

DRAFT NWWAC MINUTES

FOCUS GROUP CONTROL

Online on Teams, 8 September 2025 (10:30 – 12:00 CET)

1. Welcome and introductions

The FG Chair, Patrick Murphy, welcomed all participants to the meeting and noted that no apologies had been received. He then presented the agenda, during which Aodh O'Donnell proposed adding new items under point 3 concerning the Commission's Draft Implementing Act and the provisions on weighing and sampling. The Chair confirmed that these would be included for discussion

- **Action points from the last meetings (2 July 2025, Vigo)**

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| 1. Focus Group Control to review the issue of access ladders as raised by EFCA and potentially develop advice |
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Agenda Item 2

2. Discussion on NWWAC Draft Advice regarding the Delegated Act (applicable from January 2026) under the amended Fisheries Control Regulation, including provisions on the construction and use of Boarding Ladders

The Chair opened the discussion on the agenda item. The Secretariat recalled that the drafting process had begun following the EXCOM mandate in Vigo, after which a preliminary draft was circulated to members the previous Friday. The Chair informed members that he produced a document with some suggestions both on the Delegated Act and on the Implementing Act. The Chair, members and Secretariat discussed to consolidate Chair contribution into a single document, together with the already drafted advice on Boarding Ladder. Members agreed that further technical input and practical examples from operators would be valuable in strengthening the draft.

Inputs from Rossen Karavatchev – Fisheries Expert, International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), Fisheries Section

Rossen Karavatchev noted that much of the current legislation in fisheries is adapted from merchant shipping conventions, including IMO Cape Town Agreement, 2012 implementing the Torremolinos Protocol of safety of fishing vessels, 1993. While he considered the text of the boarding letter generally well written, he identified areas that could benefit from clarification or additional guidance.

He suggested amendments to the annex to ensure that ladders are efficiently maintained, kept clean, and regularly inspected. For vessels above 24 metres, he recommended considering certification of compliance with relevant standards by recognised classification societies.

Karavatchev raised questions regarding the materials used for ladder steps, the replacement of worn ropes, and the inclusion of certificates of competence for vessels staying for longer periods. He also suggested mentioning “double bookkeeping” as a potential example of deception and indicator of forced labour.

Karavatchev highlighted that smaller vessels, which fall below the Cape Town Agreement threshold, are not required to hold compulsory certificates but should still be inspected regularly to ensure the suitability of equipment. He pointed out that ladder materials and step dimensions are outdated and prone to damage, and suggested modernising standards to improve safety. He recommended that ladders be sourced from recognised companies and comply with national or international standards, similar to approaches taken for life jackets and personal flotation devices.

During the discussion, he noted practical challenges, such as the difficulty of accessing suitable materials for repairs and the need to consider lowering the threshold for compulsory compliance from 18 to 15 metres to align with European Commission practice and other regulations or directives. Overall, Karavatchev emphasised that while current regulations are largely inherited from merchant shipping, updating inspection practices, standards, and materials could significantly enhance safety for fisheries vessels, particularly smaller ones.

The Chair thanked Karavatchev for his support and input. With his assistance, Members proceeded to review the draft NWWAC advice on boarding ladders, offering suggestions and amendments that the Secretariat will incorporate into a revised version.

3. Implementing Act on the provision applying as from January 2026 of the amended Fisheries Control Regulation – discussion on AC follow-up

Members expressed concern about the pace of regulatory developments and the lack of consultation with stakeholders, noting that the process seemed inconsistent with the Commission’s stated goals of simplification and reduced administrative burden. It was also pointed out that the final draft implementing regulation would be circulated shortly, leaving a very tight timeline for AC input. Several participants agreed with the Secretariat proposal to issue a joint advice with the Pelagic AC, given the cross-cutting relevance of the issues, and members emphasised the importance of ensuring stakeholder engagement with control experts from Member States.

4. AOB

- **Discussion on eventual members interest on SeaVeillance Project proposal addressed under HORIZON-CL6-2025-02-FARM2FORK-11 Towards modern, integrated, and effective fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) systems:** Mo Mathies informed FG members that the coordinators of the proposed Horizon project have approached NWWAC Secretariat to gauge interest in participation in the project’s reference group. They recommended that a single AC representative be designated to follow this

project, attend meetings, and report back to the AC. Dominic Rihan expressed his interest in following the project.

- **Organisation of a second Joint ACs workshop on Control Regulation:** Members expressed interest in holding a second workshop. The NWWAC Secretariat is liaising with the other ACs and has informed FG members that it will not take the lead in organising the event, as it did for the first workshop.

5. Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

Action points

1. Letter to Commission: Agreed to draft a joint AC letter on the legislative stakeholder consultation process. Once the draft advice is ready, NWWAC Secretariat will contact other ACs.
2. Develop a NWWAC Advice on the Commission Delegated Act, which includes NWWAC recommendations on boarding ladder measures.
3. Joint AC work: Secretariat to coordinate with PELAC on possible joint advice regarding the implementing act.
4. Follow-up workshop: Group to support organisation of a further workshop with control experts, Commission, EFCA, and Member States.
5. Possible additional meeting: depending on progress with documents, a short extra FG meeting may be convened before advice submission.

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking all participants and the Secretariat.

Participants

Name	Organisation
FG Members	
Franck Le Barzic	Cobrenord
John Lynch	ISEFPO
Sander Meyns	Rederscentrale
Louis Montperrus	CNPMEM
Patrick Murphy	IS&WFPO
Aodh O'Donnell	IFPO
Alexandra Philippe	EBCD
Irene Prieto	OPPF4
Dominic Rihan	KFO
Arthur Yon	FROM Nord
Observers & Experts	
Rossen Karavatchev	Fisheries Expert, International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), Fisheries Section
Secretariat	
Ilaria Bellomo	
Mo Mathies	