

REPORT

Meeting: **Confirmation Hearing for designate Commissioner Costa Kadis**

Parties: **designate Commissioner Costa Kadis, MEPs, stakeholders**

Date: **6 November 2024**

Location: **European Parliament**

Chair: **Carmen Crespo Diaz, European People's Party (Christian Democrats)**

Rapporteur: **NSAC Secretariat**

1. Opening Statement

Commissioner-designate for Fisheries and Oceans, [Costantinos Kadis](#), began his address by underscoring the **urgency of enhancing the EU's climate response**, citing recent disastrous climate impacts in Valencia. Recognizing the significance of his portfolio, Kadis highlighted the crucial role of science-based policymaking and emphasized that conservation efforts are most effective when developed with **local communities**.

Kadis committed to upholding democratic values by **collaborating with the European Parliament and national parliaments**, ensuring all policies align with EU principles of democracy, human rights, and sustainability. The **establishment of a dedicated Fisheries and Oceans portfolio** reflects the importance of sustainable fisheries, the blue economy, and ocean health, all vital for Europe's climate regulation and resource needs.

He stressed that sustaining a competitive, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture sector is essential for **food security and environmental health**. Kadis acknowledged **challenges faced by fishers** such as environmental degradation, competition for maritime space, overfishing, lack of level playing field, and need for modernization, noting that issues vary across small-scale and large-scale fisheries. He assured support for EU member states (MS) in implementing regulations to preserve healthy and productive marine ecosystems and continuation of the ongoing **review of the CFP** (results: end of 2025) to ensure it is in line with current challenges. This evaluation will inform a long-term vision for fisheries and aquaculture through 2040, focusing on modernization, decarbonization, and social well-being of communities.

Ensuring **stable access to traditional fishing grounds** and quotas in the Northeast Atlantic is a priority. Post-2026, work will be done to protect fishers' interests in relations with the UK and ensure fisheries are central in talks with Norway. Additionally, a resilient fisheries sector requires **energy diversification** to reduce fuel cost vulnerabilities, with an **Energy Transition Roadmap** for fisheries and aquaculture toward carbon neutrality by 2050 to be finalized by end of 2025.

Strengthening the sector also means **addressing social factors**: health and safety, aging boats, gender parity, skills shortages, gender renewal, and modernizing aging fleets. These priorities will also shape the upcoming **European Oceans Pact**, a comprehensive marine policy roadmap to be presented at the UN 2025 Oceans Conference in Nice.

Finally, he stressed that EU's marine goals require **global cooperation**. Work will be done to strengthen ocean diplomacy, with the EU leading in sustainable development and environmental restoration. Additionally, support will also be given to the High Seas Treaty's ratification in EU law to protect 30% of seas by 2030.

Kosta concluded by noting the busy agenda, enriched through exchanges with EU parliament. If [confirmed](#), actions will start from engaging with coastal communities on the ground, to make sure decisions taken in Brussels reflect local concerns and aspirations.

2 Q&A with MEPs

Kadis exchanged with present MEPs. Questions and answers, relevant to matters addressed in the NSAC, are summarised below:

CFP Reform, Decarbonization, and Sustainable Fisheries: MEPs emphasized the need for a comprehensive reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) to support fleet decarbonization, generational renewal, and sustainable fishing practices. They highlighted the importance of modernizing vessels without relying on public funding for new constructions and ensuring that fishing practices remain balanced and sustainable. Kadis confirmed that the ongoing CFP evaluation will incorporate stakeholder input and guide necessary reforms. He also noted that Member States will have specific decarbonization targets, with EU support, and that capacity ceilings will be reviewed as part of the evaluation process. Furthermore, studies on the evaluation of the European Fishing Fleet and the Roadmap to Transition are ongoing. Emphasis was put on "fishing better, not more," and need for collaboration between the European Parliament, fishers, and the Commission to achieve sustainability goals while addressing the declining number of vessels and fishers was highlighted.

Landing Obligation (LO): MEPs raised concerns over the LO, seen as burdensome by many fishers. Kadis acknowledged these concerns but emphasized the LO's role in sustainability by reducing wasteful bycatch. He confirmed that this issue will be re-evaluated under the CFP review, and alternative approaches may be considered.

Social and Economic Impact: MEPs emphasized the need to address the social challenges and income (in)stability of small-scale fishers. Kadis agreed that the CFP evaluation will likely highlight these issues and noting that the upcoming Oceans Pact will create a cohesive approach to ocean and fisheries policies that supports both fishers livelihoods and environmental sustainability.

EU-UK Relations and Third-Country Competition: MEPs raised concerns about maintaining traditional fishing grounds and ensuring fair access to UK waters, particularly with

the introduction of new UK Marine Protected Areas and Offshore Renewable Energy areas. Kadis reassured that securing EU fishers' access is a top priority, and he will lay a strong foundation for negotiations with the UK post-2026, seeking input from fishers to inform EU positions. Additionally, MEPs highlighted the challenges posed by third-country competition. Kadis confirmed that the EU has tools, including dispute resolution mechanisms in trade agreements, to protect fishers' interests and assured he would utilize them as needed.

