



# Energy Transition Partnership for EU Fisheries & Aquaculture – 5th Webinar with Advisory Councils

14 July 2025, 14:00-17:00 (Brussels time)

<b>Contract title:</b>	Energy Transition Partnership for EU Fisheries & Aquaculture - Assistance Mechanism
<b>Location:</b>	Brussels and online
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<b>List of attendance:</b>	
DG MARE ETP AM	PASCUAL Marta (ETP SG Leader) DANTO Jules (ETP SG Coordinator) GABIÑA Gorka (ETP SG Coordinator) CAVALLE Marta (ETP SG Coordinator) GUERRE Vincent (ETP SG Coordinator) POSTI Janne (ETP SG Coordinator) KOVACS Eva (ETP SG Coordinator) MANZARI Leonardo (ETP SG Leader) SAREVET Mati (ETP SG Coordinator)  And representatives of: BSAC NWWAC FEAP Pelagic Advisory Council WWF MEDAC North Sea Advisory Council Secretariat Rederscentrale Sciaena NGO MAC Adriatic Sea North Sea CCRUP LDAC South West Waters Advisory Council Market Advisory Council Black Sea Advisory Council

## 1. Executive summary

The **5th webinar of the Energy Transition Partnership for EU fisheries and aquaculture (ETP)** brought together Support Group Coordinators (SG Coordinators) and Advisory Councils (ACs), to **review progress and shape the future roadmap towards sustainable, low-carbon fisheries and aquaculture by 2026 and beyond.**

DG MARE opened the meeting emphasising the accelerated efforts since the [2023 Communication](#) and the shared ambition to align energy transition goals with broader policies such as the Common Fisheries Policy, Maritime Industrial Strategy, and Port Strategy. **A strategic, integrated approach balancing economic, social, and environmental sustainability remains essential.**

The SG Coordinators reported substantial progress on recommendations across sectors:

- **Small-scale fisheries** face unique challenges including limited resources and fleet viability; they require tailored funding, simplified procedures, and recognition of their social contributions.
- **Large-scale fisheries** demand regulatory flexibility, enhanced coordination, access to demonstrator projects, fleet renewal, and expanded training to support diverse clean technologies.

- **Distant water fleet** must overcome funding, infrastructure, and regulatory barriers while integrating clean fuels and modernising ports.
- **Inland and offshore aquaculture** needs harmonised EU guidance, improved knowledge sharing, and flexible, locally adapted energy solutions.
- **Fishing shipbuilding** calls for revising design constraints to better incorporate clean technologies, modular construction, and regulatory certainty.
- **NGOs** advocate a holistic decarbonisation approach encompassing biodiversity, social fairness, and inclusive stakeholder engagement.
- **Ports** see themselves as energy hubs and innovation centres crucial for fisheries' decarbonisation, urging stronger cooperation and social considerations.
- **Research organisations** stress building trust, specialised training, data sharing, and regulatory reform to foster innovation.
- **Processing industry** highlights the need for broader funding, standardised emissions reporting, workforce development, and sustainable logistics.

ACs provided detailed sector-specific recommendations:

- The **Aquaculture Advisory Council** emphasised a holistic climate strategy, life cycle emissions assessment, financial support for SMEs, and consumer awareness.
- The **Mediterranean Advisory Council** supported strategic priorities, training, environmental sustainability, and flexible funding tailored to small- and large-scale fisheries.
- The **North Western Waters Advisory Council** called for revising capacity limits, adopting AI, improving refrigeration efficiency, cross-sector collaboration, and fair competition.
- The **Long Distance Fleet Advisory Council** highlighted funding clarity, regulatory flexibility, safety concerns, and training needs but has not issued formal advice.
- The **Market Advisory Council** advocated for extending funding beyond EMFAF, impact assessments on competitiveness, and caution against cost increases leading to import reliance.

The meeting concluded with strong recognition of the ongoing consultation's importance as a collaborative platform, while acknowledging that the transition remains a complex and gradual process. ACs and SG Coordinators are encouraged to submit detailed, evidence-based recommendations to shape the energy transition roadmap. Emphasis was placed on addressing regional and sectoral differences, developing viable business models, and fostering continued dialogue.

