

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

23 April 2024, Vigo

Advisory Board representatives: Glenn Douglas, Guillaume Carruel (BSAC), Julien Daudu, Manuela Iglesias (LDAC), Irene Prieto (NWWAC), Daniela Costa (CCRUP), Sergio López García (SWWAC), Daniel Voces (MAC), Tamara Talevska (NSAC), José Beltrán (PELAC)

Administrative Board representatives: Branka Tarandek (Croatia), Yiannos Kyriacou (Cyprus), Michael Finn (Ireland), Marvin Seguna, Bjorn Callus (Malta), Zoltán Román (Hungary), Ricardo Segurado (Portugal), Carlos Ferreira (Portugal), Marian Avram (Romania), Ancuta Kazimirovicz (Romania), David Poderoso (Spain), Niclas Törnell (Sweden).

European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA): Susan Steele (ED), Pedro Galache (HoU 5), Mario Santos (HoU 3), Cristina Morgado (Acting HoU2), Patricia Sánchez Abeal (HoS S&C), Miguel Nuevo (HoS P&A), Clara Fernández (HoS OC), Klara de Groot (Ext Unit 5) and Zuzanna Rura (trainee).

1. Introduction and state of play

The EFCA Executive Director (ED) welcomed the Advisory Board representatives thanked the Administrative Board members present at the meeting.

Advisory Councils (ACs) state of play

PELAC thanked EFCA for the attendance to the 20-year anniversary event in Dublin and for facilitating the visit to the Ocean Protector. They have a new working group on environmental and related issues (marine ecosystems, MPAs, renewable energies, etc.). The importance of the CFP package for energy transition was stressed.

Their main work ahead is the following:

- Advice on fishing opportunities
- Next benchmarks MAC + HER
- Advice on the Commission acts
- Joint working group with SWWAC on southern stocks.
- Landing Obligation (LO) and choke species.
- Cooperation with scientific institutes and ICES

SWWAC has issued an advice on bycatch of dolphin in the bay of Biscay. They will publish a document grouping their main concerns on the CFP on sustainability and control. EFCA was thanked for presenting the LO compliance evaluation work in Jerez on 17 April. They referred to the complexity of the report presented and of the need to follow it up with access to the full report and participation of EFCA in the next SWWAC meeting.

NWWAC was grateful to EFCA for having the EFCA patrol vessel "Ocean Protector" to Dublin's port for the 20th anniversary of the NWWAC and PELAC. She expressed NWWAC contentment with joint NWW CEG, NWWAC, COM and EFCA workshop on monitoring, control, and compliance with the LO in demersal fisheries in the NWW in January 2024.

NWWAC highlighted their advice on the CFP and on the Energy Transition. They have also responded to the UK consultation on discards.

In the next year NWWAC is going to work on the evaluation of the CFP and UK approach in fisheries management. Collaboration is continuing with the PelAC via a joint Focus Group on the spatial dimension regarding fisheries. The NWWAC's Focus Group Landing Obligation will engage in the Commission's exercise on evaluating the LO, while its Focus Group on control, enforcement and compliance continues to follow closely the implementation of the revised Control Regulation and EU-UK discussions regarding the UK approach to REM implementation.

To conclude reference was made to the ACFishMap, the NWWAC's online digital fisheries management tool. To assist with updating and improving the platform, all participants were invited to send comments to the NWWAC Secretariat.

