

REPORT

Meeting: **NSAC/NWWAC Social Aspects FG**
 Parties: **NSAC/NWWAC FG members, DG MARE, Pro Sea representatives, observers**
 Date and time: **5 September 2024**
 Location: **Zoom**
 Chair: **Kenn Skau Fischer**
 Rapporteur: **NSAC Secretariat**

1 Welcome and introduction [Chair]

Kenn Skau Fischer welcomed the participants and outlined the day's [agenda](#).
 Apologies were conveyed for Jan Kappel of EAA and Llibori Martínez of the IFSUA.

2 Report from the previous meeting [NSAC Secretariat]

Paper 2.1 Report of meeting of 11 March 2024

No comments were received on the report of the previous meeting, which was therefore considered approved and can be find published on the [website](#).

2.2 Actions from previous meeting

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

Action	Responsible	Status
Patrick Murphy to send a copy of most recent monthly allocations to the Secretariat for distribution to members.	Patrick Murphy	<i>Complete</i>
Members relay any challenges, difficulties in quota allocation in their respective MS in writing <i>as informal communication</i> .	FG Members	<i>Complete</i>
The FG to consider drafting a statement on standardised training on safety and implementation of STCW-F based on the first draft by Ment van der Zwan.	Ment van der Zwan	<i>Complete</i>

3 Update from the Commission

Joan Roussoulière-Azzam from DG MARE's Policy Coordination Unit provided updates on the ongoing work concerning the social dimension of fisheries.

Considering the current political context, in February 2023 the [Communication on the Functioning of the CFP](#) included a chapter on the social dimension, with commitments on social indicators, the Fishers of the Future study, STCW-F, and the vademecum on fishing opportunities.

A full evaluation of the CFP was launched in June 2024 with a call for evidence, based on discussions with the European Parliament, stakeholders, and the Council following the 2023 Fisheries Package. The first phase of feedback will close on 6 September. Following Ursula Von der Leyen's political guidelines in July 2024, which emphasized oceans, DG MARE awaits the appointment of a new Commissioner and mission letter to outline policy priorities. Adjustments may be made once the new Commission takes office.

Regarding social data, while some data (e.g., age, gender, education, employment status) has been collected by STECF, there is need for social data to include more comprehensive information. Currently, DG MARE, in collaboration with STECF, is focusing on three main strands, with a new STECF report to be published soon:

- **National Fisheries Profiles:** NFPs describe the national fisheries context, covering governance, society, training, social security systems, employment, and trends. So far, 13 profiles have been or was being developed for certain countries (NL, ES, DK, IE, BG, CY, EE, FR, IT, SI, SE, PT, HR), with inclusion of the whole value chain of fisheries recreational fisheries where pertinent. While some profiles have been discussed, they are pending peer review. Seven more profiles are still under development, with completion expected by early 2025.
- **Community Profiles:** a local version of the national fisheries profiles, crucial to offer insights into the impact of policy measures at the community level. Initial work started in 2019-2020, and in May 2024, the STECF Working Group provided a definition of "community" and template for these profiles. A list of representative communities has been identified to guide development.
- **Social Indicators:** In its latest report, STECF has developed 38 indicators to assess conservation measures and inform policy-making, to be implemented in the short, medium, and long term.

The Chair inquired about who is conducting the work on National Fisheries Profiles at the national level and if a standardized framework is being used.

Roussoulière-Azzam clarified that researchers in each country are carrying out the work. This process follows the STECF's work on national fisheries profiles, which began in 2019, using templates that have since evolved into their fourth version. While all profiles now adhere to a unified template, the initial profiles for Denmark, Spain, and the Netherlands differ slightly,

as they were based on an earlier version. The latest version will be included in an upcoming report and can be shared. **(Action)**

3.1 Social indicators

Since 2019, STECF has been working on social indicators, publishing five reports on the matter. A stakeholder consultation conducted from February to April 2024 gathered 24 responses from 3 advisory councils, 6 advisory council members, 7 Member States (MS) (BG, FR, LT, NL, SI, DE, MT), social partners, and 6 other organizations (including NGOs, ICES, and small-scale fisheries).

