

REPORT

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

Parties: **NSAC/NWWAC FG members**

Date and time: **3 October 2023**

Location: **Zoom**

Chair: **Kenn Skau Fischer**

Rapporteur: **Kateryna Urbanovych**

1 Welcome and introduction

The Chair welcomed the participants of the joint Social Aspects FG, which convened to review draft versions of the Generational Renewal and Recreational Fisheries advice. In total, 12 participants attended the Focus Group meeting.

During the meeting, apologies were received from Jasmine Vlietinck of Rederscentrale and Michael Andersen of DFPO.

The meeting's agenda was collectively approved without any modifications.

2 Report from the previous meeting

Tamara Talevska (NSAC Secretariat) read through previously agreed actions and elaborated on their status as follows:

Action	Status
FG members to share their insights regarding perceived challenges concerning the recruitment of new fishers or technical constraints when pursuing a fishing business in their countries, as well as effective strategies or exemplary practices for ways forward, for incorporation in upcoming advice.	<i>Ongoing</i>
Patrick Murphy to distribute the email from the Commission regarding updated Watchkeeper certification to the NSAC Secretariat for distribution to Focus Group members.	<i>Ongoing</i>
Members to share existing ILO/ FAO/OECD guidelines concerning generational renewal to be incorporated in upcoming advice.	<i>Ongoing</i>
NSAC Secretariat to distribute the link to the RecFishing Forum event concerning recreational fishing within the framework of the CFP.	<i>Complete</i>
Jan Kappel to produce a more comprehensive overview of the economic impacts of recreational fisheries.	<i>Drafting in process</i>

<p>NSAC Secretariat to investigate whether the MAC is working on an advice paper or a supporting letter concerning Fight against Forced Labour in Fisheries (connected to previously distributed LDAC Letter of Support).</p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p>
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Regarding the final agenda item, the Chair raised the question of whether Focus Group members would be on board with supporting the Market Advisory Council (MAC) in their ongoing work and monitor any potential developments.

In response to this, Johnny Woodlock (ISS) drew attention to various concerns discussed during the last NWWAC Executive Committee meeting, particularly the decline in fish sales due to rising expenses. This issue has garnered significant media coverage in Ireland, with questions arising about its potential impact on the entire industry. Woodlock suggested considering whether this should be communicated to the MAC.

The Chair thanked Woodlock for the input, noting that the matter is currently under discussion within the MAC. It is a trend observed in many countries in recent years, where it's becoming more expensive to purchase fish compared to other food products. Simultaneously, fish prices have increased overall, leading some consumers to avoid buying fish. However, this situation has led to improved incomes for fishers. It is instead mainly the rising cost of fuel that is increasingly affecting the industry.

Bruno Dachicourt (Syndicat National des Marins Pêcheurs CFTC) also intervened, mentioning that in France high fuel costs have resulted in higher fish prices for consumers, although the cost price for fishers has remained stable.

Gerald Hussenot (Blue Fish) echoed Dachicourt's statement, emphasizing the significant impact of this issue on the trawling sector in Brittany. He also proposed having presentations by two French organizations involved in preventive work on safety at the next FG meeting and proposed to coordinate this with the NSAC Secretariat (**Action**).

The Chair concurred with the points raised and encouraged Focus Group members to monitor future developments in fuel and fish prices. This way, if necessary, the group could draft advice regarding these concerns for future discussions (**Action**).

3 Draft advice on generational renewal

The Chair introduced the next agenda item, giving the floor to Talevska to present the draft paper on Generational Renewal in fisheries. Talevska explained that, based on previous discussions within the Social Aspects Focus Groups, the draft advice was divided into two sections: one addressing the background and the other focusing on factors contributing to the aging workforce. She emphasized that this structure could be further refined to contain sub-chapters each covering a specific subject-matter.

Talevska noted that she had received limited feedback on the advice, with the exception of Michael O'Brien (ITF), who highlighted a critical issue in Irish waters. In his adjustments, O'Brien pointed out disparities in pay for non-European migrant crew members, which could hinder efforts to attract a new generation of EU workers to the fishing industry. He shared case studies involving Indonesian crew members working on German and Belgian-flagged vessels but fishing elsewhere in the EU, and a more recent case of workers of a French-flagged vessel where some crews were paid as little as 2 EUR per hour, well below minimum wage requirements. O'Brien suggested that a minimum standard for pay, and conditions should be established and enforced across Europe. In this regard, O'Brien brought up the issue with an Irish representative from the European Labor Authority (ELA). This matter was subsequently included as a discussion item in the ELA's meeting on September 22nd. O'Brien suggested the coordination of an inspection regime across Europe, believing that a more proactive approach to inspections could reveal numerous additional cases of this issue beyond the ones he has encountered.

