

MINUTES

Joint Advice Drafting Group Blue Economy

Virtual meeting via Teams

Thursday 05 November 2020 09:30 – 11:00 CET

Participants

Name	Organisation		
Jacopo Pasquero	EBCD	OIG	EU
David Vertegaal	EAA	OIG	EU
Iván López	AGARBA	IND	ES
Béatrice Gorez	Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements	OIG	BE
Julien Daudu	Environmental Justice Foundation	OIG	EU
Patrick Murphy	Irish South & West FPO	IND	IE
Guillaume Carruel	EAPO	IND	EU
Linnéa Engstrom	MSC	OIG	EU
José Beltrán	OPP-LUGO	IND	ES
Zarah Bellefroid	Rederscentrale	IND	BE
Alex Rodriguez	LDAC	Sec	
Pedro Reis Santos	MAC	Sec	
Ludmilla van der Meer	PELAC	Sec	
Mo Mathies	NWWAC	Sec	
Ewa Mileska (observer)	BSAC	Sec	

Apologies

Name	Organisation		
Jasmine Vlietinck	Rederscentrale	IND	BE
Sander Meyns	Rederscentrale	IND	BE
Gian Ludovico Ceccaroni	Federcoopesca	IND	
Gonçalo Carvalho	Sciaena	OIG	PT
Pim Visser	VisNed	IND	NL
Rosa Caggiano	MEDAC	Sec	
Marzia Piron	MEDAC	Sec	
Marina Illuminati	MEDAC	Sec	
Tamara Talevska	NSAC	Sec	



1 Welcome and introductions

The NWWAC Secretariat welcomed all participants. The agenda was adopted.

2 The new approach on the sustainable blue economy - Ms Patrizia Busolini, Policy Officer DG MARE Unit on Sea-basin Strategies, Maritime Regional Cooperation and Maritime Security

Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Virginijus Sinkevičius was asked to develop a new approach on the blue economy by EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in order to make the blue economy sustainable and make it an integral part of the EU Green Deal. This will be described in a specific Commission communication which is scheduled for publication for the first half of 2021.

There are specific steps in process in order to prepare this communication. The first one is the preparation of roadmap, which is the object of this consultation with the 7 December deadline. A webinar¹ was held last week in support of the stakeholders' joint reflection, and to collect input and ideas from stakeholders. The new approach is shaped by the Commission together with stakeholders, and will also be implemented in collaboration. During the webinar the Commission briefly presented this new concept on the sustainable blue economy, followed by speakers from different stakeholder sectors who presented on issues and challenges from their own perspectives.

The key idea of this new approach on blue economy is that the Commission wants to look at the sustainable blue economy from three different angles:

1. Preserving marine natural capital – when it comes to the oceans, the environment is the economy;
2. Sharing profits and investing in innovation and should be resilient to shocks and not depend on privileged taxation regimes;
3. Providing benefits to present and future generations but not only in terms of income, but also in terms of healthy food, medicines and livelihoods.

The roadmap takes stock of the the 2020 blue economy report² which indicates that that blue economy is a wide and fast moving sector that includes traditional and emerging sectors with a total value of €750 billion and employing over 5 million people in 2018, thus making it crucial for prosperity and employment in Europe.

This also means it has an enormous potential to contribute to the EU Green Deal. There are still challenges that need to be tackled when it comes to exploiting marine resources in a sustainable manner, safeguarding the preservation of the oceans. Coastal and marine activities that are linked to the blue economy need to develop clean carbon neutral innovative solutions which is not a unique challenge.

¹ DG MARE webinar on the new approach on sustainable blue economy <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/en/node/5151>

² https://blueindicators.ec.europa.eu/published-reports_en



We are also facing the new and unexpected challenges of the COVID-19 crisis, which also provides opportunities regarding the development and adoption of a new sustainable and resilient model of the blue economy, one which respects and conserves the sustainable use of seas, oceans, marine resources etc. In addition, there are challenges related to digitalisation.

The roadmap tries to identify a concept on how this can be done. The Communication on the sustainable blue economy wants to set out this new vision in order to implement and to respond to the Green Deal objectives, in particular along the axis of decarbonisation, zero pollution, circularity and biodiversity. The new approach wants to identify a concrete transformation path in different sectors of the blue economy in order to guide public and private initiatives. It wants to meet the needs and the requirements from both traditional and emerging sectors as they need to be considered as a unique maritime socio-economic system. It is important to meet the expectations of all the actors involved, public authorities, academia, business, civil society etc.

At the core of this approach is the need to foster the economy and the social recovery as well as resilience. In this sense it is also important to exploit sustainable technologies of both products and services, especially in the emerging sectors which have a high employment potential and low environmental impacts. This means relying on digitalisation and modern technologies.

This approach has not been developed on its own but fits into a broader framework of other EU policies which respond to the objectives of the Green Deal, including the Farm 2 Fork Strategy, the Biodiversity Strategy, and the Plastic and Circular Economy Strategy.

