



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR  
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## MINUTES

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Virtual meeting**

**8 July 2020**

**14:30 – 16:40 CET**

#### 1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed the Commissioner, the Commission representatives, the Member State representatives, Executive Committee (ExCom) members, Chairs of the Northwest Waters AC Working Groups and Focus Groups, the Secretariat, and all observers. This was followed by an introduction of the members of the ExCom.

Apology were received from Pascale Coquet and Julien Lamothe, for whom we have a stand in the form of Jean-Marie Robert.

The agenda was adopted.

#### 2. Dialogue with Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius

**Chair:** I am delighted to welcome you Commissioner Sinkevičius to this meeting of the Executive Committee of the North Western Waters Advisory Council.

I would like to thank you for accepting our invitation to this virtual meeting. As Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries you are aware that the ACs exist as an advisory body to the Commission according to the Common Fisheries Policy which is obviously one of the most important policies in your portfolio.

The North Western Waters Advisory Council is one of the longest existing ones. It was established in 2005 and since its inception, its members have been actively involved in providing stakeholder advice to the European Commission and, under the current policy, to the regional Member States as well. A wide range of aspects relating to sustainable fisheries management have been covered in our advice work. Traditionally, our work is mainly focused on stock management and related aspects such as technical measure and control and compliance. Over the years, more and more cross-cutting issues have come to this forefront of our work.

Therefore, in addition to the Common Fisheries Policy objectives, the NWWAC pays attention to items like the Green Deal and specifically the Biodiversity and Farm to Fork Strategies and keeps an eye on all the items that can have an impact on sustainable fisheries in the NWW. The consequences of the UK leaving are one of those items which is very important to us obviously. Commissioner, we look forward to hearing some details from you and the aspects of perfecting our advisory work. Thank you.



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**Commissioner:** Thank you for inviting me to your Executive Committee and for giving me the opportunity to discuss with you the Commission's priority actions for Fisheries and Oceans. First of all, the Advisory Council, for me is an important part of the regionalization of the CFP. It is also an important forum for discussion and communication and your opinion matters and is useful to the Commission for developing management strategies and of course legislation. Before diving into the topics of today, I would like to thank you for the considerable body of work and advice the Advisory Council has produced over the years. Reaching and maintaining MSY has been in no small part thanks to efforts of the industry and other interest groups that participate in this AC.

The implementation of the Landing Obligation also benefited from your considerable input on issues such as choke mitigation, and suggested management measures. Most recently we have had valuable input from you on the management of seabass and stocks with zero catch advice and I would like to thank you for the interest you have expressed in contributing to the Commission's open public consultation on the deep-sea access regulation.

There will be many opportunities and challenges in the coming years. The continued implementation of the Landing Obligation, the European Green Deal the further development of a sustainable Blue Economy and mitigating the impacts of both Brexit and the recent COVID-19 pandemic just to name a few. Allow me to elaborate briefly on these points to set the scene for our discussion afterwards.

I would like to start with the European Green Deal which is the new growth strategy for the Commission. With the Green Deal, we want to make Europe the first climate neutral continent by 2050. This is the only responsible thing to do if we want to protect our environment, our economy, and the well-being and prosperity of all European citizens.

Oceans are an important element of the Green Deal. They are first in line to suffer from Climate Change, and this will have an impact on fisheries and food security all over the world. At the same time, they contribute to Climate Change Mitigation and have strong potential to drive the transition to a climate-neutral Europe forward. The Blue Economy will literally put the blue in the Green Deal. As we develop these new offshore activities, we have to carefully manage our maritime space including for fisheries, maritime spatial planning will become even more important.

In this context, it is of utmost importance that we use the ocean sustainably with respect for the marine ecosystems. A healthy ocean is a productive ocean in the end of the day. The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 will ensure that the EU can contribute even better to the conservation efforts by increasing the effective management and coverage of protected areas. When it comes to fisheries management, an important element to protect marine biodiversity is the ecosystems-based approach and the objective of maximum sustainable yield for fish stocks under the Common Fisheries Policy.

