

REPORT

Meeting: **Inter-AC**

Parties: **Commissioner Kadis, Director General Vitcheva, DG MARE, AC Chairs & Secretariats**

Date: **15 July 2026**

Location: **Brussels, BE and online**

Chair: **Stelios Mitolidis, Director MARE Unit D**

Rapporteur: **NSAC Secretariat**

[1. Opening speech by Charlina Vitcheva](#)

DG MARE Director General Charlina Vitcheva thanked participants for their contributions to the CFP evaluation. It was stressed that the priority at this stage is to establish a shared understanding of the diagnosis before considering future action.

The evaluation forms part of the Commission's evidence-based assessment of the Common Fisheries Policy, following the 2013 reform, examining its long-term impacts and whether its objectives have been achieved. It confirms that the approach adopted in 2013 to reconcile the three pillars of sustainability remains valid. However, while the CFP has contributed to significant progress in reducing overfishing, the recovery of stocks has not met expectations. The landing obligation has not delivered the anticipated increase in selective fishing practices, and socio-economic outcomes remain below the ambitions of the reform. Persistent challenges include fleet ageing, energy dependency, difficulties in attracting younger generations, pressures on small-scale fisheries, unequal access to resources and insufficient profitability, affecting investment and fleet renewal. Questions also remain regarding fleet capacity management and the balance between capacity and fishing opportunities

The evaluation also highlights **positive developments**, notably improved scientific advice and data collection, which have strengthened evidence-based policymaking. At the same time, there is a need to better integrate socio-economic considerations into scientific advice. The DG stressed that conservation remains the foundation of a viable fisheries sector and that long-term sustainability requires progress on both environmental and economic objectives. The evaluation also shows that many outcomes are influenced not only by the CFP Regulation itself but also by secondary legislation, including Multiannual Plans.

The assessment acknowledges the significant influence of external factors beyond the CFP, notably the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Brexit. These events had substantial impacts on the sector, making it important to distinguish between challenges arising from the CFP itself and those resulting from broader external developments. On the international dimension, the EU remains a global leader and strong advocate for sustainable fisheries.

The Commission has continued gathering stakeholder feedback, noting that while some stakeholders have raised concerns about stock recovery, the evaluation's robustness or its conclusions, the process was based on objective analysis and comprehensive data. The Commission considers the CFP's foundations to remain valid while recognising clear areas for improvement.

Key issues raised by stakeholders include simplifying the landing obligation, reviewing fleet capacity management, supporting energy transition, reducing administrative burdens, improving competitiveness, ensuring a level playing field and strengthening aquaculture. Stakeholders also highlighted the need to reinforce precautionary and ecosystem-based approaches, strengthen Article 17 and further develop regionalisation.

Discussions have also taken place with the European Parliament, where different expectations regarding the evaluation's conclusions were expressed. The Commission stressed that future proposals must be developed based on evidence rather than assumptions about the position of co-legislators.

As a **next step**, the Commission will continue discussions with stakeholders to assess the extent to which the diagnosis is shared and determine the appropriate follow-up, including possible changes to the CFP Regulation, stronger implementation or adjustments to secondary legislation. These reflections will be closely linked to the Vision 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture, as well as wider initiatives such as the European Ocean Pact, simplification efforts, legislative fitness checks and the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

1.2 Discussion on CFP Evaluation

On behalf of the NSAC, **ExCom Chair Peter Ronelov Olsson, DWG Chair Solene Prevalet, and NSAC member Jan Kappel** took the floor emphasizing key elements. The CFP evaluation was welcomed, recognising the policies' achievements in improving stock sustainability and strengthening science-based management, while stressing that significant challenges remain, including governance, socio-economic resilience, climate adaptation, decarbonisation, fleet renewal and food sovereignty. They emphasised that the effectiveness of the CFP depends on practical and inclusive implementation, with stronger stakeholder involvement, transparent decision-making and legislation that is realistic and workable. Drawing on lessons from Brexit and the implementation of the revised Control Regulation, they argued for a more coherent and credible governance framework. They also called for better integration of recreational fisheries, stronger socio-economic objectives alongside environmental targets, greater stability and predictability for the sector, and consideration of broader issues such as fleet capacity, food sovereignty and social objectives in future CFP discussions. Overall, they encouraged the Commission to build on the CFP's successes while addressing implementation challenges through a collaborative and ambitious revision of the framework.

