



Ms Charlina Vitcheva
Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
European Commission
Josef II-straat 99
1000 Brussel
Belgium

Dun Laoghaire, 22 March 2021

Re: Commission's Explanatory Note and lack of participation in NWWAC meetings

Dear Ms Vitcheva,

It is with great concern that I am contacting you today on behalf of the members of the North Western Waters Advisory Council who reviewed and discussed the Commission's explanatory note on the proposal for a revision of the EU-fisheries control regulation. This note was apparently circulated to some MEPs in preparation of a plenary vote on the PECH Committee's report on the Commission's proposal. The NWWAC members have perceived in this note that the European Commission considers that EU fishers constantly operate in illegality and generally are cheaters. Therefore, the NWWAC members expressed their support for the Europêche open letter EP(21)18 to Commissioner Sinkevičius urging the Commission to stop casting a shadow of suspicion on the European fisheries sector and its compliance, and to respect the principles in the EU democratic legislating process.

Sending you the above comments was decided by the NWWAC members when addressing the lack of participation of Commission representatives in the recent AC meetings of which the dates were known since autumn last year. The combination of both issues has raised serious concerns amongst the members in relation to the usefulness of the AC's work and the support for their participation by the people they represent. Such lack of participation is unprecedented as Commission representatives always actively participated in NWWAC events previously to update on ongoing dossiers as well as to explore and provide feedback on members' queries. It has been commented that attendance of the NWWAC meetings by Commission representatives cannot be substituted by more frequent Inter-AC meetings.

NWWAC members wish to continue the good cooperation with the Commission but feel that in light of the unfounded allegations made in the explanatory note, tarring all fishers with the same brush and accusing all of infringing on the current legislation, a lack of trust is evidenced. This is considered extremely harmful for the image of an entire sector that has been subject to major changes on the road to sustainability and still faces many challenges. This is unfair to all the hard working and honest fishers who want the best for the sustainability of their industry and who have their communities at heart.





Therefore, the NWWAC kindly requests DG MARE to address this issue and to look into sending a clear signal of support of the sector to Europe's fishers and to the general public. In addition, we would ask that an official explanation is given to the NWWAC members about the lack of participation including a confirmation that every effort will be made to join the future meetings of the NWWAC.

Thank you for your attention on this matter. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Emiel Brouckaert
Chairman NWWAC Executive Committee