The Chair thanked Talevska and O'Brien, and encouraged Focus Group members to provide comments, examples, and suggestions for different chapters of the draft advice with the deadline of October 13 (**Action**). A new draft of the paper would be produced thereafter.

Peter Breckling (German Fisheries Association) contributed by reporting on recruitment challenges in Germany, emphasizing the need for better communication about the fishing profession. He noted that many perceive fishing as a career of last resort, and efforts should be made to showcase the skill and versatility required in the industry. Breckling also highlighted German initiatives to offer additional qualifications to fishers, such as training to work in nature conservation as 'sea rangers' or to aid with scientific services (i.e., scientific samples), providing opportunities for the industry to earn extra income with their vessels. Breckling suggested exploring and discussing various experiences from different countries regarding the involvement of fishers in activities beyond their traditional roles within the NSAC, and particularly within the Generational Renewal advice.

The Chair agreed with Breckling and suggested that the advice should also highlight the need for EU-wide programs or campaigns to raise awareness of fisheries career possibilities, given that this issue affects all Member States (MS). Regarding alternative economic opportunities for the fishing sector, the Chair noted that roles like sea rangers or those involved in sampling and monitoring could be more fruitful for fisher than being involved in areas such as tourism and should be further considered.

Woodlock pointed out that fishers' firsthand knowledge of the sea enables them to detect and report a number of events, such as cetacean sightings. He suggested that establishing a European qualification for roles like rangers or guides could be beneficial. However, he acknowledged that this would necessitate additional changes to encourage more individuals to participate. Woodlock also emphasized that there are many ways to showcase the valuable experience of fishers, and their expertise is currently used by various organizations, including NGOs, for monitoring sea conditions.

Talevska shared insights from a parliamentary event (From Waves to Wisdom), where gender bias in fisheries was discussed. She noted lingering superstitions among fishers regarding

women on board and highlighted the need to address this issue, as it could affect both women and youth recruitment.

The Chair and Hussenot stressed that such perceptions are outdated and, in most cases, do not represent the modern European fleet, and that more women are entering the maritime sector. Hussenot mentioned efforts undertaken by ISS to understand women's roles and improve inclusion on vessels, including necessary changes in vessel design and uniform clothing.

On this aspect, Talevska noted that in France women were not allowed on Navy submarines up until recently, officially due to the lack of adaption of submarines for women use, but unofficially due to superstitions (i.e., women bringing bad luck). She stressed that though outdated, such beliefs could still be persistent and unconscious among fishers.

Woodlock commented that the fishing industry has indeed a history of superstitions, which has impacted gender equality negatively, noting that while many have faded, not all have been forgotten.

Dachicourt pointed out that efforts were made to accommodate female crew members on newly built vessels in France, but attracting women to the industry should start at the schooling and training level.

Mo Mathies (NWWAC) highlighted the country-specific nature of gender issues, with Scandinavian countries being more progressive compared to countries such as Ireland, or Southern European countries. Mathies emphasized the need to account for different MS specificities. In response to Dachicourt's mention of newly built vessels in France, Mathies pointed out that the Irish fleet faces challenges as it has very few new vessels due to financial constraints within the industry. Upgrading older vessels to accommodate female crew members can be expensive, and in some cases, it might not even be feasible.

Breckling suggested using improved working conditions for women as an argument to the European Commission (COM), which is already promoting vessel decarbonization transformation of vessels.

In conclusion, the Chair agreed to integrate this dimension into the advice but stressed the importance of presenting the issue in a positive light.

4 Draft advice on Recreational fisheries

Talevska took the floor and presented the draft advice on Recreational fisheries to the participants. She explained that the draft was based on discussions from the FG previous meeting and included additional feedback from Jan Kappel of the European Anglers Alliance (EAA), as well as from a few presentations at the European Parliament (i.e. from RecFishing event).

Kappel added a point about the lack of consistent and robust data on the behaviour of recreational fishers, emphasizing the need for more data collection on recreational fisheries and an overview of its socio-economic implications. He also mentioned that there was a

misconception that introducing separate quotas for recreational fisheries would subtract from the allocations of commercial fisheries. Kappel clarified that recreational quotas would be based on fresh stock data and would not affect commercial fishing quotas, provided recreational fishing mortality was not previously included in biomass estimation.