Kappel also asked about the need for EU self sufficiency and what this implies.

The interventions of the ten other ACs highlighted several key priorities:

- Despite reduced fishing opportunities and precautionary measures, many stocks continue to face challenges. Fisheries management should move beyond a single-species approach towards a **stronger ecosystem-based approach**.
- Independent scientific advice should remain the cornerstone of fisheries management. At the same time, scientific assessments should better incorporate **socio-economic considerations** and the practical experience of fisheries professionals.
- Sustainability should not be assessed through one indicator alone. The balance between environmental, economic and social objectives remains essential to ensure the long-term viability of the sector.
- More attention is needed to the socio-economic resilience of fisheries and the diversity of EU fleets and regions. **Local realities** should be better reflected in decision-making.
- Developing **realistic business models**, improving predictability, supporting fleet renewal and ensuring access to adequate funding are essential for the future resilience and attractiveness of the sector.
- Overall, the concept of a business model requires greater clarity, including issues such as fish prices, market competition, stability of rules and imports of products produced under different sustainability standards.
- Future measures should be designed with early consideration of **operational realities**, feasibility and stakeholder input.
- **Adequate financial support** will be critical, particularly through the upcoming MFF, to enable fleet modernisation, improve safety, support decarbonisation and strengthen the resilience of coastal communities.
- **Food security** should receive greater prominence in future CFP discussions.
- Stakeholders should work closely with scientific institutions and Member States to improve data collection frameworks, expand surveys and strengthen understanding of **climate-related** changes at sea.

Responding to the ACs, the **DG stressed that:**

- Sustainability should not be understood as a compromise between environmental, economic and social objectives, but rather as ensuring that each pillar is properly addressed. The socio-economic performance of the sector remains a concern and requires further attention.
- Full **self-sufficiency** based on wild capture fisheries is not realistic given the limits of natural resources. However, the EU can increase resilience through sustainable aquaculture development, maintaining access to fishing grounds and ensuring that imports do not undermine the competitiveness of the EU sector.
- A sustainable economic model is essential for the future of the fisheries sector. The evaluation identifies key elements affecting viability, including profitability, access to resources, costs and market conditions. Business models must reflect local realities, including how different sectors interact within coastal areas and how value is generated on the ground. However, the Commission cannot give recommendations on a particular business model to follow.
- Fleet modernisation cannot rely solely on public funding. **Private investment** will only flow where there is economic viability and profitability. Reducing operational costs,

particularly through decarbonisation and reduced fossil fuel dependency, is a matter of both survival and competitiveness.

- Available financial resources are more limited than in the past. It is crucial to discuss with Finance Ministers and Member States to secure appropriate support for fisheries priorities.
- The next phase will focus on **consolidating the shared diagnosis from the CFP** evaluation while developing the Vision 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture. The Vision will provide the broader strategic framework, including an external fisheries dimension and a roadmap for energy transition. No legislative proposals will accompany the Vision immediately; policy options and possible regulatory changes will be considered afterwards.
- The importance of independent scientific advice was reaffirmed and there is no intention to question MSY as a management objective. The ecosystem-based approach incorporates broader considerations, including socio-economic aspects, and reflects current scientific approaches such as those developed by ICES.
- The landing obligation should be understood as a tool to improve selectivity, rather than as an objective in itself, and future discussions should focus on how to achieve its intended outcomes effectively.

