

REPORT

Meeting: **NSAC/NWWAC Social Aspects FG**

Parties: **NSAC/NWWAC FG members**

Date and time: **27 March 2023**

Location: **MS Teams**

Chair: **Kenn Skau Fischer**

Rapporteur: **Tamara Talevska**

1 Welcome and introduction

The Chair welcomed the participants of the joint Social Aspects FG, dedicated to the presentation of best practice from Denmark and review of the draft advice on vessels safety directive.

Apologies were presented from Michael Andersen (DFPO), Norah Parke (KFO), Bruno Dachicourt (ETF) and Ment van der Zwan (Cornelis Vrolijk).

Agenda was approved without amends.

2 Report from the previous meeting

Tamara Talevska read through previously agreed actions and elaborated on their status as follows:



| Action | Responsible | Status |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| The Secretariat to contact EMSA with a request for provision of fisheries-related data on the number and causes of fisheries accidents. The Chair to verify the accurate numbers with the Danish expert. | NSAC Secretariat, Chair | <i>Complete; on the day's agenda</i> |
| The draft advice to include the distinction between structural and technical issues, and human factors compromising safety. In addition, the advice shall report on the number and reasons for accidents in the EU fleet. | NSAC Secretariat, members | <i>Complete; on the day's agenda</i> |
| Expand the section on accident reporting obligation in the draft advice. | NSAC Secretariat, members | <i>Complete, on the days agenda</i> |
| The latest version of the advice shall be put for consultation and members to contribute in writing on identified aspects by 10 March 2023. The advice should include a paragraph on the use of AIS, including the call on improved cooperation between authorities overseeing both monitoring systems, and refer to previous NSAC advice on AIS/VMS. | NSAC Secretariat, members | <i>Complete, on the day's agenda</i> |

3 Best practices in vessel safety by Flemming Christensen from the Danish Fishermen's Occupational Health Services

Flemming Nygaard Christensen started his presentation by saying that the establishment of the Danish Fishermen's Occupational Health Services (OHS) in 1993 was the foundation of "best practices" in relation to the safety of fishing vessels. The Occupational Health Service is a non-profit organization based in the west coast of Denmark in Esbjerg, working to raise awareness about safety and providing advice and guidance to the Danish fishing industry. Working closely with the fishing sector and the maritime authorities is one of its main premises.

Christensen presented organizational chart of the OHS, where he is the director of the organization. The OHS is servicing five safety committees divided geographically. Largest vessels either have their own safety committee on board, or they have a safety committee in each of the four regions (West, North, East, Northwest).

On the OH Board are eight members with an equal number of employed fishermen and ship owners. The employed fishermen are represented by "3F" which is Denmark's largest trade union. The ship owners are represented by the Danish Fishermen's Producer Organization

which is Denmark's largest organization for ship owners, and Danish Pelagic Producer Organisation, representing pelagic fleet.

The purpose of OHS Board is to promote the safety of fishermen and prevent injuries, maintain a healthy and safe working environment on Danish fishing vessels, Identify and assess health and safety problems, provide information, guidance and coordinate the work of the safety committees, make requests and suggestions about health and safety of and on fishing vessels, propose and comment on new rules and regulations.

As for the Fishermen's Occupational Health Service, its tasks are laid down by the OH Board: to identify and evaluate occupational health problems on fishing vessels, to act as a secretariat for all local safety committees and participates in all meetings, to assist and advise ship owners, employees and the safety organisation of the fishing industry when solving occupational health issues, to advise ship owners, employees and the safety organisation of the fishing industry about the purchase, control as well as use of PPE (personal protective equipment).

OHS also hold annual seminars where they take up relevant topics about working environment and safety for discussion.

OHS also train and educate the members of the OH Board and Safety Committees. They have to attend a mandatory occupational health course approved by the Danish Maritime Authority, so they can do their work as board members or members of the safety committees.

The tasks of the safety committees are the same as for the occupational health board and services, however they work at the local level. The members also act as safety officers in the local area where they can be contacted by the fishers (or their colleagues) if they need assistance with work/safety issues. The safety committees make sure that the reasons for accidents, poisoning and work-related attrition are looked into and arrange for measures to be taken to prevent recurrence.

The committees meet four times a year. At these meetings, any accidents that have happened in the area in the past 3 months are evaluated and commented on by the committee. If any relevant preventative measures can be taken on the vessel where the accident happened, the committee will send its suggestions to the vessel owner, so similar accidents can be avoided.