Talevska recommended making certain sections of the advice as specific as possible, especially when mentioning economic value data, with substantive sources provided in footnotes, following the previously expressed preferences of the COM and the MS. Kappel responded that precise economic data, such as the approximately 99,000 full-time jobs generated by recreational fisheries, is already included in the draft.

Kappel stressed the need for consistent data collection across borders, following the examples of the United States and Canada, and highlighted the potential impact of the newly revised fisheries control regulation on data collection for recreational fisheries, as all recreational fishers will have to be licensed or registered.

Talevska asked whether the information from a previously attended event about the digitalization of small-scale fisheries could be cited in the advice, as the event focused on themes such as data collection and storage, but Kappel advised against it to avoid confusion with commercial fisheries.

Woodlock emphasized that recreational fishing offers more than just catching fish, citing the importance of the 'mindfulness' aspect and the growing recognition of its value beyond the quantity of fish caught. He stressed that the advice should reflect this outlook as well.

Kappel agreed, highlighting the significance of culture also in understanding the differences between freshwater and marine anglers. Freshwater anglers are more accustomed to licenses and restrictions, while marine anglers often resist them. The EAA has been advocating for minimum registration requirements, similar to what exists in Italy.

Considering recreational fisheries quota, Kappel explained the complexities surrounding it. He mentioned an issue that arose regarding the Baltic cod, where a bag limit was introduced 5 years ago. ICES was consulted about setting quotas, but they suggested that no quota should be established. Instead, ICES provided scenarios based on new biomass estimations, including estimates of catches from recreational fisheries. All in all, Kappel noted that the impact on commercial fisheries quotas depends on the specific case. In the new control regulation, the term 'quota' is mentioned in the context of recreational fishing, even though the EU had not previously proposed quotas for anglers. The COM indicated that quotas for recreational fishing could be considered in the future, and therefore, the term was retained in the legislative text.

Kappel also discussed the case of seabass, which was a non-quota species until emergency measures were introduced following a period of trouble. Although there were no quotas for anglers or commercial fishers, monthly bag limits were proposed, with a maximum of 10 bass catches per month. MS initially opposed this measure, citing concerns about enforcement due to the lack of full registration or licensing. However, with the new control regulation, MS can no longer dismiss the monthly bag limit. Along with the 10 catches bag limit, the EAA advocated for obligatory registration of sea bass catches, but again faced resistance from MS

due to concerns about a two-tier system. Nevertheless, an app was developed to register various recreational fishing catches (<https://recreational-fishing.ec.europa.eu/>), and MS must implement registration, either through the EU-developed app or their own versions. This will be necessary two years after the revised control regulation takes effect, therefore by 2026.

The Chair acknowledged Kappel's insights and raised the additional question of whether the advice should address animal welfare, as it could be a subject of future discussion. Kappel suggested avoiding this topic, as it is sensitive. He also expressed frustration about the common interest of fish farmers and animal welfare groups in driving an animal fish welfare agenda forward. Kappel warned against such connections and noted that the issue of killing fish humanely is a challenge for both recreational and commercial fishers.

The Chair pointed out ongoing discussions in certain areas, such as Germany, where catch-and-release practices have prompted concerns about animal welfare. He emphasized that if a paper specifically addressing recreational fisheries is developed, the topic of animal welfare should be included.

Kappel suggested that animal welfare concerns could be addressed by referencing national legislation or the [EIFAC code of practice for recreational fishing](#). This code stipulates that catch and release is legal if allowed by local regulations. However, Kappel noted that in Norway, it is illegal to catch and release tuna; the fish must be brought onboard and killed. This can lead to a significant amount of meat on board, and there is a need for clear rules on how to handle such situations when the fish cannot be released.

Regarding the presence of anglers on board commercial fishing vessels or charter boats, Kappel stressed the importance of maintaining a clear distinction between different concepts. Charter boats serve as platforms for anglers and should be subject to angling regulations. In contrast, pesca tourism involves bringing tourists out to sea to observe and learn, and sometimes participate in commercial fishing. Kappel highlighted the challenge of counting the fish caught in these scenarios. They can be counted as fish caught by the vessels, affecting quotas of the vessel, or if registered as anglers, they can be treated similarly to those on charter boats, with the fish caught attributed to the tourists, not the boat or the skippers. Kappel pointed out that the COM had not fully recognized these distinctions, which is why the term 'pesca tourism' was not included in the control regulation, creating confusion. Nevertheless, funding is currently provided to vessels throughout Europe for pesca tourism under the EMFAF program, requiring clarification of the regulations.