Although these are already established as main pillars of the current policy, the Biodiversity Strategy will serve as an important boost to step up the efforts. The CFP has successfully managed to bring average fishing mortality to long-term sustainable levels in the North-East Atlantic over the last decade. This by itself means a substantial reduction in the environmental impact of fishing. 99% of landings of stocks managed by the EU alone are now at MSY in this area. This serves as proof that sustainability is feasible and that it makes economic sense as we are seeing that the sustainable management of stocks improves the overall economic performances of our fleet.



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Another part of the Green Deal that is highly relevant for fisheries is the Farm to Fork Strategy. It addresses the challenges of sustainable food systems by recognizing the inseparable links between healthy people, healthy societies, and healthy planet. The strategy is also central to the Commission's agenda to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The importance of food from the oceans is widely known in the Farm to Fork Strategy. We know that food from sustainable fisheries and aquaculture tends to produce less greenhouse gas, in fact, the Farm to Fork Strategy calls for an accelerated shift over to sustainable fish and seafood production.

The strategy announces that the Commission will set up efforts to bring fish stocks to sustainable levels via the Common Fisheries Policy where implementation gaps remain. This could include reducing wasteful discards or strengthening fisheries management in the Mediterranean. We have also included our intention to scale up the fight against food fraud, which is needed to achieve a level playing field and to strengthen control and enforcement, notably, the revision of the EU's Fisheries Control System.

More downstream, the supply chain, the Farm to Fork Action Plan looks at marketing standards for fisheries and aquaculture products, and also food labeling, to empower consumers to choose healthy and sustainable diets, is among the actions announced. Finally, the Farm to Fork Strategy aims to promote a global transition to sustainable food systems in partnership approach through trade and international corporations, bilaterally and multilaterally the EU will promote ocean governance, more sustainable fishing practices, coastal management, and enhanced by diversity.

The Commission aims to develop green alliances on sustainable food systems to respond to distinct challenges in different parts of the world, and we will continue to apply zero tolerance in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities and combat, of course, overfishing. All of this will make our food system healthier, more productive, and more resilient. The need for resilience is probably one of the most important lessons we learn in COVID-19 crisis. During this crisis, for this, we will also develop a contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security. This action will allow us to build from the lessons learned with the current crisis and prepare ourselves for any challenge the future may bring.

Now, as we prepare for the future, we cannot be blind to the present, and our present, unfortunately, carries the watermark of the COVID-19 pandemic. The projections for the economic performance of the EU Fleet in 2020 remain extremely uncertain. The decline in demand and a subsequent drop in first sale prices, forced many vessels to cease activities, especially in the fleet segments targeting high-value species and the small scale coastal fisheries. What's more, fishing fleets depending on export markets were highly impacted. In addition to the demand problems, sanitary measures hampered some fisheries drastically. Over time, the situation seems to be improving both for the catching and fishing processing sector.

Very low fuel prices in 2020 may contribute slightly to ease operating costs in the EU fleets. As you are aware, the Commission has intervened immediately to protect the sector. We changed state aid rules and amended the EMFF fisheries fund to grant increased support to all sectors involved in the fishery and aquaculture sector from the processing enterprises to fishers, together with all measures targeting the general economy.

This will help protect thousands of jobs in the EU's coastal regions and maintain food security. The best investment in the future of our sector, however, is our Common Fisheries Policy. By the end of 2022, we will table a report on functioning of the CFP where issues such as the social dimension,



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climate adaptation, and clean oceans will also be looked at. To be able to evaluate the current policy, we first have to implement it fully, and this whole implementation is one of the priorities I received from President von der Leyen. The CFP is clearly bearing positive results. Many EU fish stocks are in their best shape since decades. The EU fleet continues to make record-high profits, especially in those areas where we fish sustainably. This success can largely be attributed to good governance. First of all, a multi-annual plan for stocks fished in Western Waters was adopted in March 2019. At European level, we managed to adopt the first-ever MAP in the Mediterranean. This is really a success.