DG MARE identified four priority areas for consultations:

- **Current socio-economic situation of fishers:** working conditions, safety, well-being, income, training & skills, positioning in society, age, and gender.
- **Vulnerability of fishers:** wages, contracts, social coverage, pension, predictability of business environment, financial position, and work safety.
- **Impact of management measures** on local communities, engagement and compliance
- **Generational renewal & attractiveness of the sector**

Based on these priorities, STECF has developed a list of 38 potential indicators, with plans to implement 12 indicators using employment data by 2025/2026, aiming to create a social report similar to the existing economic one.

The Chair asked about the possibility to view the 38 indicators, to which Roussoulière-Azzam informed that they would be accessible in the upcoming STECF report.

Patrick Murphy (IS&WFPO) highlighted concerns about fleet activity, the decline in industry attractiveness, and the inefficiency of reallocating quotas to small-scale vessels. He stressed that the Irish fishing industry is in crisis and felt that social indicators should reflect these issues.

Roussoulière-Azzam noted that generational renewal indicators include tracking new entrants and that issues related to fishing opportunity allocation will be addressed in national fisheries profiles for each MS. Concern that was put forward is currently under policy consideration.

Murphy further pointed out the challenges posed by rigid policies, using an example where Irish vessels could face severe penalties in light of stringent regulations. He argued that "one-size-fits-all" policies are impractical and discourage new generations from joining the industry

The Chair emphasized that once national fisheries profiles and the list of indicators are available, stakeholders would have opportunities to provide input, which will be relevant also to the CFP evaluation discussions.

Johnny Woodlock (Independent observer) echoed Murphy's concerns, mentioning that inshore fishers are struggling to recruit crew and are wary of foreign workers acquiring boats, citing safety issues. He reported fishers' calls for stricter enforcement by national authorities, noting that the crew shortage affects both inshore and larger boats, likely due to tough working conditions.

Marta Ballesteros (IEO) emphasized that current social studies aim to adopt a comprehensive view, combining national fisheries profiles, community profiles, and social data to capture the full picture of fishers' situations across Europe. She noted that different Member States face unique challenges, and while some successfully integrate foreign workers, others do not. She also acknowledged DG MARE's efforts to place social aspects on par with economic considerations.

Peter Breckling (German Fisheries Association) highlighted the difficulty of measuring social and economic indicators compared to natural sciences. He stressed the importance of accurate data interpretation, warning against misinterpretations, as incorrect assumptions can lead to misleading conclusions, citing past consultancy errors in vessel cost assessments.

Dominic Rihan (KFO) inquired about how and when the fisheries profiles would be updated, expressing concern that they might quickly become outdated.

Joan Roussoulière-Azzam assured that STECF members are knowledgeable about fisheries and have great social science expertise. Observers, including ACs, are welcome to participate in discussions. Profiles are intended to be dynamic, with general sections remaining stable and other elements updated periodically.

3.2 Vademecum on the allocation process of fishing opportunities

Article 17 of the CFP on the vademecum for fishing rights allocation has been extensively discussed, involving multiple studies, an EP report in 2021, and court cases. The Commission has sought clarity on how Member States (MS) allocate fishing opportunities through four questionnaires (2016, 2020, 2022, 2023) analyzed by three STECF Expert WGs. Additionally, 22 stakeholders responded to a consultation on the possible vademecum structure, including input from ACs, MS, social partners, and other organizations.

Based on this data, ongoing internal work is focused on enhancing transparency and objectivity, while recognizing that allocation criteria are determined by MS. The aim is to share practices, showing which MS use social or environmental criteria. The goal is to improve transparency without creating an administrative burden, considering the nuances of each MS's approach. Discussions have also involved Producer Organizations (POs), emphasizing the delicate balance in fishing rights allocation. The final document is expected by year-end, with possible adjustments based on the new Commissioner's mission letter. Once a draft is ready, consultations with MS and ACs will resume.