Since the last Advisory Board meeting in October, the NSAC has been very active with different activities:

- Advice on the evaluation of Technical Measures Regulation
- Advice on generational renewal and recreational fisheries.
- EFCA/NSAC/Scheveningen CEG workshop on control and compliance with the LO was organised in January 2024. The exchange with EFCA representatives was appreciated fostering trust and openness.
- In March they held the NSAC/EAPO Symposium on Innovative Fishing, with participation from MS and stakeholders, including UK and Norway.
- Responses to several joint recommendations were sent, namely on Sprat box, on the technical measures for squid and the Danish Natura 2000 sites, and de minimis exemption for lemon sole. They are currently consulting on one MPA site in the Kattegat proposed by the Swedish administration. They also started collecting best practices in the mapping of fishing grounds for MSP purposes in their Mapping FG. In collaboration with Norwegian colleagues and the MAC, AAC and CCRUP, they are currently also working on the advice on valorisation of fisheries sidestreams and waste in order to bring circularity and zero waste also to fisheries and aquaculture.
- Following up the developments on the Control Regulation and its implementation and working on developing guidelines for stakeholder engagement in ICES/STECF scientific advice request formulation, an initiative to which they thanked the Commission.

In July they will hold their WG and ExCom meetings in San Sebastián, where their ICES correspondent will present ICES Advice on fishing opportunities for 2025. In parallel they are in the process of relocating the NSAC from the Netherlands to Brussels, and this should be concluded by November 2024.

The NSAC will celebrate its 20th anniversary on 12 September in Edinburgh castle, Scotland. Together with the presentations, they will be organising a short afternoon Conference on the future of CFP. They are glad to count with EFCA participation.

MAC referred to several advice delivered and linked with the work of EFCA:

- Forced Labour: This advice is even more relevant now that forced labour will be a serious infringement. This is recommended to cooperate with international bodies, to construct and maintain comprehensive databases on social and environmental issues, and the establishment of a list of companies, including where relevant, fishing vessels, involved in forced labour.

- Negotiation of the free trade agreement with Thailand: the AC is worried about Thai legislative developments in the area of tuna fisheries and about particular sensitivities for the import of canned and tuna loin products and requests the use of the available tools in the EU, such as the IUU Regulation, to ensure compliance of the products with the international rules.
- STECF Annual Economic Report on EU fishing fleet, where MAC requests to duly consider social variables impact via data collection.
- Marine Action Plan: Request of a comprehensive socioeconomic impact assessment of the impact of the foreseen measures on the market of fishery and aquaculture products.
- Advice about China, in conjunction with LDAC: A reply from the European Commission was received. At a recent meeting of the MAC, journalists reported about cases of IUU fishing by the Chinese long-distance fleet as well as forced labour cases in fish processing factories, including through the use of ethnic minorities and North Korean labour. China is doing efforts but still they need much effort.

On other issues, MAC is preparing advice to the European Commission on the Terms of Reference of the planned study in preparation on feasible traceability systems and procedures for prepared and preserved fishery and aquaculture products. At a recent meeting, the MAC also held an exchange on the effects of the Red Sea situation, including changes of routes and their impact in the market.

LDAC referred to their advice delivered recently:

- Recommendations with regard to the annual meetings of ICCAT and WCPFC
- Recommendations on the key role of fisheries observers and the importance of ensuring their protection
- Joint advice with AFRIFISH-Net on addressing the role of women in fisheries-example of EU SFPAs.

An advice on sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture in EU-Norway trade relations. With regard to the previous LDAC-MAC advice on China and the response from the Commission, the LDAC understands that the Commission considers that its cooperation with China is positive and progressing. However, the LDAC believes that additional political steps are needed in particular with regard to transparency in fisheries and the effectiveness of control efforts by China.

In the future, LDAC will advise the different RFMOs with regard to measures on sharks, tuna, REM and MCS systems. Regarding International Ocean Governance processes, LDAC is working on a draft advice on potential impacts of deep-sea mining occurring in the high seas for distant water fisheries. Moreover, LDAC is working on a piece of advice on the impacts of climate change in international fisheries from various perspectives (incl., food security, biological sustainability). Another area of work will be with FAO, ATLAFCO-COMHAFAT and AFRIFISH-Net about traceability of fish products, the fight against IUU fishing, the use of catch documentation schemes and the implementation of the PSMA and access agreements.