With multi-annual plans in place, we have the tools to ensure that stocks are fished at a sustainable level. They provide predictability, and transparency, on how the fishing quotas are set. Also, regionalization plays an important part in the success of the EU approach to fisheries management. The CFP has the possibility of regionalized legislation on technical measures, fishing closures, and on innovation and practices, to reduce or eliminate discards and catches of under-sized fish.

This allows for a truly tailor-made approach. Of course, the successful implementation of the CFP requires effective control and enforcement. Therefore, the Commission has proposed an ambitious revision of the EU control system, and it is now the Council's and the European Parliament's hand to make this much-needed modernization a reality on the ground. One of the topics that always comes up when we are discussing the CFP, is the full implementation of the Landing Obligation. I know very well that this is a challenge for the sector.

That's why there was a long phasing-in period, which should have allowed the fishing industry to adjust, and develop measures to avoid unwanted catches, and notably by adopting more selective fishing methods. That is also why there are flexibility mechanisms such as inter-species, and inter-annual flexibility to mitigate so-called choke situations. This could be supplemented through managing quota distribution within and between Member States.

Let's not forget the financial support available under the EMFF, or investments into more selectivity, or into infrastructure for handling unwanted catches. Let me stress that we take the concerns we hear about the implementation of the Landing Obligation very seriously and that we will continue working together with the Member States and industry to overcome these difficulties. This should include also the deployment of more efficient control means such as remote electronic monitoring without waiting for the adoption of our proposal for the revised fisheries control regulation.

I count on your support to engage in pilot projects and regional agreements for applying these tools. The next EMFF will play a crucial role in the success of the Common Fisheries Policy. We need to progress on this, and I have already shared my concerns with all the stakeholders about certain amendments by Parliament and Council, especially those that refer to vessel construction.

The Commission's position is very clear. We cannot undermine the sustainability objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy, and we have to remain consistent with our international commitments under the WTO, and of course, the G14 on harmful substances. Finally, I would like to say a few words about the intense negotiations between EU and UK on the future partnerships for fisheries.

Post-Brexit, we will share around a hundred TACs with the UK, which will make it the most comprehensive fisheries agreement ever negotiated. For these reasons, it is essential that we agree on maximum coherence and convergence, and that the cooperation also fits with the framework of the CFP. The negotiations are very complex, and the respective positions are far apart. Nevertheless,



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together with our chief negotiator Michel Barnier, we continue our work to have a timely agreement by the autumn to provide certainty for our fishery sector going forward.

Also, post-Brexit the work of your Advisory Council will be essential given the number of shared stocks we have in the NWW, and the inter-linkages between our respective industries. We must build on the decades of collaboration and cooperation between stakeholders, both in the EU and also of course in the UK. I count on you all.

Let me conclude. I have no doubt that this Advisory Council will continue to play an important role, in helping to tackle many upcoming challenges and grasp the opportunities of the Green Deal, and our transformation towards a sustainable economy. I look forward to continuing our intense and constructive cooperation in the future.

**Chair:** Thank you very much Commissioner for the extensive amount of topics that you've raised. There is obviously a lot going on, and that's worthwhile talking about these things.