The Chair asked if ITQ systems and state aid are included, noting concerns in Denmark about whether reserving quotas for specific groups (i.g., SSF) constitutes state aid.

Breckling queried on the purpose of the vademecum.

Joan Roussoulière-Azzam clarified that the vademecum doesn't cover pure ITQ systems but addresses cases where ITQs coexist with other methods. For example, Denmark, which primarily uses ITQs, has reserve systems in place. The primary purpose of the vademecum is to enhance transparency, as understanding of what is happening is crucial for accountability. Article 17 emphasizes supporting SSF and considering environmental concerns. Regarding the state aid issue, it has been noted, and its implications will be examined further, as it hasn't previously been raised. **(Action)**

Murphy emphasized that Ireland's allocation policies have remained unchanged for decades, potentially leading to environmentally sound allocations without the inclusion of such considerations in the initial decision-making process. He questioned whether this historical approach is being examined, asserting that if MS claim to consider environmental criteria, it is misleading.

Roussoulière-Azzam responded that while the questionnaires ask MS about their current allocation practices, many still rely on historical catch data. Changes in allocations are recent, and the focus is on the current state of affairs rather than historical evolution.

Breckling highlighted that DG MARE should align the motivations of its work also with Ursula Von der Leyen's political priority on food security, which fisheries contribute to significantly.

Ballesteros clarified that the questionnaire focuses on specific criteria used by MS in quota allocations. The vademecum will complement national fisheries profiles and social data, allowing for deeper analysis of any discrepancies. Expert WGs and ACs will have opportunities to provide feedback.

Roussoulière-Azzam acknowledged that MS often interpret criteria differently over time, with historical catch serving as a stabilizing social criterion for fishers. She noted that while food security is a priority for DG MARE, environmental and social criteria in Article 17 have been less emphasized compared to historical catch, which still dominates allocations.

Murphy pointed out that changes in fishing opportunities, particularly for species like hake and haddock, are crucial, as declining scientific advice directly affects fishers. He asked if these shifts are being considered.

3.3 Fishers of the Future

The [Fishers of the Future](#) (FoF) project is DG MARE's first attempt at a foresight study and as such is a learning process shaped by feedback from ACs, social partners, and researchers. While, due to the set-up of the project, there were inherent limitations to changes, DG MARE has attempted to make some adaptations based on received feedback.

The project's goal is not to define a single future but to explore various possibilities for 2050. Recognizing the challenges of today, policymakers must consider the global context and trends impacting fisheries, including environmental factors, supply issues, and competition.

The project is articulated in three phases:

- **Phase 1:** Development of **baseline profiles of current fishers in today's world**. This involved consulting 200 fishers to create 12 initial profiles, supported by surveys and stakeholder feedback, which will be incorporated into the final report. A number of adjustments were made to the initial profiles based on the feedback collected.
- **Phase 2:** Analysis of global macrotrends to identify key drivers of change for fisheries by 2050. This phase produced **four different future scenarios**, developed through a survey and four stakeholder workshops. Opportunities to comment on draft scenarios were provided in July, and the team is currently refining the scenarios.
- **Phase 3:** Development of **profiles of fishers in 2050**, using the drivers and scenarios previously developed. This phase has begun, with drafts already prepared. Feedback discussions with ACs and social partners will occur in September (on the 16, 17, and 20). Based on these meetings, profiles will be revised.

The final report is expected to be published in November or December, marking the beginning of further discussions on the scenarios and profiles to enhance their relevance. **Roussoulière-Azzam** welcomed feedback on the process, emphasizing that the insights gained are crucial for the broader evaluation of the CFP.

3.4 Exchange of views

Mo Mathies (NWWAC Secretariat) inquired whether the multi-AC letter on FoF, sent at the end of May, was well-received and if any updates were available.

Roussoulière-Azzam confirmed that a response was sent out on July 10.

Murphy emphasized the importance of the project but noted its fluidity. He also stressed that changes from climate change and shifting fishing opportunities should be factored into discussions.