## 2. Detailed topics and outcomes

### Opening of the webinar

**Sven Langedijk (DG MARE)** recalled that efforts have been ongoing and accelerated since the [2023 communication](#), with a shared ambition to achieve key goals by 2026 through the Energy Transition Partnership, supported by a collaborative Assistance Mechanism.

- There is a need for an **integrated and strategic approach that aligns with other policy areas**, such as the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the Maritime Industrial Strategy, and the Port Strategy. It is essential to **follow a path that is both ambitious and realistic, ensuring economic, social, and environmental sustainability**.
- Focus areas include **research, innovation, skills development, financing through private and public sources, and navigating complex regulations** that balance preservation with sustainability.
- Advisory Councils have contributed with valuable recommendations **shaping the roadmap, especially on vision, funding, legislation, innovation, training, capacity, and sector diversity**.
- The next steps include **two studies on gas emissions and transition pathways, stakeholder consultations by October 2025, and a high-level conference with the Commissioner Kadis planned for February 2026**. Additional workshops and coordination with related initiatives will also continue.
- The **ETP is open for membership, encouraging active participation to foster collaboration and ensure a productive, inspiring workshop**.

## Presentation of the progress made by the ETP WGs on the recommendations

The ETP **SG Coordinators** provided an overview of the work carried out in their working groups over the past months and highlighted the progress made on the recommendations for the roadmap.

### Small-scale fisheries

- Small-scale fisheries have low carbon emissions but face major threats to their future, including limited resources and low viability. A dedicated action plan is needed to secure their place in the energy transition.
- Targeted and accessible funding is essential, with simplified procedures and support focused on new, efficient vessels rather than expensive retrofits, which often aren't suitable for ageing fleets.
- Capacity and impact should be measured differently for small-scale fisheries, recognising passive gear use and including social indicators like job creation to better reflect their contribution.

### Large-scale fisheries

- The energy transition for large-scale fisheries needs to be flexible and adaptive due to reliance on evolving technologies and multiple future fuel options. An open, supportive regulatory framework is essential to accommodate these changes.
- Strong coordination and knowledge sharing across Europe are vital to avoid duplicating efforts. Expanding demonstrator projects with both environmental and economic evaluations, plus centralised data access, will support better decision-making.
- Scaling up projects requires significant funding beyond research, including accessible financing. Fleet renewal is essential, as retrofitting old vessels is not enough and capacity rules need revision. Training, certification, and immediate measures like fuel efficiency and onshore power should also be promoted.

### Distant water fleet

- The distant water fleet must balance environmental goals with economic viability. Key barriers include limited funding, outdated infrastructure, and regulatory constraints. Trust in clean tech and integration into broader EU energy efforts are essential.
- Scaling up clean fuels, upgrading ports, and launching demonstrators and audits can close tech gaps. Regulatory reforms, like removing capacity limits, are needed to enable innovation.
- Dedicated financing tools and updated EU funding rules will support adoption. Common EU standards can ensure a fair, competitive transition.

### Inland and offshore aquaculture

- Fragmented national rules hinder fair competition; clearer, harmonised EU guidance with flexible national implementation is needed.
- Better knowledge transfer, case studies, and access to financing are essential for adoption of clean technologies.
- Energy transition must reflect the sector's diversity; flexible, locally adapted solutions and business models are key.

### Fishing shipbuilding

- Vessel design is constrained by current CFP (volume and length limits), which often result in short, wide, and fuel-inefficient vessels. Greater design flexibility is needed to accommodate clean energy systems while maintaining hydrodynamic efficiency.
- Enabling the energy transition requires rethinking these design limitations while safeguarding against overcapacity. Clear, stable regulations are essential to create confidence for investment and uptake of new technologies.
- Modular shipbuilding and series production could reduce vessel costs and help bridge Europe's price gap with global competitors, supporting both shipyards and vessel owners in the transition.

### NGOs

- NGOs call for a holistic approach to decarbonisation that includes the full value chain, biodiversity impacts, ecosystem-based management, and social fairness.

- They stress the need for clear and timely regulation with definitions, timelines, and sustainability criteria, along with fairer access to EU funding for smaller actors, targeted support, tax relief, and major investment in training and digital skills.
- Recommendations also highlight generational renewal, stakeholder involvement (including NGOs and local communities), and the need for new indicators to track progress without increasing fishing capacity.

