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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

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MARE/A1/MS

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**Subject: Multi-AC advice on the implementation of the Single Use Plastics Directive and Fishing for Litter schemes**

Dear Mr Brouckaert,

Many thanks for this well-prepared and comprehensive set of recommendations. It is especially remarkable that the document is a collaborative effort of 8 Advisory Councils!

I agree with your assessment that marine litter is a continuously increasing problem and in particular for the seafood industry e.g. due to increasing scientific evidence that micro plastics can enter our food-chain. I also believe that the fishing sector is part of the solution as proved for instance by your elaborated advice and by fishermen bringing ashore litter caught into their nets rather than throwing back into the sea.

The list of recommendations is useful regarding several work streams of DG MARE, but also DG ENV, DG MOVE and EASME. Please allow me to make some comments on the content of your recommendation.

1. DG MARE has been actively engaged in your consultation process by helping to organize and contributing to 2 workshops mentioned in the document as well as by inviting to hold 2 workshops under DG MARE remit<sup>1</sup>. We wish to continue such a collaboration, and DG MARE intends to invite Advisory Councils for relevant future events planned for the first half of 2021<sup>2</sup>.
2. Your proposals for research and study needs are duly noted and will be considered within future research program Horizon Europe as well as under the EMFF support.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/en/node/4478> and <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/en/node/4486>

<sup>2</sup> Workshops on “How to promote fishing for litter activities and the use of EMFF support”, “Implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility schemes in practice” and “Best practices workshop on how to achieve that fishing gear in future never becomes a waste”

3. As regards the Single use plastics Directive (SUP)<sup>3</sup>, most of the requirements fall under the responsibility of the EU Member States. Nevertheless, DG MARE will continue its collaborative efforts to bring together relevant stakeholders, promote good practices, best available science and knowledge by organizing workshops (see above), supporting Member States in the transposition and the implementation of the legislation and the Advisory Councils' initiatives.
4. Extended producer responsibility schemes for fishing gear containing plastic that need to be put in place by Member States by 31 December 2024, indeed deserve a good collaboration among relevant stakeholders. Therefore, DG MARE intends to organize a workshop on the "Implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility schemes in practice" in the 1st half of 2021.
5. I share your views that fishermen should incur no additional cost for delivering ashore passively fished waste. The revised Port reception facilities Directive<sup>4</sup> provides incentives and instruments to ensure that passively fished waste, including waste fishing gear, is delivered ashore at no additional cost. Member States are responsible for setting up effective waste delivery and treatment systems in ports and the Commission will monitor and facilitate this to the extent possible.
6. Another requirement under the SUP directive for the Member States is to report to the Commission on the amounts of fishing gear placed on the market and waste fishing gear collected. It is up to the Member States to establish mechanisms and platforms in order to gather this information, in cooperation with ports, waste managers and local authorities. The setting of such mechanisms will have to be supported by port reception services, in close cooperation with the Extended producer responsibility schemes, and will lead to harmonised monitoring and reporting across the EU.
7. "Fishing for litter" schemes are indeed simple, unique and most effective way known so far to retrieve and bring ashore marine litter that is already in the seas. I fully support the continuation and further expansion of the scheme and I encourage you to collaborate with my services to expand the use of EMFF support for "fishing for litter" activities to all 21 coastal EU Member States. To bring this forward, DG MARE plans to organize a workshop in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2021 on "How to promote fishing for litter activities and the use of EMFF support". Your advice letter already provides some initial ideas for the agenda points such as the potential harmonization of "fishing for litter" schemes across the Member States.
8. As you may know, the Commission will continue to support in the next EMFF programming period<sup>5</sup> under shared management investments in ports to provide adequate reception facilities for lost fishing gears and marine litter collected from the sea. Collection of waste from ships, creating suitable waste storage facilities

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<sup>3</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/904 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment

<sup>4</sup> [DIRECTIVE \(EU\) 2019/883 on port reception facilities for delivery of waste from ships](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Proposal for the Regulation on European Maritime and Fisheries Fund](#)

on board, waste monitoring, education and promotion of fishing for litter as well as establishment and maintenance of national fund – as indicated in your letter – all are potentially eligible for co-funding from the EMFF. The European Commission has and will continue to promote broader inclusion of “fishing for litter” expenditures into the national Operation programmes. We invite you to do the same via your channels.

9. EMODNET portal already contains beach, seafloor and microlitter data and it is indeed worth exploring how litter collected and brought ashore within fishing for litter actions could be fed into the portal.
10. Thank you for your proposal to launch a study to identify projects, initiatives, best practices and consequently have a single platform aggregating relevant information and efforts at the EU level. My services will consider this.
11. I also fully agree that training and awareness raising initiatives about marine litter impacts are much needed and my services are ready to collaborate on this with all relevant stakeholders.

Many thanks again for your comprehensive and timely advice. There is certainly more to be reflected upon your advice letter, therefore my services will be in contact with you to organize a follow up web-meeting by end of 2020.

Should you have any question on this reply, I invite you to contact Ms Pascale COLSON, coordinator of the Advisory Councils ([pascale.colson@ec.europa.eu](mailto:pascale.colson@ec.europa.eu)).

Yours sincerely,

Charlina Vitcheva