**Question:** In relation to the area that the NWWAC deals with, I note, Commissioner, that you have said the 99% of our stocks are going to be managed at MSY as such, which is really good news in terms of our Advisory Council. I just have a question in relation to the Green Deal, the Biodiversity, and the Farm to Fork Strategy. As an industry representative, I fully support this initiative, but I think when you look at the Biodiversity Strategy in particular, there seems to be a really negative attitude taken towards the fishing industry. Rather than seeing us as the custodians of the marine environment, we seem to be painted as the detriment to the marine environment. I think it is unfortunate that it is done like that. Similarly, with the Farm to Fork Strategy, I think the title of it alone tells us that there seems to be a huge emphasis on agriculture than on the seafood sector. More mention needs to be made on seafood throughout the Farm to Fork Strategy as such. One final question is on the Landing Obligation. This is a key component of CFP, and it is quite difficult to implement in practice. However, I would say that the co-legislators made the situation worse in my view, by introducing catch composition rules and mesh size rules around the new Technical Conservation Regulations. That is going to make a difficult situation worse because it seems to me there is a legal contradiction between the CFP and the new technical regulations in relation to that. Thank you.

**Question:** [We are hoping the Common Fisheries Policy regarding social issues, one of the wishes of the partners, social partners, the trade union, is for all of us to be together in this assessment.] – *translation unclear but picked up by the Commissioner in his answer.*

**Commissioner:** Regarding biodiversity strategy being negative towards fishermen and women. I do not agree with it. As I said, with facing Parliamentary Committees, that there are no strategies as such, if fishermen and women wouldn't be on board. This is not the end of the discussion, and this is just the beginning. I am ready to facilitate and mobilize all the possible resources to help fishermen in this transition to more sustainable practices.

We cannot neglect the fact that fishing activities are an additional pressure on the oceans, and we have to set the best example. We have plenty of great examples set by our fishermen and women, I think they are named as the guardians of the sea. I think this is a very appropriate name, and again, the biodiversity strategy is the way to maintain that name and move to more sustainable practices.



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Now speaking about the Landing Obligation and its rules. The rules are what the co-legislator has decided in the Technical Measures Regulations, and this is what we have to apply. The Landing Obligation itself is in its second year of full application and the main concern is compliance, which remains extremely weak. The Commission's audits and the initiatives of the European Fisheries Control Agency indicate a general lack of compliance. Part of the solution must come from new and innovative control tools. This is taken on board in the Commission's proposal for a revised fisheries control system, which is currently negotiated with the co-legislators. The European Union has taken actions to facilitate the implementation of the Landing Obligation through, for example, the adoption of temporary discard plans and multi-annual plans and introducing bycatch quotas also linked with remedial measures to address certain choke situations.

The Commission is encouraging Member States to utilize better their funds available to improve selectivity and, as a result, reduce unwanted catches. I can only thank you again and repeat that the Commission appreciates your contribution in the recent discussions on the demersal and pelagic exemptions to the Landing Obligations, especially in view of the often tight deadlines involved. The Commission has received a joint recommendation from the Member States Group and passed it through the steps for their scientific assessment in June 2020. Our aim is to have the resulting delegated act in place in time for 1st of January 2021 to provide certainty and business continuity for the industry.

Speaking about the 25% annual flexibility, we will assess later this year what are the real consequences of COVID-19. The sector has been hit hard, but we do not know what the real consequences and the impact on quota uptake were? For now, it is too early for a discussion.

Now, concerning the question on 25% and social partners, which concerns the 10% and going beyond the 10% annual flexibility. It is important that again, we will have to wait and see the real consequences and what the impact on quota uptake was. After careful assessment, we will be able to make a decision. Now, it is still too early to say.

**Chair:** Thank you very much, Commissioner. There's been a bit of confusion indeed in the chat. The question that was unclear earlier was, indeed, about the social aspects of the evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy, specifically how the social dialogue will be involved in this. In addition, with regard to the results of the review by 2022 of the CFP, how do you see the involvement of the Advisory Councils and specifically the NWWAC in such a review?

**Question:** I want to thank the Commissioner for joining this meeting and giving us the opportunity to discuss with him topics of our interest. I have two short reflections and one question to make to the Commissioner. One of the reflections is related to the new strategies, in particular, the Green Deal, the Farm to Fork and the Biodiversity Strategies. I will like to reiterate the interest of adding the marine component, and fisheries in particular to these strategies and remind the Commissioner that green without blue is only yellow. Please consider very seriously all the marine components in all those strategies.

