLAFCO/COMHAFAT (the coordination meeting is scheduled at the end of 2022. It will deal with subjects as the implementation of a regional observer's programme, regional control scheme).
- The LDAC showed interest in the activities related to PESCAO and any other programmes related to good governance.

EFCA ED welcomed the information provided and looked forward to receiving the LDAC advices in the different areas.

MEDAC thanked EFCA for its participation and active exchange of information in the MEDAC meetings. Special mentioned was done to the MEDAC meetings the week before where EFCA presented provisional data on the bluefin tuna purse seine campaign.

The AC pointed out that during the last week MEDAC meetings, the MEDAC made a proposal to enhance the role of EFCA in carrying out more activity related to fight against IUU fishing and to assist Mediterranean third countries to improve their control capacity. He highlighted the need to put more effort on the reviews of catch certificates for Third Countries in the Mediterranean.

They drew the attention to the need of standardisation and progress towards level playing field in the Mediterranean and called for the JDP to have a specific focus on the Eastern Mediterranean and to reinforce the activity in the Strait of Sicily. They looked forward to continuing the cooperation with EFCA.

EFCA ED thanked the MEDAC for looking at the operational role of EFCA and to the Member States for their support and the increasing work that has been done in the Mediterranean which has been very productive.

NSAC thanked EFCA for hosting the last meetings of the NSAC and for the openness of EFCA to take part on the discussions. On the energy crisis, echoed what PELAC raised.

The following issues were highlighted:

- The NSAC-NWWAC social aspects WG, where gender issues, education, operational health and safety are discussed.
- The new climate change focus group.
- The combination of energy prices and spatial management has resulted in increased competition for fishing grounds.
- The EU-UK-NO shared stocks in the North Sea create also multiple complications for the NSAC. Fishers need to deal with different legislative frameworks in one fishing trip. For dealing with this they have created an inter AC Brexit forum with the NWWAC.
- On the LO, indicated that the discard plan for the NS will be ready in 2023 (to be reviewed by STECF).
- Announced a workshop on the LO being organised by NSAC on 17-18 January 2023 in Brussels.
- On REM, the Kattegat project being run in DK for monitoring and control of the LO, and indicated that the Danish industry is not happy with the Danish administration.

The ED thanked for the overview and offered all ACs the possibility to use EFCA facilities to host meetings and to get a closer look to the work of EFCA.

NWWAC thanked EFCA for the participation in the recent plenary and WG meetings of the NWWAC in Belgium in July 2022. They highlighted the good collaboration with NSAC, PELAC and MA and indicated that their focus group on the LO is working on an update of the choke prediction tool which will be presented shortly.

- In September they presented the ToR of the focus group on control and compliance.
- Inquired about a workshop on the evaluation of compliance with the LO next spring.
- Highlighted that for article 27 of the technical measures regulation there is still not a clear solution.
- A georeferenced tool for fisheries in NWW (GIS tool) was presented.
- Finally, it was announced that NWWAC will hold a training session on the WebGIS tool at the beginning of December 2022, EFCA invited.

EFCA ED thanked the NWWAC. She said to understand well that the Control Working Group is very attentive to the control regulation adoption. She found the presentation of the GIS fishing management chart tool very useful and interesting. EFCA HoU 2 remarked we are in cooperation with the NWW CEG regarding the workshop on the LO in spring and appreciated the support from NWWAC.

BSAC thanked EFCA for the very close relationship throughout the years. The BSAC had the Ex Com meeting the day after the Advisory Board meeting. It The workshop on the LO in 2023 or the possibility of organising some BSAC meetings in Vigo were mentioned.

It was indicated that the level of compliance with the LO is improving in the Baltic, according to the latest LO compliance evaluation performed by the EFCA in cooperation with the Baltfish CEG. The reduced bycatch of cod in the gillnet fishery in the Baltic was highlighted

Other issues mentioned were:

- Demersal:
 - TM implementing rules
 - TAC and quotas
 - Predation by seals and cormorants
- Pelagic:
 - Bothnian Bay herring issue
 - Rebuilding plan for western herring
 - Windfarms being dealt with by the Environmental WG

EFCA ED thanked him warmly and stated she was looking forward to meetings in spring 2023.

SWWAC appreciated the participation of the EFCA ED in the general assembly in July 2023. She indicated that for them bluefin tuna was the priority and ICCAT visibility of the stock. On dolphin bycatch, the MS regional group is following this issue closely. On the deep-sea regulation and VMEs, they are waiting for the update from ICES at the end of the year.

EFCA ED thanked her and indicated it was a pleasure to participate in the SWWAC GA, and that hopefully she will be able to participate in the next presential meeting.

2. EFCA's Single Programming documents (SPD): Multiannual work programme 2023-2027 and Annual work programme 202

The EFCA ED presented the work since the last advisory board meeting in April 2022 and the SPD 2023.

Some exchange of views took place:

- NSAC representative inquired about the level playing field in the treatment of Third Countries in Med vs the North Sea. Also raised some concerns about all the control focus given to the LO versus other CFP provisions, indicating that other control matters also require attention.
- The EFCA ED indicated that the situation is very different in the Med with North African Third Countries than in the North Sea with Norway and UK. On the LO it was clarified that it is a

priority in the EFCA MAWP. The HoU 2 highlighted the close cooperation with Norway and UK and the meeting hosted by EFCA the previous week of EU-NO-UK on the shared stocks in the NS. The HoU 2 added that the priority on the LO is clear due to the observed low compliance with that provision.

- BSAC inquired about the bilateral meetings with Russia. The HoU 2 replied that in the past EFCA has been requested to provide technical assistance to the EU delegation in bilateral meetings with Russia, but that since the COVID pandemic these meetings have been suspended.

3. Rotation of the Advisory Board representative in the Administrative Board of EFCA

Currently the Advisory Board representative is the MAC and the alternate, the LDAC until 1 March 2023. From 2 March 2023 until 1 March 2024, the representative will be the LDAC, and the alternate, the CCRUP.

The ACs endorsed the EFCA proposal.

4. AOB

The ED closed the meeting by thanking all ACs members for their participation and that the EFCA will continue to support and work with them