2 Guidelines on functioning of advisory councils presentation by Commissioner Kadis

Commissioner Kadis presented the **voluntary guidelines on the functioning of Advisory Councils**, developed on the basis of contributions from the ACs themselves. The guidelines reaffirm a core principle of both the CFP and the EU institutions: dialogue. ACs provide a unique forum where different perspectives can be debated openly and constructively, leading to advice that helps shape the CFP. At a time of increasing public polarisation, ACs demonstrate that dialogue and consensus-building are strengths rather than weaknesses.

Effective ACs require trust, good governance and balanced representation. The existing legal framework, with its 60/40 balance between the fishing sector and other interest groups, reflects the principle that sustainable fisheries policy can only be achieved when all relevant perspectives are represented and heard. However, representation alone is not sufficient; all members must have a genuine opportunity to contribute in an environment where they feel respected and able to express their views freely.

The guidelines therefore place respect, integrity, inclusiveness and professionalism at their core, recognising that constructive disagreement is both inevitable and valuable. Where consensus cannot be reached, minority opinions should be reflected to ensure that all legitimate views are taken into account. Particular responsibility lies with Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Working Group Chairs to facilitate balanced discussions, foster consensus and create an inclusive atmosphere, while Secretariats play a crucial role in ensuring continuity, supporting members and coordinating the work of the ACs.

The Commissioner concluded by stressing that the guidelines are not intended to create additional rules or bureaucracy, but rather to strengthen a shared culture of good governance, dialogue and inclusion. He called on all stakeholders to continue working together to ensure that Advisory Councils remain balanced, inclusive, effective and credible.

2.1 Exchange on draft guidelines

On behalf of the NSAC, **Information Officer Kateryna Urbanovych** informed that NSAC welcomed the Commission's voluntary guidelines on the functioning of ACs. The AC is committed to implementing the guidelines through the ongoing revision of its Rules of Procedure, alongside the adopted 2023 Code of Conduct. Following a comprehensive five-year performance review, the NSAC has launched several initiatives to strengthen governance, including anonymous meeting feedback, management training, guidance for inclusive chairing and outreach to NGOs. While Advisory Councils are crucial to support sustainable fisheries, challenges related to limited NGO resources, declining trust and increasing stakeholder polarisation exist, which highlights the need to build shared understanding, create incentives for participation and foster constructive engagement.

Key points shared by other ACs:

- **Voluntary** guidelines are broadly welcomed as a timely initiative to help ACs adapt to evolving expectations and strengthen their governance.
- While recognising the important role of Chairs and Vice-Chairs, the responsibility for good governance should be shared across the **entire membership**.
- The inclusion of **whistleblower procedures** is welcome, although implementing new measures will require adequate financial resources.
- The guidelines should better address the relationship between the Commission and the ACs, including cooperation, communication and the prioritisation of work.
- There should be caution when introducing excessive procedural requirements, as several ACs, such as the MEDAC, already apply similar principles through their existing rules and codes of conduct.
- There is need for stronger **institutional memory** was emphasised to ensure continuity during changes in membership, leadership and Secretariat staff.
- **Joint** whistleblower mechanisms and joint training **initiatives** across ACs could be pursued to promote consistency and the exchange of good practices.

The Commissioner clarified that the document consists of voluntary guidelines, not mandatory rules, and that they were developed in response to requests from several Advisory Councils, taking their views into account. He welcomed the broad support expressed and invited any further comments to be submitted to the Commission services as soon as possible.

The overall objective is to strengthen the governance and functioning of the ACs. The Commissioner welcomed the examples of good practice shared during the discussion and encouraged greater exchange of experiences between Advisory Councils, suggesting that a dedicated session could be organised for this purpose. Stronger involvement of the scientific community could facilitate consensus-building by providing a robust evidence base. On

resources, he acknowledged existing budgetary constraints, noting the annual 2% increase in funding, while recognising that additional support from governments may also be needed.