On the CFP, and the report by the Commissioner to be delivered by the end of 2022 on the implementation, I would like to stress the need on making further progress in the implementation. It is true that there are some positive trends in the recovery of the stocks regarding reduction in the fishing mortality. Also, the Commissioner has been highlighting the point that 99% of the landings are taken from stocks exploited at a sustainable level. These are good news, good trends, but we should not forget about many other stocks. This is a productive approach, and we should take care



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of the marine ecosystem. These 99% of catches have been taken from just a few stocks. They are around 50 - 60 in total number, but we are not saying or communicating anything about the status of many other stocks. We have been making good progress for the stocks that are fully assessed, for the stocks for which there is MSY advice, but we are not taking care and we are not following the same approach for stocks for which we only have a precautionary approach. For those stocks we, the Member States and the Commissioner, are failing set catch limits in line with scientific advice. Does the Commissioner have any particular plan for those non-fully assessed stocks, for those stocks for which there is no an MSY advice in order to recover them and exploit them in a sustainable way?

**Question:** The European Anglers Alliance, together with the industry who serves the anglers activities, has lobbied for more than 20 years for a fully and fair inclusion in the CFP. We have seen in recent years we have been included gradually, but the full step has not been taken. Will the Commissioner proactively work for a full and fair inclusion of recreational fisheries in the next CFP after 2022? In addition, we (recreational sector) consider ourselves also as guardians of the ocean and also guardians of the rivers and the lakes. This as well when we talk about increasing the amount of marine protected areas. Your objective is 30% marine protected areas and 10% highly protected areas. We ask the Commission's proactive approach to this and try and look at what has happened worldwide, and you will see that angling is almost always accepted within an MPA. There might be some additional management measures, but it is very rare that angling is banned in those areas. Actually, there are areas preserved solely for recreational fishing.

**Question:** Regarding the impending sharing of our resource to new entrants, like offshore industry, what is the Commissioner's view on how this is proceeding?

**Commissioner:** There is no doubt that all social partners will be here when we evaluate the CFP in 2022. Our main goal is not only to review the CFP, but to find ways that it would be fully implemented on the ground. Having social partners on board is important and then striking a balance between social aspects, which is key. Economic and sustainability is very important and the Advisory Councils will also be here and play a crucial role.

Regarding the Landing Obligation, CFP implementation, MSY, a lot remains to do. We have to acknowledge that progress has been made. This is also due to the hard work of fishermen and women and their continuous efforts and we cannot ignore it. We still do not have sufficient data for example on stocks, we also often do not have sufficient stocks which are MSY-assessed. This is why data is so important and we need to improve this when speaking about data collection.

When we speak about the CFP, there seems to be a view that with 2020 looming, the CFP is due to for reform. I don't think so. I think reaching MSY by 2020 is only part of the CFP and an important benchmark, but it does not mean that the CFP will expire, and it needs to be reviewed.

The current CFP, the toolbox, contains all the necessary elements to contribute to the Biodiversity Strategy, to Farm to Fork to help striking the balance for our fishermen and social-economic aspects. Both MSY and the LO are very important contributors to reducing pressure from fishing on the marine environment. We need to focus now on their full implementation. There are also other important objectives that need to be achieved. Therefore, I believe we should continue focusing on making the CFP work rather than engage in discussions about the future CFP.

I would like to note the huge progress which was done by our fishermen and women in implementing it. Speaking on recreational fisheries, I agree that recreational fisheries play an



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important role in the CFP. The commission recognizes the role of recreational fishermen and women in the prosperity of coastal communities all across Europe. As recreational fisheries can have a significant impact on fishery sources, Member States should ensure that they are conducted in line with the objectives of the CFP.