### Ports

- Ports are assessing their own decarbonisation readiness while also preparing to meet the energy needs of fisheries and aquaculture vessels, covering operations like energy supply, cargo handling, and fish processing.
- They propose six key recommendations, including positioning ports as energy hubs, innovation testbeds, and drivers of coastal decarbonisation.
- Ports also call for stronger social consideration (jobs, community integration) and enhanced cooperation among ports, especially to support long-distance and distant-water fisheries with appropriate energy infrastructure.

### Research organisations & academia

- Strong alignment and trust-building between research, academia, industry, and policymakers; creation of a “broker” role to facilitate communication, identify barriers, and promote solutions.
- Development of specialised training programs, demonstration sites, and living labs to test and upscale new technologies; promotion of data sharing, standardisation, and support for early-stage and long-term research.
- Regulations supporting the energy transition; reform of fisheries policies; financial mechanisms to reduce investment risks and boost competitiveness, especially for startups and SMEs.

### Processing Industry

- Expand eligibility criteria for funding mechanisms to support energy-efficient investments in processing and trading sectors, reducing reliance on private capital.
- Develop tools, templates, and training to address data and knowledge gaps for emissions reporting under Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD); create an EU common protocol to standardize energy consumption and emissions measurement tailored for seafood companies.
- Enhance skills and workforce development by improving sector image to attract young talent emphasizing innovation and sustainability; promote knowledge sharing via a centralised EU platform; transition logistics to low-emission electric cold chain solutions where feasible.

## AC's contribution and recommendations for the Energy Transition in EU fisheries and aquaculture

The European fishing and aquaculture sector faces a dual necessity: transitioning to sustainable, low-carbon operations while maintaining competitiveness in a global market. The ACs recommendations set a detailed agenda across multiple dimensions - strategic planning, financial investment, skill development, and competitiveness - to facilitate this transformation by 2050.

The main highlights of the ACs' intervention have been summarised as follows:

### 1. Aquaculture

The Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC) developed a specific recommendation focused on **decarbonising finfish farming facilities** in the EU.

- They emphasise a **holistic approach** to climate action that also considers related issues like land scarcity, freshwater availability, pollution, eutrophication, and biodiversity loss.
- Finfish aquaculture represents a small but significant share of agriculture-related emissions and must contribute to the EU's climate targets: **halving emissions by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050**.
- The recommendation targets the **energy use on farms** (not feed or distribution) and calls for detailed **life cycle assessments** to measure emissions accurately.

- The sector is diverse and mostly composed of **micro and small enterprises**, so economic competitiveness and legal certainty are critical to enable their transition.
- The AAC highlights the **impact of recent crises** (COVID, Ukraine conflict, inflation) **on the sector's capacity to adapt**.
- Consumer awareness of the full carbon footprint of aquaculture products is important for market-driven change.

#### Key recommendations:

- Establishing an **EU-wide mechanism to reduce electricity costs** from renewable sources and stabilise price volatility.
- Funding **research and technology development** for energy efficiency and new fish farming systems.
- Linking decarbonisation with other EU objectives like **food security and nature restoration**.
- Using the **Aquaculture Assistance Mechanism** to share best practices and benchmark energy efficiency and renewable use.
- Integrating decarbonisation into **maritime spatial planning** (e.g., location of farms relative to ports).
- Supporting consumers to make low-carbon footprint choices.
- Maximising financial support via EU funds for farm equipment and fossil fuel reduction.
- Identifying and promoting **voluntary environmental performance targets and indicators**.

The AAC underlines that the sector must actively engage in improving its efficiency while relying on supportive policies and funding to meet EU climate goals.

## 2. Small-Scale Coastal Fisheries

The **Mediterranean Advisory Council (MEDAC)** shared its perspective on the European Commission's fisheries recommendations, highlighting priorities for sustainable development, environmental protection, and practical innovation **across small- and large-scale fisheries**.

#### Key recommendations:

- Broad agreement with the strategic vision and funding priorities, though **no clear position yet on partnerships with financial institutions**.
- Emphasise **skills development, training, generational renewal, adaptability, and safety**.
- Encourage **collaboration with related sectors** (ports, logistics, infrastructure) to boost competitiveness.
- Place **environmental sustainability at the centre**, promoting marine biodiversity protection, pollution reduction, climate change mitigation, and comprehensive data monitoring.
- Prioritise **short-term efficiency improvements** (e.g., anti-fouling, propeller upgrades) over immediate adoption of advanced technologies.
- Recommend **thorough SWOT and comparative analyses** with Advisory Council involvement before new technology adoption.
- Call for **flexible funding and incentives tailored to the needs of both small- and large-scale fisheries**, especially for emission-free vessel development.

