



Mr Bernhard Friess
Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
European Commission
1049 Brussel
Belgium

Dublin, 01 April 2020

Dear Mr Friess,

Subject: Request for clarification on impact of the COVID-19 crisis on functioning of Commission, Member State and Advisory Council work

The outbreak of COVID-19 presents a major challenge to all aspects of life in the European Union and worldwide. The North Western Waters Advisory Council greatly appreciates the measures proposed by the European Commission to alleviate the impact of COVID-19.

Members of the NWWAC are greatly affected by the health crisis, and concerns are growing as to the ability to maintain fishing communities around all coasts with livelihoods at stake due to reduced seafood processing leading to reduced fishing effort.

The main focus of the fishing community is to ensure support for its members, their families and coastal communities overall. This, in turn, is impacting the work of the Advisory Council itself and the ability of the Secretariat to mobilise its stakeholders to continue contributing to current advice drafting processes. In addition, the NWWAC preparatory work on advice has been seriously hampered by the unexpected cancellation of the regular Spring meetings due to emergency measures to combat COVID-19 being put in place in Madrid at the time of the meetings.

Without any doubt the current crisis also has an impact on the European Commission's own processes, and deadlines might be under review as well for Member States, as for scientific advisory bodies and for the implementation of various legal instruments.

Therefore, the NWWAC suggests to initiate a thorough review of the feasibility to achieve currently existing deadlines, including the one for the Joint Recommendation 2021 and to amend these taking into account the current circumstances.

I hope to receive your confirmation of a positive approach to this suggestion and look forward to your response. Again, thank you for the support the seafood sector is receiving from the European Commission during this difficult time.

Yours sincerely,

Emiel Brouckaert, Chairman Executive Committee