The OHS is working closely together with the Danish Maritime Agency. All fishing vessels with fisheries licenses are registered with OHS as an obligation. Fishers have to attend mandatory course provided by the Danish Maritime Agency to work as counselors for the colleagues.

The annual fishing safety seminar is an opportunity to flag any pressing issues. Christensen mentioned that one of the most recent issues is increasing psychological pressure on fishers.

Typical tasks on board by OHS consultants include:

- Advice / help with everything on board relating to health /safety / working environment
- Noise measurement and noise measurement reports

- Proposals to reduce noise problems
- Interpretation of new regulations / rules
- Help with preparation of workplace assessment
- Pre-inspection before the maritime Authority's ordinary surveys
- Suggestions / help with repairs in connection with surveys
- Advice when building new and conversion of vessels, as well as flagging in fishing vessels
- Help / advice on work related injuries / attrition
- Crisis counselling
- Development of products / equipment to prevent accidents and attrition

When carrying out all these different tasks the OHS counsellors are mostly onboard the vessels, which gives them a unique opportunity to talk about safety and safety awareness, not just in relation to the main task, but also to deal with a lot of other issues in relation to health, safety and the working environment on board.

OHS is financed by annual fees paid by the fishers, with amounts depending on the size of the vessel with Danish Maritime Authorities issuing the invoice. After that fee is paid, all service of the OHS is free.

Best practice in raising safety awareness:

- Establishment of the OHS as safety culture needs to be anchored somewhere: provides counselling, are contact for safety-related advice etc.
- Publications: OHS produced a wide range of publications and videos, and some of them are translated into English, Norwegian and Greenlandic.
- Stability Guide and the report from a project, which describes the development of the safety culture in Danish fisheries. They're both in English, and you can find them on the website: <https://www.f-a.dk/english>.
- Two recent campaigns are on "safe start on a new job"; and "safety for one-man operated fishing vessels". Christensen reported that since 2016, there had been 6 deaths on Danish fishing vessels and 5 of those were from one-man operated fishing vessels (people falling over the board with no proper safety measures applied).
- Project "Safety in the Danish fishing industry" - this project showed that the proportion of occupational injuries depends on how long the fisherman was employed on a particular vessel. Over 52.4 % of reported injuries involved fishermen who have worked less than one year on the vessel. 31.7 % of the reported injuries involved fishermen who've worked between 1 and 5 years. This shows that the risk of work-related injuries decreases, the more experience the fisherman has on the vessel. It also shows that safety awareness is very important, and it's important to discuss safety onboard, and here, the workplace (risk) assessment can be a vital tool for new crew members.

- The OHS also produced 7 short educational movies on safe behavior, stability guide etc.
- Safety Management System: web-based system for conducting workplace assessments, report on survey dates etc. based on which the system will send alerts to clients on what needs to be done and when in terms of crew's certifications and qualifications.

Peter Breckling, German Fisheries Association, found interesting and commented on time-specific analysis of accidents (below 12 months); he had also been involved in accident analysis before and noted that he had difficulties with getting the data. In Germany, slippery surface was reported as the main cause for accidents. He wondered if there would be any data on reasons for incidents in Denmark. He also commented on the issue of increased accidents with new crew members. This understanding seems crucial for further reduction of accidents. Breckling proposed that increased frequency of summarized communications on vessel safety observations would be beneficial and could perhaps be distributed through the NSAC.

Christensen responded that in Denmark there exists a data base of a few thousand accidents from 1996 until today, with underlying reasons, time, and all other factors available for analysis.

Michael O'Brien, ITF, queried whether "employed fishers" mentioned in the presentation meant that fishers were actually all employed directly and not part of any catch sharing scheme in Denmark, as is the case in Ireland. He also noted that there's an accident reporting obligation in Ireland as well, however some of the most pervasive injuries are not being reported there, such as back injuries, pain and stress due to excess hours etc.

Kenn Skau Fischer responded by saying that most Danish fishers are having the same kind of system as well: sharing of the catch between the skipper, owner and the crew. The catch is usually split between the owner and people working on the ship without ownership. In addition, the non-owners are secured minimum wages agreed with the main trade union (3F) regardless of the catch. Some have guaranteed salary and a bonus at the end of the year. In that sense no one is working on a fixed salary, there is always a carrot attached. He also noted that there is no people employed from outside of the EU working in Danish fishery which most likely adds to the low rates of accidents as the level of understanding and shared culture is high.