Although this is already an obligation for Member States, reliable and uniform data collection still remains a major challenge making it difficult for the Commission to assess the impact of recreational fishing on specific stocks and to set appropriate measures. Your support for the revision of the Control Regulation is extremely important which proposes a licensing system for recreational fishermen to improve control and monitoring. The important role of recreational fishermen in the rebuilding of particular fisheries, such as sea bass or Western Baltic cod sustainable fisheries are the result of efforts made by the recreational sector as well. The dialogue between the recreational and commercial fishermen should be reinforced as both activities have a lot to gain in working towards sustainable fisheries.

**Chair:** Thank you again Commissioner for staying so long with us and taking your time to reply to very specific questions. Also, on our behalf, I hope that we can soon meet real life and, I would like to invite you now already to our first live meeting that we are going to have again as the NWWAC ExCom.

**Commissioner:** Thank you very much. I see that I missed a question earlier. With offshore, it is an important issue. We will publish our offshore strategy later this year. Clearly, it is going to be a challenge, but I think we have all the necessary tools and opportunities while using the Marine Framework Directive, Marine Spatial Planning to accommodate all of the activities, our energy ambitions, our fishermen and women's activities, as well as protected areas because protected areas do not mean that they are no-take zones. In this strategy, we will try to accommodate all while also taking into account the well-being of our fishermen and women.

Let me now thank you very much for your questions and for your interest, we have noted areas which you were interested most. Most importantly, I can only reiterate what I said in my introductory speech that partnership and constant dialogue with stakeholders is key for the successful implementation of our policies. Also, it is key for developing those policies so that they would be fit for purpose, implementable, and of course, that they would be met well by our fishermen and women.

**Chair:** Again, thank you, Commissioner. There are a lot of points for discussion that could be interesting, but thanks for staying so long with us. We hope to see you at our first live meeting in the not too distant future, and we'll certainly send you that invitation.

### 3. Action points

#### a) Action point from last meeting (23 March 2020, virtual)

Letter to the Commission with request to postpone MSG and COM work to prepare 2021 discard plan as the focus is currently on health issues and the COVID-19 crisis. The letter was sent on 01 April ([link](#)), a reply was received on 16 April ([link](#)) basically stating that no extensions would be given.





## b) Action points arising from Working Groups

### Horizontal Working Group:

1	Focus Group Landing Obligation on advice to MSG on pending JRs and Com requests.
2	Set up Advice Drafting Group on Cetaceans bycatch advice
3	Request members for input on NWWAC work on Social aspect
4	Secretariat to circulate expert consultation on Fisheries Statistics review and ask for input.
5	Secretariat to make proposal for September meetings.
6	Members to contact Secretariat if they have comments/suggestions regarding the administrative proposal

### Working Group 1 and 2:

1	Members to send their comments/input to feed the drafting of the NWWAC advice to the Commission's TAC & quotas proposal
2	Members to inform the Secretariat if they want to continue with the current Chair and Vice-Chair and delay the elections until next year September, or rather wish to see elections this September.

### Working Group 3

1	Members to send their comments/input to feed the drafting of the NWWAC advice to the Commission's TAC & quotas proposal.
2	Proposal to the ExCom to re-establish the Seabass Focus Group to produce advice on seabass management for 2021.
3	Jim Portus to keep the AC informed on the progress of the UK Whelk Working Group.
4	Proposal to the ExCom to create a Focus Group on Whelk.
5	Caroline Gamblin to forward the draft advice for AC consultation and approval by the ExCom via written procedure.
6	Members to inform the Secretariat if they want to continue with the current Chair and Vice-Chair and delay the elections until next year September, or rather wish to see elections this September.

### Working Group 4:

1	WG Group to participate in further projects regarding Irish Sea that arise out of WKIRISH.
2	The Secretariat will collect and collate any further queries on the ICES advice from the Working Group members and send them to Ghislain.
3	Members to send their comments/input to feed the drafting of the NWWAC advice to the Commission's TAC & quotas proposal
4	Members to inform the Secretariat if they want to continue with the current Chair and Vice-Chair and delay the elections until next year September, or rather wish to see elections this September.