LDAC is also involved in advising EU on North East Atlantic multilateral negotiations for fisheries management in the post-Brexit scenario and on social and labour issues.

BSAC congratulated EFCA for their work on social media. On the issues they are working, they mentioned the following issues:

- Wind development: Industrialisation and privatization of the Baltic Sea
- Advice on MPAS.

- STECF and ICES
- A workshop on control and enforcement of the LO, with EFCA. This should follow up from the evaluation of the LO of 2019 to 2021. In that sense, an update would be appreciated.
- New control obligations and regulation for small scale and recreational fisheries, as the Control Regulation is a starting point. For recreational fisheries, it is important to provide robust data.

CCRUP thanked EFCA for their activities and contribution to fight IUU fishing. The adoption of a JDP for the Indian Ocean will be an important contribution to the level playing field in the area. They have been working on improving the application of IOTC rules, on achieving a level playing field between European fleets and those from third countries in terms of fisheries control, and on the establishment of a control and surveillance system on the high seas.

As presented during the last INTER AC in Brussels, French Guyana is suffering IUU fishing activities in their waters. A recommendation was adopted requesting France to ask a Specific Control and Inspection Programme (SCIP) and JDP covering the French Outermost Regions (ORs).

MEDAC could not be physically present in the meeting but sent a video with the main updates of their work highlighting the cooperation with EFCA in the framework of the MEDAC work plan and the topics in relation to ICCAT (working group 2 of MEDAC). They issued advice on the following topics:

- the socioeconomic and compliance indicators in all the multiannual plans in the Mediterranean
- MEDAC contribution to the EU Marine Action Plan
- MEDAC Contribution to the Management Strategy Evaluation ongoing process in the Adriatic Sea at GFCM level
- Work on invasive species: blue crab in the Adriatic Sea
- Work on Fisheries Restricted Areas in Strait of Sicily
- Shared standards for the training of the fishers of the future, in particular the importance of safety on board, social protection, new technology to support the sustainability of the fisheries sector and equal opportunities
- Recognition of working rights to non-EU fishers and the support to fisheries communities
- Advice on equal opportunities underlying the implementation and harmonisation of data collection on gender equality in fisheries value chain
- MEDAC survey on the available information on IUU fisheries in the Mediterranean and illegal recreational fisheries

MEDAC expressed its strong support to continue the involvement and mandate of EFCA on the fight against IUU on the control and enforcement of conservation and management measures of ICCAT and GFCM by third countries and the work towards a level playing field in the Mediterranean. MEDAC thanked the collaboration for the upcoming GFCM and ICCAT meetings.

2. EFCA's Annual Report 2023

The Acting Head of Unit North Atlantic, North Sea and Baltic Sea (HoU 2) and the Head of Unit Strategy and Cooperation (HoU 5) provided then a summary of the Annual Report and its main figures.

- The Agency had an implementation of 98 percent of the annual work programme with a budget execution of 99.94.

- Regarding the six JDPs, the number of inspections conducted at sea and at shore for all the JDPs were 44,993, among which 4,230 had at least one suspected infringement.
- There were 29 specific actions taking place in the framework of the North Sea, Baltic Sea, and Western Waters, and nine specific campaigns implemented in the framework of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.
- The Agency continued to provide support to the regional control expert groups in particular, regarding the implementation of the landing obligation and of the pilot projects on REM that are being conducted in the Baltic Sea, North Sea, and North Western Waters. The reports on the evaluation of compliance with the landing obligation were finalised.
- Regarding training activities, efforts have been done in order to introduce a more systematic approach in the different training courses, aligning them with the sectorial qualification framework. 2,400 EU Member States and third countries officials have passed EFCA training activities.
- On the international dimension, EFCA activities have been focussed on supporting the EC in the context of RFMOs. Thereby, the Agency participated in four missions related to fight against IUU to third countries together with EC.
- The project PESCAO came to an end: it brought a new approach in the cooperation with third countries applying a more operational approach and introducing some seeds for expansion in the future for other potential regions of interest to the EU.
- Concerning the European Coast Guard cooperation, the multipurpose maritime operations continued, namely in the context of the Adriatic Sea. The Coast Guard Handbook has become really a good reference point to have a first entry door to what is being done across the different domains. EFCA also organised jointly with Belgium, the European Coast Guard Forum seminar on the use of innovative fisheries surveillance and inspection techniques.
- The weighing project brought to work together Member State experts and officers preparing legislation from the EC in a very participatory way and based on the best technical advice.
- With the e- FishMed project, contract technologies are an instrumental tool that EFCA is facilitating for Member States using operational contacts to monitor potential restricted areas.
- An overview was given on the horizontal support activities.