3 Update on Ocean Act & MSPD by DG MARE A.2

The Commission confirmed that a legislative proposal on the Ocean Act is expected by the end of the year. Protecting ocean resources remains the foundation of the initiative.

An **impact assessment** to evaluate different policy options is currently being carried out, including their practical implications and potential for simplification, as well as opportunities for stronger policy alignment. The precise legal form of the initiative is still under consideration.

Key points raised by ACs included:

- The consultation received significant input from non-EU citizens, particularly from the UK. Questions were raised on how these contributions will be considered, given the cross-border nature of marine governance.
- Clarification was requested on the **future relationship between the Ocean Act and the MSPD**, including whether the MSPD would remain a separate instrument or be integrated into the new framework.
- The **Ocean Dashboard** was welcomed as a useful tool, but participants stressed the importance of ensuring that the selected indicators are appropriate and of sharing the tool more proactively with Advisory Councils and members of the Ocean Board.

The Commission clarified that the MSPD already includes provisions on cross-border coordination and that feedback received from non-EU stakeholders will be analysed and reflected, including in the accompanying staff working document. Work is ongoing on the future role of the MSPD, and discussions are also taking place on strengthening coordination with relevant bodies, including the GNSBI and regional sea conventions.

MSFD and MSPD revisions are being considered in parallel to ensure coherence between the two frameworks. However, the final form of the revision is still under assessment and is being examined with the support of the Commission's Legal Service.

4 Update on the Energy Transition, the EU Strategy for islands and the EU strategy for coastal communities strategies by DG MARE A.4

The Commission presented the **Strategy for Coastal Communities**, adopted on 10 June 2026. While support for coastal communities is already addressed through various policies, the strategy aims to provide a more coherent framework for Member States to address shared challenges. With around 95 million people living in coastal areas, these communities are strategically important but increasingly exposed to climate, economic and security pressures.

The Commission also provided an update on the **energy transition of the fisheries sector**, which will be addressed as part of the Vision 2040. Key challenges identified include limited profitability, ageing and diverse fleets, uncertainty regarding future technologies, technical and regulatory barriers, and insufficient port infrastructure. The Commission stressed that the transition requires viable business models, with private investment as the main driver, while recognising that technologies are not yet fully mature and that the transition must be gradual, socially fair and supported by appropriate policies. Energy transition is therefore considered part of a broader transformation of the sector rather than a standalone issue.

On **funding and simplification**, the Commission highlighted the ongoing call for evidence on simplifying elements of the EMFAF and stressed that the next Multiannual Financial Framework will be a key opportunity. Stakeholders are encouraged to engage proactively with national authorities, as discussions on future priorities and funding approaches will increasingly take place at Member State level ahead of 2028.

Key points raised by ACs were:

- The need to reconsider the link between investments improving working conditions, safety and quality of life on vessels and fishing capacity rules. Such investments should not automatically be considered as increasing fishing effort, as fleet renewal and improved working conditions are essential for attracting younger generations.
- Lack of mature and cost-effective technologies should not delay the transition, but flexibility may be needed, including regarding capacity rules for new vessels and modernisation.
- Jobs at sea support a much larger value chain on land, including processing, marketing, services and coastal economies.
- The need for fleet renewal in certain segments was emphasised, particularly where ageing vessels limit competitiveness and the ability to adopt new technologies.
- Questions were raised regarding potential additional funding for the strategy and whether new regulatory requirements, such as the “do no significant harm” principle, could create additional administrative burdens for the sector.
- Stakeholders asked how progress under the Coastal Communities Strategy would be monitored, including which indicators would be used within the Ocean Dashboard.
- On electrification, **NSAC** highlighted the practical difficulties faced by small-scale fisheries, including the high costs and uncertainty involved in identifying suitable technologies. The Chair called for EU-level planning, technical support and financial assistance to help fishers navigate the transition.

The Commission acknowledged the importance of addressing capacity issues and referred to a recent study examining fleet capacity, including future needs related to safety and modernisation. It noted that some Member States have available capacity, but decisions on allocation remain a national responsibility.