The Chair asked for comments and/or approval of the action points.

A comment was made that changing the dates would be a major problem due to other events happening in September.

The Secretariat is drafting proposal on September schedule as put forward by the HWG.

#### **4. Information points**

##### **a) Focus Groups' progress**

###### **i. Control and Compliance (Sean O'Donoghue)**

Despite the COVID-19 situation disrupting our plans, we did manage to get some of our action points from the physical meeting we had in Madrid, I think, on the 10th of March. One of those was reiterating our recommendations in relation to the Commission's control proposals to the parliament and to further information and to the Member States, reminding them of our recommendations. We had hoped to have a Focus Group in June. Unfortunately, we had to postpone that in terms of COVID, as well as due to the uncertainty around the control dossier. The Parliament have a significant number of amendments, apparently more than 1200, that they are going to be dealing with in the autumn. When we looked at it in March, we thought there was going to be a framework document on certain work packages on the control aspect agreed before the Croatian presidency finished on the 30th of June, but that is not the case. We are looking at holding a meeting in September, or possibly in the first half of October.

The purpose of that FG will be to look at the amendments that are being put forward and whether hours are being taken on board or not. If they are not, we need to remind the parties.

The other big area was remote electronic monitoring. The FG really wanted to go into details in terms of the pros and cons and looking at all of the different systems that were there and evaluating them from a factual basis, rather than either side having set positions, that we examine them coolly and calmly, and I would still hope that we would do that.

We also said we would circulate the compliance report which was discussed again on Monday at the joint workshop. The FG was party to the organisation of the joint workshop with EFCA on Monday, which was useful in terms of hopefully developing a much closer relationship between the Advisory Council and ECFA, and indeed the control expert groups in the member states and also the commission control people as well.

###### **ii. Focus Group Brexit**

The FG agreed its Terms of Reference at its meeting in June which were subsequently circulated. As there are only a few members involved so far in this FG, all members are invited to join if they have an interest. The FG will work over an 18-month period from March 2020 until September 2021. We felt the FG would need some time to get its act together in the post-Brexit scenario or whatever that will be in terms of the 1st of January as such.



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The other thing we decided is that in light of there being six rounds of both formal and informal discussions happening over July and August of this year between the EU and the UK, the next meeting of the FG would be organised in September at one of the dates that are already set out for the meetings.

A number of clear objectives were set out for this FG. The first of those was to assess the changes in the Fisheries Policy and Management in the NWW and the impact on our AC and provide advice on the new functioning. This is going to be critical because we will be in a different dynamic on 01 January. We know the UK will have left the Common Fisheries Policy. Just from a legal point of view, if you look at the Common Fisheries Policy, you will see that the remains of the NWWAC will no longer be the remains after 01 January. I think the NWWAC has been at the forefront particularly with the PELAC in terms of trying to get other ACs to look at the functioning and rationale of the ACs in a post-Brexit scenario. That is a key area that this group will be looking at. Our understanding is that there was going to be a meeting in Vigo assuming there is physical meetings as such in relation to this and then relation to the other ACs.

We also have to look at the budgetary implications. I think this is a key piece of work because we have to see how we can operate in this totally new environment. What would we as an Advisory Council recommend should be the way forward? It will be up to the Commission and the Member States and probably the Parliament to decide in the end what it will be.

**Chair:** If there is no comments or suggestions from the members, then we can consider those terms of references as endorsed.

### iii. Focus Group Marine Plastics (Patrick Murphy)

An awful lot of work was put into this FG and I must give the credit where credit is due, it goes to the Secretariat. The amount of work that was carried out here was impressive. To bring in all the other ACs to back this advice, I think, is also impressive.

The advice has been circulated to all ExCom members for approval today unless there are any comments.