Breckling took the floor raising a question about the registration of lost recreational fishing gear in a global database, which had been under discussion for a long time. There was a proposal to establish specific regulations for recreational gear at the local and regional levels. Breckling asked whether the advice should address this proposal.

In response, Kappel emphasized that for anglers (rod and line fishing) the issue has been resolved through the efforts of the EAA. There is no more a requirement to label, or GPS-mark lost rods, all other recreational gear is subject to the same rules as commercial fisheries. In Denmark, all recreational gear is marked, and the owner can be identified by examining the net, provided they follow the legislation. This approach is now being adopted at the EU level.

Kappel hopes this is part of a larger effort to better define and raise awareness of recreational fishing. Different types of recreational gear have varying impacts on specific areas or species, and they involve different numbers of active participants. Thus, this derogation reflects the COM's recognition of these differences and suggests that further steps can be taken.

Following this, the Chair questioned whether the current draft advice is specific enough regarding the definition of 'recreational fishing' and whether a definition including the different gear types or fishing methods used should be considered.

In response, Kappel noted that while a list of recreational fishing gear could be compiled, it is essential to emphasize that recreational fishing cannot be defined solely by the types of gear used, as some gear is used by both recreational and commercial fishers. Furthermore, the specific rules vary between countries; for instance, in the Mediterranean region, almost all types of gear are prohibited for use by recreational fishers except for rod and line and spears.

Breckling raised an issue that there had been a topic of public discussion in Germany regarding the establishment of a large national park in the Baltic Sea. The debate focused on what activities park users should be allowed to engage in. A representative of anglers suggested that anglers could play a significant role in organizing projects related to citizen science discussions. Anglers are widespread in many areas, even more so than commercial fishers, and this offers opportunities to report on the state of the natural environment. Breckling questioned whether it would make sense to include information about these citizen science projects in the advice to highlight the contributions anglers can make to society by reporting on the state of the ecosystem. He mentioned a specific project in the port of Hamburg, where two hundred angler volunteers use an app to report when they start fishing and record the time until they catch the first pike perch. This data is then communicated to scientists who can use it to create an index of stock size based on anglers' data. By communicating these initiatives, it could stimulate public discussions about the activities of anglers in aquatic environments and foster a sense of responsibility for natural resources.

The Chair acknowledged all contributions and concluded by stating that work would continue on this paper. He asked Focus Group members to submit any contributions to the recreational fisheries advice by the 13th of October (**Action**). A draft would be prepared to identify any missing elements in the paper.

4 AOB & date and time of next meeting

No AOB points were raised by the Focus Group Members.

The next meeting of the Social Aspects Focus Group was scheduled for **Monday, 30th October 2023, at 14:00 CET**, and will be conducted **online**.



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5 Actions

Action	Responsible
Patrick Murphy to distribute the email from the Commission regarding updated Watchkeeper certification to the NSAC Secretariat for distribution to Focus Group members.	Patrick Murphy, NSAC Secretariat
Jan Kappel to produce a more comprehensive overview of the economic impacts of recreational fisheries.	Jan Kappel, NSAC Secretariat
Gerald Hussenot and NSAC Secretariat to coordinate presentations for the upcoming FG meeting.	Gerald Hussenot, NSAC Secretariat
Focus Group members to monitor future developments in fuel and fish prices to possibly feed into a future recommendation if needed.	Members
Focus Group members to provide comments, examples, and suggestions for different chapters of the draft advice for Generational Renewal and Recreational fisheries until the 13 of October.	Members

6 Participants

First Name	Last Name	Organisation
Gerald	Hussenot	Blue Fish
Michael	O'Brien	ITF
Bruno	Dachicourt	Syndicat National des Marins Pêcheurs CFTC
Peter	Breckling	German Fisheries Association
Kenn Skau	Fischer	DFPO
Johnny	Woodlock	ISS
Tamara	Talevska	NSAC Secretariat
Mo	Mathies	NWWAC Secretariat
Jan	Kappel	EAA
Jenny	Collier	J Collier Language Services
Patricia	Lopez	J Collier Language Services
Kateryna	Urbanovych	NSAC Secretariat