On monitoring, coastal communities will be included among the indicators of the Ocean Pact Dashboard, with progress also reported through the State of the Ocean report.

Regarding electrification and alternative technologies, it was noted that some solutions are already economically viable and can receive support through the EMFAF, but further development is needed for other technologies.

On funding, future funding arrangements are expected to be simpler than the 2021-2027 framework, with a stronger focus on coordination and maximising synergies. The Commission also confirmed that Advisory Councils will receive a **targeted consultation on the “do no significant harm” principle**, with the objective of developing clearer and simpler guidance applicable from 2027 in line with EU financial rules.

5 Presentation of the European Integrated Framework for Climate Resilience by DG CLIMA

European seas are experiencing increasingly frequent and severe temperature anomalies. The rise in average sea surface temperature since the 1980s (+1.1°C) illustrates the broader trend of climate change and its impacts on marine ecosystems and people working at sea. Climate change is affecting Europe across multiple dimensions, with growing economic losses from extreme weather events despite existing adaptation policies, including the EU Adaptation Strategy and the European Climate Law. The Commission’s assessment is that Europe is not adapting quickly enough to the pace of climate change and that stronger action is needed to improve resilience across societies and economies.

Climate adaptation is not only about reducing losses but can also contribute to long-term prosperity and resilience. There is growing demand for action, particularly from local authorities, where climate impacts are experienced most directly. To respond to these challenges, the Commission is preparing a **European integrated framework on climate resilience**, expected in Q4 2026, consisting of a legislative proposal, a Commission communication and tools to support risk awareness and adaptation planning.

Key elements of the future climate resilience framework are:

- The Commission will promote a more anticipatory approach, integrating climate risks into investment decisions and planning from the outset rather than reacting after impacts occur.
- A key challenge identified is the lack of accessible and harmonised climate risk data across Europe. The Commission is therefore developing the **European Climate Viewer**, which aims to provide reliable and location-specific information to support adaptation planning and investment decisions.
- The first version of the Viewer is expected in Q4 2026 and will focus on key climate hazards such as sea-level rise, heatwaves, exposure and vulnerability. The tool will continue to evolve and will be expanded based on user needs and feedback. Initially focused on EU territories, future expansion beyond EU waters is being considered.
- Published in 2024, European Climate Risk Assessment provides the first comprehensive assessment of climate risks across Europe, identifying 36 key risks, several of which are already considered critical. A second edition, planned for 2028,

will place greater emphasis on adaptation solutions and involve broader stakeholder participation, including sectoral and national actors.

Input from ACs highlighted that:

- There is need for a shared understanding of future climate scenarios to support long-term investment planning and adaptation strategies.
- Governance capacity and the ability of local actors to design and implement adaptation projects were identified as key enabling factors.
- Questions were raised on whether the European Climate Viewer could eventually include information beyond EU waters, given the interconnected nature of marine ecosystems.
- Concerns were raised regarding the **availability of fisheries-specific climate data**, including the extent to which information exists on climate impacts on fish stocks and fisheries activities.
- Participants asked how fisheries and aquaculture stakeholders would be involved in the development of the next EUCRA assessment to ensure sector-specific knowledge is properly reflected.

The Commission clarified that the first version of the European Climate Viewer will focus on EU areas because available datasets and models are currently strongest at this scale, but future expansion is envisaged.

Regarding fisheries-related data, substantial information exists on climate variables, including atmospheric and ocean indicators, but sector-specific impact data are more limited. In some cases, this is because data have not been systematically collected, while in others further digitalisation is needed.

On stakeholder involvement, the Commission confirmed that thematic groups are being established, bringing together relevant stakeholders and “risk owners” to provide sector-specific evidence on observed impacts, vulnerabilities and possible solutions. Inputs from these groups will feed into the EUCRA process, with DG MARE ensuring that fisheries-related perspectives are reflected.