CCRUP asked if the JDP map could be enlarged so that outermost regions are also reflected. HoU 5 explained these were the JDP areas of 2023, but in 2024, the Indian Ocean will be covered.

BSAC asked for an update on the Baltic Sea evaluation of compliance with LO. EFCA mentioned a Baltfish meeting on 14-15 May 2024, during which the issue of publication of the report would be discussed, and a possible joint workshop in October 2024 to present the results.

LDAC asked for more information on the JDP in the Indian Ocean. HoU 3 answered that there are three countries involved in the JDP: Italy, France and Spain. The JDP is focused on land-based inspections. In June 2024, the first team of inspectors will be deployed especially in a fact-finding mission, gathering information on the main operators in the area and getting acquainted with the concerned areas. It will be a joint team and will have the presence of an EFCA inspector. Inspections in ports will take place in EU ports or third countries ports with previous agreements. This will be a learning experience for the upcoming activities.

Moreover, in the area the SWIOP project will be developed in the Indian Ocean, replacing the current ECOGISH. In terms of content, it will be similar to PESCAO, with support to operational activities and a training component. The next concrete step is the organisation of a workshop on Risk Assessment in Mozambique.

LDAC is also interested in following up on the West Africa Sustainable Ocean Programme (WASOP)

BSAC asked why there is a lower infringement rate (from 2.5 to 2). HoU 2 explained that the lower infringement rate may be a reflection of the current status of fishing activity, which is very low for most of the fisheries covered by the SCIP.

MAC asked if it was possible for EFCA to have an overview and compare what they see at sea with the actual infringements. HoU 5 answered that currently the info available from MS is under the JDPs. From 2026 there will be an annual report from MS.

3. EFCA's Single Programming Documents (SPD): Draft SPD 2025

EFCA presented the draft for the agency's Single Programming Document containing the Multiannual Work Programme 2025-2029 and the Annual Work Programme for 2025. The draft, as adopted by the Administrative Board in October 2023, has been notified in January 2024 and the Commission is expected to give its opinion before July 2024. The draft will then be presented to the Administrative Board again in October 2024.

The Head of Unit Strategy and Cooperation (HoU 5) presented the draft Single Programming Document with the multiannual objectives and areas of intervention, as well as the Annual Work Programme 2025 with the draft budget for 2025 and the draft operational objectives. He confirmed that the final draft incorporating the Commission's suggestions shall be presented to the Administrative Board in October 2024. The final draft will also contain the Annual Strategic Plan under the Tripartite Working Agreement with Frontex and EMSA and the strategy for the cooperation with third countries.

There were no further comments on the SPD.

4. Rotation of the Advisory Board representative in the EFCA Administrative Board

From 2 March 2024 until 1 March 2025, the representative at the Administrative Board is the CCRUP, and the alternate, the NSAC. The ACs endorsed the EFCA proposal.

5. AOB

EFCA ED thanked everyone for their participation and hard work and said she was looking forward to receiving them in Vigo next Spring.

Regarding the possibility of online meetings, CCRUP asked to be in the afternoon, in case they are held online.