

Chair's REPORT FROM THE MEETING:

an implementation dialogue dedicated to small-scale and coastal fisheries (SSCF) organized and hosted by **Commissioner Costas Kadis-before Fisheries Council**
24th November, 09:00, Berlaymont

In line with the goal of supporting SSCF, Commissioner Kadis organized and hosted the meeting in Brussels, with participation of invited group of fishers, Fisheries Local Actions Groups (FLAGs), Advisory Councils, NGOs, Member State representatives, industry, and social partners. The meeting was focused on discussing the practical implementation of key EU Fishing related policies with a view to bolster the sustainability, resilience, and long-term viability of SSCF across European sea basins.

The discussion was also aimed at exploring the role and potential of new technologies in strengthening the sustainability and competitiveness of small-scale and coastal fisheries as well as good practices and opportunities for income diversification.

This time, as part of the dialogue on small-scale and coastal fisheries, the BSAC Chair was invited to present the key recommendations of small-scale fishermen from three regional Advisory Councils: Baltic Sea Advisory Council, the North Sea Advisory Council and North Western Waters Advisory Council.

Presented paper was the outcome of the consultations carried within each council and the common contribution to the one consolidated advice. This formula was applied to all ACs, and only four were invited to this meeting. In result the constructive dialogue following councils were selected to attend (BSAC., Med AC, and MAC, Outermost Regions AC).

Despite that it is not welcome practice, that COM limits participation of the AC I found eventually the cooperation with NWWAC and NSAC as constructive and focused in the common benefit of our SSCF members.

Thanks to all everyone involved in preparing and agreeing on our contribution to the dialogue!

Especially to Ewa Milewska, who involved her great devotion and merit expertise into the process.

Below the BSAC input

Policy implementation

- The provisions (electronic traceability, weighing of catches) of the amended Control Regulation will place an additional financial burden on small-scale fishers in particular due to the necessary purchase of expensive equipment, without any measurable success for the objectives of these regulations.
- The implementation of Article 17 of the Basic Regulation has failed around all EU member states. In order to ensure appropriate fishing opportunities, the implementation of Article 17 must be mandatory.

Funding

- SSF should continue to have access to funding even when stocks are below biomass reference points. SSF only received 20% of EMFF funding despite representing 75% of the fleet. In order to become competitive, investment needs to be disproportionately targeted to the SSF fleet.
- With regard to funding at all levels, the same framework conditions must be created for all market participants. Compliance and access to EU support
- All existing regulations must be reviewed for their proportionality and effectiveness and, if necessary, adapted. A level playing field/access for all market participants must be ensured.

Other data needs

- The data already available is completely sufficient for the assessment. With regard to classification and appreciation, we see room for improvement. Especially when it comes to assessing the profitability of the companies as a basis for eligibility for funding.

Strengthening the role of SSCF in the seafood supply

- First of all, it is the operator's task to develop a customer base through the quality and refinement of the catches. The sales opportunities of their products are to be promoted by the state by presenting the sustainable production to the public. With regard to funding at all levels, the same framework conditions must be created for all market participants

Training and upskilling needs of SSCF fishers to improve their resilience

- The training base must be broadened. This applies both to ship technology, processing technology and commercial aspects

Input from the BSAC, NSAC and NWWAC - short & combined:

The Baltic Sea Advisory Council, North Sea Advisory Council and North Western Waters Advisory Council wish to state the following:

- Funding and Investment – The BSAC, NSAC and NWWAC urge for broader access to funding through reformed State Aid and EMFAF rules, greater European Investment Bank involvement, and regulatory stability to foster innovation and renewal of the fleet, with special focus on the SSCF fleet.
- The BSAC and NSAC draw attention to the fact that many SSCF operators face structural barriers to funding: excessive paperwork, high co-financing rates, and long reimbursement delays make EU programmes inaccessible for small family-owned vessels.
- The BSAC underlines that with regard to funding at all levels, the same framework conditions must be created for all market participants.
- Control Regulation and Support – The BSAC, NSAC and NWWAC warn that the new Control Regulation places additional burdens on small-scale fishers and call for appropriate financial and technical support to ensure fair implementation.
- Modernisation and Energy Transition – The BSAC, NSAC and NWWAC call for investment in modern technologies, digital tools, and training to enhance safety, efficiency, and attract new generations, supported by revised capacity rules enabling the renewal of the fleet.
- The NSAC calls for making the energy transition an opportunity, not a burden: funding for hybrid/electric engines, improved energy efficiency, and harbour charging infrastructure must be accessible to SSF through grants and simple financial tools.
- The BSAC calls for reviewing all existing regulations for their proportionality and effectiveness and, if necessary, adapting them. A level playing field/access for all market participants must be ensured.
- On data needs, the NSAC is of the opinion that the contribution of SSCF remains under-documented, particularly regarding socio-economic value and local ecological knowledge.
- Compliance and access to EU-support. In the opinion of the NSAC, regulation and compliance must reflect the principle of proportionality. Today the SSCF are subject to the same or higher relative administrative costs as large fleets.
- Training and upskilling needs of SSCF fishers to improve their resilience: the training base must be broadened. This applies both to ship technology, processing technology and commercial aspects
- Unified Representation of Fishers – The NWWAC insists that fishers' representation must remain united and inclusive of all fleet segments to ensure cohesion and effective policy dialogue.

Full content of the recommendations from the three northern Atlantic Area Advisory Councils, was submitted to the COM -with request to be attached to the meeting documents.

The full text of the joint BSAC, NSAC, NWWAC recommendation can be found on the www.bsac.dk website.

Jarek Zieliński

BSAC ExCom Chair