MEDAC offers ongoing collaboration and further input if needed.

## 3. Large Scale Fisheries

The **North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC)** welcomes the structured approach of the Commission's draft, noting alignment with their own advice submitted in June. However, they emphasise several **additional points** they would like to see integrated into the final version.

#### Key recommendations:

- **Revision of vessel capacity limits:** The current constraints prevent necessary upgrades for decarbonisation. Capacity increases should be allowed when directly tied to energy efficiency and safety improvements.
- **Integration of artificial intelligence:** AI has potential to support fishers in daily operations while promoting decarbonisation. Training in digital skills is essential for meaningful adoption.
- **Energy-efficient refrigeration and logistics:** Improved onboard cooling systems and supply chains can significantly reduce energy use.
- **Cross-sector collaboration:** Specifically, **synergies with offshore renewable energy (ORE)** are encouraged.
- **Building trust with fishers:** Transparency, communication, and inclusive engagement are vital to ensure the sector feels heard and actively involved in the transition.
- **Fair competition:** The EU should ensure that imported seafood products are subject to comparable environmental standards to prevent unfair competition from countries with lower obligations.

The NWWAC highlights that **enabling a just and effective transition requires structural flexibility, technological integration, and strong stakeholder trust.**

**NWWAC** questioned **the usefulness of distinguishing between small- and large-scale fisheries, pointing out that many recommendations overlap and definitions remain unclear.** It emphasised **the need for realistic and flexible funding mechanisms**, noting that most fleets face significant investment challenges. **Regulatory clarity** was highlighted as essential to build investor confidence, alongside a call for a balanced mix of public and private funding. Finally, they **opposed the inclusion of fisheries in the Energy Taxation Directive**, arguing that fuel taxes would unfairly penalise the sector without effectively contributing to decarbonisation.

**The North Sea Advisory Council (NSAC)** issued detailed advice on decarbonising the fishing fleet in 2022 and may submit updated input soon.

#### **Key recommendations:**

- Ensure **scientific grounding** for targets and proposed measures.
- Create a **centralised overview** of existing technologies, projects, and their costs.
- In the **short term**, focus on **energy efficiency**: gear optimisation, hybrid systems, and better use of current technologies.
- Any **new technologies or fuels** must undergo **environmental impact assessments** to avoid unintended harm.
- All decisions should be based on **comparative cost-benefit analysis**.

The **Pelagic Advisory Council**, representing mainly **large-scale pelagic fisheries**, emphasised that fuel use, especially during **steaming to fishing grounds**, is their fleet's largest GHG contributor. Loss of access to nearby waters has increased fuel consumption, illustrating how **stock conditions** and **geopolitical access** heavily impact emissions.

#### **Key recommendations:**

- **Better stock status** and **stable access** to fishing grounds are essential to reduce fuel use and emissions.
- A **predictable governance framework** in the North-East Atlantic is crucial to unlock both **public and private investment** in decarbonisation.
- The need to **rethink fishing capacity management**, as current limits may hinder green innovation.
- Call to explore **alternative metrics** (beyond GT and kW) to account for vessels using new propulsion technologies.
- Open to **new models for managing effort** in single-species fisheries that support both sustainability and modernisation.

They urged that these issues be integrated into CFP evaluation and broader discussions on the green transition.

#### 4. Distant Water Fleet

The **Long Distance Fleet Advisory Council (LDAC)** provided informal reflections rather than a formal position, as the topic is not currently prioritised in its annual work programme. Key points included:

1. **Funding clarity needed:** While there is support for diversifying funding beyond EMFAF there is a need for more detail on how funding will be accessed (EU vs. national level), and how operators can apply.
2. **Fishing capacity measurement:** The Council supports revisiting the definition of fishing capacity to exclude space required for crew and new technologies (e.g., alternative propulsion systems), which would necessitate legislative changes.
3. **Technological diversity and retrofitting concerns:** There is no single technological solution suitable for all fleet segments. Tailored pilot projects are preferred. Some members are sceptical of retrofitting, especially for distant-water fleets, and favour new vessel construction if sufficient financial and legal certainty is provided.
4. **Operational challenges:** The introduction of new energy systems raises logistical and infrastructure issues, especially in remote ports. Potential solutions include offshore platforms or mobile bunkering services.
5. **Naval engineering input:** It is important to involve naval engineers to assess what is realistically achievable in vessel design and modification. Regulatory flexibility is necessary to support innovation.
6. **Maritime safety:** Concerns were raised about safety risks related to new technologies, such as fuel tanks near working areas, with potential stability and explosion risks. Safety and social impact assessments are essential.
7. **Training and workforce adaptation:** While the concept of workforce adaptability is positive, practical training is essential. Suggestions included developing online manuals or training resources to harmonise knowledge at the EU level.

While there is no formal advice at this stage, the LDAC may submit written feedback by October.

#### 5. Processing market

The **Market Advisory Council** referred to advice already given to the European Commission a year ago. Their key points included:

1. **Broad scope of the initiative:** The Council supports the energy transition initiative and welcomes that it includes not just primary production (fisheries and aquaculture) but also the full post-harvest value chain, such as traders, processors, packaging, and transport.
2. **Funding concerns:** The Council believes EMFAF alone is insufficient and advocates for access to additional EU funding sources (e.g., research funds). They also urge engaging financial institutions to make the sector more attractive for investment.
3. **Avoiding negative externalities:** The Council warns against unintended consequences, specifically, that additional costs and requirements could increase production prices in the EU and lead to greater reliance on imports.
4. **Call for impact assessment:** It encourages the Commission to assess the likely effects of the initiative on product prices and EU competitiveness, particularly the risk of increased dependence on imported seafood.

### Open discussion Support Group Coordinators – Advisory Councils

The meeting led to a discussion among SG Coordinators and the ACs. The main outcomes of the exchange are as follows:

- **Alignment on aquaculture recommendations:** The aquaculture sector generally agreed that aquaculture companies are micro or small-sized, emphasising the need for dedicated financial instruments such as non-refundable grants and simpler co-financing to support the energy transition.
- **Environmental impact of fish feed:** Feed is recognised as the main environmental impact factor in fed aquaculture due to the carbon footprint from agricultural raw materials and

fertilisers. The European Commission is actively working on feed sustainability recommendations.

- **Differences in aquaculture types and funding needs:** Offshore aquaculture requires large investments typically accessible to medium or large companies, whereas land-based aquaculture involves many small or micro enterprises with varied financial needs and access to aid.
- **Challenges with EIB investment scale:** Concerns were raised that typical EIB project investments (around 15 million €) may be too large for many fisheries and aquaculture projects, suggesting a need to adapt funding scales to better suit smaller initiatives.
- **Ongoing dialogue and collaboration:** The European Commission is in regular contact with the EIB to explore public-private financing models, though no finalised mechanisms exist yet. Ongoing discussions focus on overcoming investment barriers, regulatory constraints, and addressing a lack of sector understanding and perceived risks.
- **Investment in fisheries and aquaculture:** Current investment from the banking sector is low, partly due to differing definitions of sound investments and communication gaps. Addressing these issues is essential to unlock financing.
- **Small-scale vs large-scale fisheries:** The distinction between small-scale and large-scale fisheries is often unclear and sometimes unhelpful due to regional differences and regulatory variations. Some recommendations aimed at large-scale fisheries also apply to small-scale ones, but it remains important to keep the specific needs of small-scale fisheries visible to avoid them being overlooked. Clearer and more precise definitions of both sectors are needed to reduce confusion and improve the effectiveness of policies and funding strategies.

### 3. Conclusions and next steps

The consultation process for the ETP is an important but ongoing effort that requires continued collaboration and detailed contributions to ensure effective progress. Key next steps include:

- **Active engagement:** ACs and stakeholders are advised to provide specific, detailed recommendations, including examples and sector impact analyses, by late October, ahead of the consultation phase closure.
- **Regional and sectoral considerations:** The process must carefully address regional and sea basin differences while identifying viable business models to support a sustainable and equitable energy transition.
- **Ongoing collaboration:** Continued dialogue and cooperation among all participants are essential to refine the strategy, balancing environmental goals with economic and social sustainability for the future competitiveness of EU fisheries and aquaculture.