This approach of course requires the commitment of all stakeholders. It also needs financial means for its implementation. The EMFF will play a key role accordingly, especially its Blue Invest platform, the Blue Invest Fund, coupled with other new programmes, for example Horizon Europe.

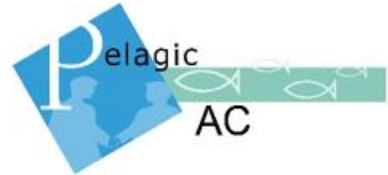
In parallel, it is essential that national resilience and recovery plans submitted by the Member States as part of their operational programmes for 2021-2027 are aligned towards the same priorities, so that they consider and include the priorities of the new sustainable blue economy approach in order for financial means to be made available.

ACTION: For specific questions and comments and questions in addition to the online consultation, DG MARE has activated a specific functional email: MARE-A3-SBE@ec.europa.eu.

Q: I would like to ask the Commission to focus on the positives that the industry has achieved over the last number of years and where it is continuing to improve and bring more stocks up to MSY. The industry does still have to make further improvements and is for example looking at the actual fuel which they are using and looking at new technology.

Q: How is the blue economy communication aligning itself with all the other initiatives that are currently going on, for example the UN blue ocean decade, the Farm to Fork Strategy, substantiating green claims, empowering consumers in the green transition?

A: There is an internal process within the Commission that when a new initiative is launched, all EU services and DGs are consulted well in advance. In order to arrive at the roadmap which is now open for public consultation, all



Commission services have been consulted to coordinate the approach. This is a continuous process. While the consultation is now open to the public, discussions are also ongoing within the Commission and another meeting will be held internally before the 07 December deadline where for example the results from the webinar will be presented. A coherent approach is vital for all internal Commission initiatives responding to and addressing the objectives of the Green Deal. Regarding external processes and initiatives, this is where the consultation, the webinar and other engagement with stakeholders come in. This is the very initial stage of the consultation process and further webinars are planned. The contribution from the ACs is crucial during this stage.

Q: It is really important that fisheries will be a part of this initiative because of the role it can play in creating sustainable jobs and also as a sustainable food source. The roadmap states that the blue economy covers a multitude of sectors which often produce cumulative and synergistic effects on a single environment. The industry's worry is more about a situation where these cumulative effects are not synergistic but when there is competition for example between the fishing sector and other sectors of the blue economy. How will this be taken into account? The industry would like to see in the roadmap proposals for mechanisms on how to address these conflicts.

A: I have taken note of your comment and will discuss this internally. These kind of important comments can also be sent to the functional mailbox as they are important for the Commission to take into account.

Q: In Ireland the conflict that has entered the spatial use of the marine environment is really important. This approach has to be carried out in a way that reduces conflict or finds different measures to compensate between the competing industries. Just to highlight to the Commission, this is an industry that is on the periphery of our countries, in isolated areas where there are very little other activities that create social and economic benefits for the communities. This should also be taken into consideration by the Commission in any decision making.

3 Election of Chair

There were no volunteers to take on the position of Chair for this group.

The NWWAC Secretariat proposed that it will continue to act as coordinator and liaison for this group, lead on the development of the documents and chair/moderate any future meetings. This proposal was seconded by the Chair of the LDAC and no objections were made.

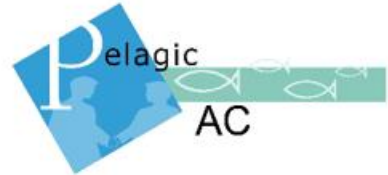
4 Terms of Reference

The draft Terms of Reference still need completion regarding the structure and functioning of this ADG within each of the ACs.

ACTION: Can the Secretariats involved please complete the relevant section and send to the NWWAC.

ACTION: NWWAC Secretariat to include the proposed timeline as circulated in previous email.

LDAC: The actions of the ADG will be channelled through the dedicated LDAC Focus Group on International Ocean Governance (IOG). The key outputs and written documents produced will be submitted for approval to the LDAC



Working Group 5 (Horizontal Issues) and the ExCom for comments and adoption by fast track procedure (minimum period of 8 calendar days).

5 Review and discussion of available documents.

Additional background information was received from the PELAC prior to this meeting and distributed to all participants as part of the agenda. Links are also available on the NWWAC website [here](#) under the relevant meeting.

ACTION: If any participants have any additional information and background papers that they consider useful to this group, please share these with the NWWAC Secretariat.

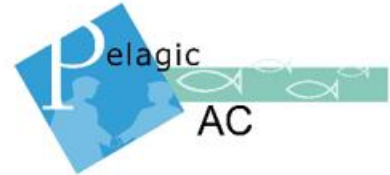
6 Advice drafting - discussion

LDAC: One thing to highlight in the advice would be the specificities of fisheries when it comes to the blue economy. It is important to highlight its role for job creation in often remote areas, its role also in providing sustainable food. The roadmap makes a reference regarding this in its mention of the Farm to Fork Strategy, but the Farm to Fork Strategy does not mention this specifically. It is important to highlight this key role of fisheries. Another important aspect is to highlight how to ensure the different sectors of the blue economy will work together. When it comes to fisheries it can be seen that there are a lot of occasions where there is competition between sustainable fisheries and other sectors of the blue economy which make it crucial that there are mechanisms in place to address these conflicts, but also that similar types of requirements are applied to other sectors. In our case it is very important to have transparency in fisheries. In the same way it would be very important to have transparency in all the other sectors of the blue economy, which currently is not always the case, for example in the oil and gas sector. The LDAC has worked quite extensively on these issues though mainly in relation to African fisheries which is of course different. But there are similar issues and documents can be provided.