Christensen continued with reports on the number of reported accidents per 1000 fishermen compared with all other trades and noted that since 2010 Danish fisheries have been below all other trades in terms of the number of incidents. In Danish fisheries there are on average 40 accidents per year. In 2022 they had 5 serious accidents (which involves broken bone) and no deaths. He also explained that in Denmark an accident needs to be reported on day 1. If fisher is away from work or unable to work due to an accident, they have to report the accident on day 1 (instead of general 3 days rule).

Kenn Skau Fischer commented that due to excellent work of the OHS, the number of incidents has decreased since 2000. He noted that Danish fishers recognize that the OHS advice is

necessary and relevant. He half-joked that it is nowadays safer to go fishing in Denmark than to perform any work on land.

Christensen said that dissemination of information is important, but speaking directly to fishers is what makes the difference. Being able to go to harbors and conduct trainings and demonstrations has proven critical.

Peter Breckling reiterated that safety issues are generally not being communicated well enough, especially it would be interesting to have wider communication on the fact that it is possible for fisheries to reach levels of accidents that are below other trades – this would take away the unnecessary stigma of fisheries as a dangerous profession. Introduction of a communication method that is shorter than extensive publications would prove useful. Dissemination of core messages of main observations to different MS should be further explored on an EU level.

Flemming Christensen noted that presentation just scratched the surface of what OHS do and invited members to step in touch for any further information on their activities. They would be happy to share some tools from their toolbox. A login to their safety management system could also be provided. He advised to visit their website where some documents are translated to English.

Johnny Woodlock, Irish Seal Sanctuary, congratulated Danish representatives on the establishment of OHS. He shared that in Ireland there is the Marine Casualties Board responsible for accidents reporting, however the reporting is poor, and he noted that regional fisheries occupational committees are a good idea. He also thought it was great that fishers are involved bottom-up as top-down approaches are often not appreciated. He also commented that there should be funding available from EMFAF to facilitate the founding of bodies like OHS in other MS.

Flemming Christensen thanked Woodlock and noted that OHS beginnings were very difficult, because one had to reach in the fishers culture. Fishers are traditionally reluctant to have people teach them what to do. One must get rid of the culture “this is how we normally do it” first and open oneself to learning opportunities and changes. It was difficult to implement risk assessment as well, and he noted that it’s not the papers that come out of the risk assessment that matter, but the process itself. The main issue is to have people commit themselves to talk about what they do.

Members agreed to get the presentation circulated amongst members and include a section in the advice. **(Action)**

Christensen invited members to reach out in case there is a wish to hold further presentations in individual organizations (Flemming Nygaard Christensen: flemming@f-a.dk) **(Action)**

4 NSAC Advice on evaluation of Vessel Safety Directive

Talevska went through minor text changes introduced by Ment van der Zwan and reported on incorporated data from EMSA report on fishing vessel accidents from 2014-2021. It was agreed that the advice is amended based on the day's discussion and best practices are included as part of recommendations. **(Action)**

The Chair proposed to aim for finalization and approval of the advice by end April 2023.

4 AOB & date and time of next meeting

Gerard Hussenot from Blue Fish mentioned that in France organisations such as Glass and Risk Prevention Institute would be suitable for presentation and the members agreed that this might be scheduled at future meetings. **(Action)**

The Chair identified no need for further meetings on this matter and agreed to reconvene when there arises a relevant topic.

5 Actions

| Action | Responsible |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Secretariat to circulate Flemming Christensen's presentation on Danish Fishermen's Occupational Health Services and include a section of best practices in the draft advice. | Flemming Christensen, Secretariat |
| Members are invited to reach out to Flemming Nygaard Christensen: flemming@f-a.dk in case there is a wish to hold further presentations in individual organizations | Members |
| Consider inviting Glass and Risk Prevention Institute of France to deliver a presentation at future FG meeting. | Members |
| Launch written consultation in appropriate for a (FG, WG) with aim to approve advice by end April 2023. | NSAC, NWWAC Secretariats |
| Reconvene at appropriate time in the future – to be decided by the Chair and the Secretariat on advice by members. | NSAC Secretariat, Chair |

6 Participants

| First Name | Last Name | Organisation |
|------------|-------------|---|
| Gerald | Hussenot | Blue Fish |
| Michael | O'Brien | ITF |
| Flemming | Christensen | Danish Fishermen's Occupation Health Services |



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|-----------|-----------|------------------------------|
| Peter | Breckling | German Fisheries Association |
| Kenn Skau | Fischer | NSAC |
| Johnny | Woodlock | ISS |
| Tamara | Talevska | NSAC Secretariat |
| Mo | Mathies | NWWAC Secretariat |