Bureaucratic Burdens: MEPs called for a reduction in regulatory burdens on fishers, given the sector's current pressures. Ways to reduce bureaucracy and make sector more digital will be explored.

Balance of Marine Protection and Fishers' Welfare: MEPs stressed the need to increase EU-produced seafood (currently only 30% of what is consumed). Kadis acknowledged the key role of small-scale fishers, who make up 76% of EU vessels and 50% of employment, and committed to improving quota allocation and budget distribution to better support them.

Youth and Gender Inclusion in Fisheries: Kadis expressed a commitment to engaging young people and women in the sector, emphasizing the importance of listening to regional needs. He referred to the *Fishers of the Future* (FoF) initiative, which explores future skills for fishers and could inform targeted policies to attract young workers. He mentioned that DG MARE's upcoming Blue Economy report would provide data to support gender-focused policy development, recognizing the sector's significant gender gap. Additionally, a similar project to FoF, aimed at attracting more women to the sector might take place in.

Impacts of Fishing and Protection of Marine Biodiversity: MEPs expressed concern about the environmental impact of fishing, particularly bottom trawling, on biodiversity. Kadis acknowledged that biodiversity loss stems from multiple causes, including fishing and climate change. To address this, he emphasized the need for a balanced approach, integrating scientific evidence and close cooperation with other commissioners to reach the target of protecting 30% of global seas.

Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management (EBFM): MEPs argued that the CFP does not fully support and implement EBFM. Kadis agreed on the importance of healthy ecosystems and committed to prioritizing collaboration with the scientific community to strengthen EBFM.

Harmonizing Fishing Regulations and Invasive Species: Questions arose about harmonizing net size regulations, handling Natura 2000 protected areas, and managing invasive species (i.e., cormorants). Kadis discussed the ongoing research on Natura 2000 management, advocating targeted, balanced restrictions without total bans. The invasive species issue is a priority.

Whaling Practices and Ghost Nets: MEPs condemned the Faroe Islands' whaling practices and raised issues around ghost nets harming marine life. Kadis expressed intent to leverage international forums and the upcoming High Seas Treaty to address whaling. For ghost nets, the Commission aims to enhance port disposal facilities and encourage realization of biodegradable fishing gear to reduce pollution.

Scientific Advice, Precautionary Approach, and Impact on Fishers: MEPs emphasized the need for precautionary, ecosystem-based approaches in scientific advice and raised concerns about the impact of scientific recommendations on fishers' livelihoods. Kadis assured that he would regularly consult scientific bodies to ensure sound, science-based decision-making while equally considering input from fishers. He stressed the importance of valuing both empirical knowledge and scientific data to make informed decisions that balance environmental sustainability with the needs of the fishing sector.

Improving Selectivity and Innovation in Fishing Techniques: MEPs emphasized the importance of improving selectivity in fisheries, particularly in mixed demersal fisheries, to reduce bycatch and environmental impact. Kadis agreed, highlighting that selectivity will be a priority in the upcoming research and innovation strategy, with funding for selective gear available through the EMFAF. He also expressed openness to discussing innovative fishing techniques, such as pulse fishing, noting the need for a balanced, science-based evaluation of their environmental benefits and risks.

Modernization and Support for Small-Scale Fisheries: MEPs called for regulatory changes to modernize fleets and ensure new technologies benefit small-scale fishers, highlighting concerns over privacy related to onboard cameras under the new Nature Restoration Law (NRL). Kadis committed to addressing these issues, emphasizing that decisions would be data-driven and require patience to ensure well-founded legislation. He assured that support measures for small-scale fisheries are already in place, with more to be introduced. Effective implementation of MPAs could improve both environmental and fisheries outcomes, and small-scale fishers could access funding through the EMFAF to adjust to these new regulations. Kadis also emphasized that further support would be considered following the CFP evaluation.

Role of Producer Organizations (POs): MEPs stressed the need to take on board POs, which protect fishers' interests and aid in implementing the CFP. Kadis agreed on the importance of POs, noting that CFP evaluation will assess support adequacy for POs, while engaging Member States to enhance their support.

Ocean Renewable Energy (ORE) Impact: Concerns were voiced about offshore wind farms impacting fisheries, tourism, and migratory bird populations, and the lack of scientific consensus on the overall impact of ORE. Still, MS are advancing in, especially coastal, installations of windfarms. Kadis explained that MSP is primarily managed by each MS but emphasized that decisions should consider environmental and social impact assessments, which might not be the case always.

Intersectoral Impact on Oceans: MEPs inquired about addressing various sectors impacting oceans, such as agriculture and transport. Kadis acknowledged the interconnectedness of multiple sectors affecting ocean health, particularly land-based activities, and pledged to consider these impacts comprehensively within the Ocean Pact framework.

Full recording available at: <https://bit.ly/4fKsf05>