Roussoulière-Azzam confirmed that climate change, environmental degradation, and pollution are integral to the four future scenarios, which explore their potential impacts on fisheries. These scenarios also consider supply and demand dynamics, addressing uncertainties regarding the effects of climate change and changing consumer behaviour.

The Chair acknowledged the significance of the FoF project, though relaying participants' concerns that the contractors may have a preconceived notion of what fisheries should look like.

Roussoulière-Azzam replied that from the start of the project contractors have been urged to incorporate feedback. The FoF project differs from typical contracts due to its iterative nature, with each phase informing the next. Initially, ACs were not included, but this has been rectified, and adjustments are being made based on feedback.

Michael Andersen (DFPO) echoed Murphy's concerns, stating that while the initiative is welcome, it hasn't aligned with expectations. He expressed frustration over the lack of changes despite suggested corrections. Andersen urged for more openness and responsiveness to industry input, emphasizing concerns about the project's current direction.

Talevska urged members to confirm their availability for one of the three workshops scheduled for September 16, 17, or 20, to help the Commission finalize dates. **(Action)**

The Chair thanked Roussoulière-Azzam for the extensive presentation and looked forward to receiving documents related to the vademecum and other materials for further discussion. **(Action)**

4 Baseline study on the training and certification requirements of fishers in the EU

Tamar Poppelier and **Thomas Van Schie** from ProSea presented the ongoing baseline study on the training and certification requirement for fishers in the EU Member States.

ProSea is currently part of a consortium conducting the presented baseline study alongside Wageningen University and Research, with Deloitte serving as the study lead. The project receives oversight from a steering committee that includes DG MARE and CINEA.

The study aims to support the EU Commission's initiative to ratify the STCW-F convention, which establishes uniform training standards for fishing vessel personnel across MS, facilitating the free movement of workers and enhancing maritime safety. Revised and approved by the IMO last May, the updated STCW-F standards will take effect on January 1, 2026, addressing the current needs of the fishing industry and emphasizing the protection of fishers through defined training and certification requirements.

While these developments are promising, a significant challenge remains: the mutual recognition of certificates across member states. Unlike the shipping industry, the fishing sector lacks an EU mechanism for such recognition, complicating the validation of fisher qualifications across borders. The objective of the study is to provide a comprehensive overview of training and certification systems for fishers in relation to the revised STCW-F Convention and existing EU regulations.

The study will unfold through several main tasks. The first task involves identifying existing training requirements, structures, and certification processes. The second will research discrepancies between national frameworks and the revised STCW-F convention, including any gaps in preventive measures. Finally, the study will assess the benefits and drawbacks of implementing a common EU standard for fisher training and certification to determine the feasibility of integration into EU law.

Currently, the study has received 75 responses from most EU member states.

A comprehensive report, including all findings and recommendations, will be delivered in November. Before this, a FG will present key results to stakeholders in the industry and seek feedback and validation.

Murphy expressed his enthusiasm for the project, highlighting certification issues in Ireland, particularly concerning the watchkeeper's certificate. He mentioned efforts to draft a competent certification process for watchkeepers, which unfortunately were not accepted, and sought assistance from the project team for a possible bilateral meeting on this matter.

Poppelier confirmed that a meeting could be arranged and suggested contacting her colleague, Van Schie, for coordination.

Woodlock inquired if the project was limited to marine fisheries, to which **Van Schie** clarified that it is, as STCW-F does not cover inland or freshwater fisheries.

Poppelier indicated that it would be beneficial for AC members to complete the e-survey or share it with relevant stakeholders in their MS.

Rihan noted in the chat that while the study is appreciated, the survey's complexity could pose challenges for those not directly involved in training. The Chair echoed this sentiment.

Roussoulière-Azzam noted that the baseline study aims to establish a foundation for assessing the implications of transposing STCW-F, including cost assessments, as some countries may be more advanced than others in training structures. If the initiative progresses, consultations will be held regarding any legislative changes, with input from ACs and stakeholders sought at a later stage based on the new Commissioner's priorities.