MAC: It is vital to have wild catch fisheries on the agenda. The Commission representative commented on the structure of the initiative stating these key points:

1. Preserving marine natural capital
2. Share profits and invest in innovation and should be resilient to shocks and not depend on privileged taxation regimes
3. Provide benefits to present and future generations but not only in term of income, but also in terms of healthy food, medicines and livelihoods.

Could the advice be structured around these three themes? The MSC is also working together with credible eco-labels that are part of iSEAL to influence the Farm 2 Fork Strategy on substantiating green claims for example. The whole UN agenda on collecting more data on oceans and fisheries is something else that we can contribute to immensely since the MSC has so much data on certified fisheries. This all connects to the point mentioned earlier on transparency and traceability in fisheries. This is crucial and should be made very clear in this advice document we are here to draft.



NWWAC: Regarding the issue of data, there is another EU consultation open on [Ocean observation – sharing responsibility](#). This initiative aims to achieve a common EU approach for measuring once and using the data for many purposes. It proposes the joint planning of observation activities, as well as a framework for collaboration on a national and EU scale. Feedback is open until 19 November on this.

PELAC: Are we considering to include for example the Single Use Plastics Directive and the standardisation of fishing gear in this advice document?

NWWAC: What could be done is make a reference in the final advice document to all previous advice that the various ACs have submitted in the past to the Commission on topics relating to the blue economy in order to avoid repetition or additional work, for example the multi-AC advice on the SUP implementation or the NSAC advice on circular design of fishing gear. This could be included in an annex and stated that this must be looked at as part of the considerations.

MAC: It is a very good idea to refer to previous advice of all the ACs, for example also on EIAs and environmental impacts of wind farms. Also to point out the reference to a transition mechanism for fishers at the end of the roadmap: “The initiative contemplates transition mechanisms for workers and coastal communities and sets orientations for skills development.” This sounds a bit like a proposal to replace fisher(wo)men by wind farms or other activities. While this is still quite vague it is important to highlight this in the advice.

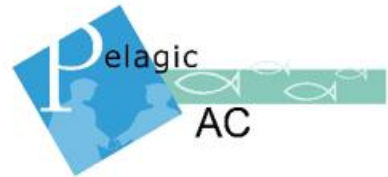
NWWAC: Knowledge gaps are a very important issue regarding this whole topic. There is a lot we do not know when it comes to biodiversity and climate change especially in relation to the impacts that these have on the fisheries sector. It is extremely relevant that any multi-AC advice voices the concerns of the sector and identify what the sector needs in terms of data, knowledge and research in order to provide for a more tailored approach to data and knowledge. Secondly, the roadmap identifies further discussion with stakeholders, and while several fora are considered, many others are missing. We may want to include this in the advice as well. Thirdly, when it comes evidence based there is a lot regarding biodiversity and climate change which is great, but this can be complimented with evidence-based documents that are also relevant, for example the [FAO SOFIA report 2020](#) and the [Global Biodiversity Outlook](#) produced by the Convention on Biological Diversity which clearly states what works and what does not work when it comes to climate change and biodiversity in the marine environment.

MAC: Please bear in mind the other sectors covered by the MAC when drafting the advice, including aquaculture and seafood processing.

ACTION: Can all Secretariats review their previous advice and send any related advice to the NWWAC Secretariat to be included from the start.

7 Timeline, AOB

The NWWAC Secretariat will pull together the minutes from this meeting and make a first draft document based on today’s discussions. This will be distributed as soon as possible especially to those members of this group who were unable to attend today.



It was suggested to set up a meeting for the following week to give those members who were unavailable today to have their say.

The LDAC supports this approach, and is happy to contribute to providing guidance and feedback with regards to aspects related to fisheries governance and management in the High Seas and International non-EU Waters.

ACTION: NWWAC Secretariat to set up Doodle poll for meeting week of 09 November.

8 Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

1	For specific questions and comments and questions in addition to the online consultation, DG MARE has activated a specific functional email: MARE-A3-SBE@ec.europa.eu .
2	Can the Secretariats involved please complete the relevant section of the Terms of Reference and send to the NWWAC Secretariat.
3	NWWAC Secretariat to include the proposed timeline as circulated in previous email in the terms of Reference.
4	If any participants have any additional information and background papers that they consider useful to this group, please share these with the NWWAC Secretariat.
5	Can all Secretariats review their previous advice and send any related advice to the NWWAC Secretariat to be included from the start.
6	NWWAC Secretariat to set up Doodle poll for meeting week of 09 November.