The Chair invited members to fill in the distributed e-survey. **(Action)**

5 Commission's response to Recreational Fishing advice

The Chair noted that Jan Kappel of EEA, the main contributor to the [FG's Advice on Recreational Fishing](#), was unable to attend the day's meeting though he did send written input to the Secretariat regarding the [Commission's response to the advice](#).

Particularly, in their response, the Commission addressed the new Control Regulation, specifically the requirements for recreational fisheries aimed at improving data collection and assessing the impacts on fish resources. They highlighted Article 55, which mandates Member States to implement electronic systems for monitoring recreational fishing catches. The Commission noted ongoing communication with EEA and current focus on gathering data for pollock and seabass. While identifying data gaps, they observed that recreational catches significantly affect pollock mortality, yet this data is not included in stock assessments. In contrast, seabass stock assessments incorporate recreational catch data.

The written input from Kappel was relayed.

The Chair suggested it would be more effective for EAA to directly engage with the Commission. It's essential for the ACs to determine the priority of this issue, noting that the topic could be addressed at the next Social Aspects FG meeting. **(Action)**

6 AOB & date and time of next meeting

The Chair invited members to share any pressing topics, otherwise, the focus of the FG will continue on social data, ongoing studies, the vademecum on fishing allocations, and certification standards.

Murphy noted that while fuel prices have decreased, they are still significantly higher than in previous years. He asked if any Member States were continuing subsidy schemes related to fuel.

The Chair replied that France might still offer support, although this remains unconfirmed. Denmark does not have support schemes and is set to implement a CO2 tax on January 1, 2025, which will further increase fuel prices.

The Chair indicated that the next meeting should focus on trends in fuel and fish prices related to the fisheries sector. **(Action)**

7 Closing: Date and time of next meeting

While the exact date and time for the next meeting are not yet determined, there will be a FG meeting in the coming months, dependent on the availability of new documents. The FG will probably reconvene in the autumn.

8 Agreed actions

Action	Responsible
Joan Roussoulière-Azzam to circulate the template used for developing the National Fisheries Profiles and the draft of the vademecum on fishing allocations to the FG once available.	Joan Roussoulière-Azzam
Joan Roussoulière-Azzam to inform the Commission on the mention of the inclusion of state aid in the vademecum on fishing allocations.	Joan Roussoulière-Azzam



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Members to inform the Secretariat of their availability to attend the Fishers of the Future workshop on future fishers profiles, scheduled for September 16, 17, or 20.	FG Members
Members to complete the e-survey related to the baseline study on training and certification requirements for fishers in EU Member States before the deadline.	FG Members
Next Social Aspects FG meeting to focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Next steps following the Commission's response to the NSAC/NWWAC Recreational Fishing advice (if needed). ○ Trends in fuel costs and their impact on fish prices. 	Social Aspects FG

9 Participants

First Name	Last Name	Organisation
Bruno	Dachicourt	Syndicat National des Marins Pêcheurs CFTC
Ciara	Dower	Verifact
Dominic	Rihan	BIM
Duco	Claringbould	DG MARE
Elsa & Isabelle		Interpreters
Evelien	Ranshuysen	DG MARE
Falke	Falke de Sager	Rederscentrale
Gerard	Hussenot	Blue Fish
Gundula	Broich	DG MARE
Joan	Roussoulière- Azzam	DG MARE
Johnny	Woodlock	Independent observer
Kateryna	Urbanovych	NSAC Secretariat
Kenn Skau	Fischer	Chair of FG
Marta	Ballesteros	Spanish Institute of Oceanography (IEO)
Maximillian	Schwarz	EBCD
Michael	Andersen	DFPO
Mo	Mathies	NWWAC Secretariat
Patrick	Murphy	IS&WFPO
Peter	Breckling	German Fisheries Association
Tamar	Poppelier	ProSea
Tamara	Talevska	NSAC Secretariat

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Thomas	Van Schie	ProSea
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