**Secretariat:** To give you an update on the support we have received from the other Secretariats and the other Advisory Councils, the South Western Waters AC ExCom has approved the advice, as has the ExCom of the Outermost Regions. The ExCom of the Market AC has also approved the advice, and so has the ExCom of the Mediterranean AC.

We have received from our own ExCom one comment that has been discussed with members of the FG. There has been no agreement on this comment which is why we would like to discuss this comment here to identify with the help of the ExCom members, which way to best go forward. We received the following comment from Jan Kappel from European Anglers Alliance.

Original sentence: "In addition, the unknown, possibly considerable amounts of fishing line and related plastic equipment placed on the market for the recreational sector must be taken into account, as well as financial and logistical support for the development, implementation, and harmonization of recycling schemes such as the Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme."



Jan Kappel's comment relates to the two words “possibly considerable “which he would like to remove from this paragraph.

Following a brief discussion, the advice including this amendment was approved by the ExCom.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to circulate updated text to other ACs.

#### **iv. Scallops**

The plan is for the FG to continue, but nothing is to be reported at this point in time of where we are to the ExCom.

#### **v. Brown Crab (Norah Parke)**

The FG is looking for approval of this advice which was circulated in time for this meeting. This is the last iteration of this particular brown crab FG which began some years ago with a very simplistic mode. At the time, it was a follow-on to the Acrunet project with a focus of the fishery in Area 6 and 7. There were really only three countries involved, Ireland, UK, and France, and the markets were by and large in Europe.

Since that original iteration of the FG, things have changed considerably. There are now a lot of different additional countries involved. A big focus of the fishery is now in the North Sea, a major outlet is China and other Asian countries and the industry has become so large now that it is actually very vulnerable to disruption of supply chains and other issues like that. There is also an issue as regards the difference between European and Chinese standards when it comes to things like cadmium levels in the crab.

These all need to be addressed and what we would look for now is approval to have a joint Brown Crab FG with our colleagues in the NSAC and the MAC.

**Chair:** If there are no comments then this advice is approved by ExCom.

#### **vi. Focus Group Landing Obligation (Secretariat)**

This is a proposal from the HWG. There are already around 10 members, 9 from industry and only one OIG which is Client Earth. We would like to ask the other OIGs' representatives listening here that they come forward if they are interested in joining this FG.

The Secretariat drafted the Terms of Reference for this FG. They have been circulated among the members of the FG who have approved them. The duration of this FG is 12 months with the possibility to extend or convert this into a standing group. As the chair pointed out, this FG will function within the HWG.

If this FG and its ToR are approved, it is proposed to report on the work and future planning in a more precise way at the next ExCom meeting in September. The main three items and advice that this FG should work on are the follow up on the joint recommendation for the discard plan 2021, the drafting of the NWWAC advice on the directed fishing definition, and the drafting of the NWWAC advice on the choke species, so basically also working on the choke identification tool. Because the group has not met yet, it does not have a chair or a vice-chair yet.

**Chair:** If there are no interventions that the ExCom approves this FG.

#### **vii. Focus Group Climate and Environment**

The members of this FG decided to extend the scope of the ToR to include environmental issues, as this seems more appropriate considering that, for example, the Commission issued the its Biodiversity Strategy or considering the IUCN World Conservation Congress in January 2021 discussing sustainable development.

The FG wanted to broaden the scope, not just linking it to climate change. The main objective of this FG is to ensure that the NWWAC is involved in providing advice on all those climate change mitigation and adaptation issues as well as environmental protection issues that are relevant at EU and at regional level. This FG will start now and last for 12 months, and then possibly be extended and/or converted into a standing group.

The members of this group already convened as a task force twice in June, as they prepared the two replies to two different European public consultations. These replies were sent to the ExCom, approved, and sent to the Commission as an AC response. The first public consultation was on the Climate Pact. The second one was on the 2030 Climate Target Plan.

We are now seeking the approval from the ExCom for this group to become an effective FG.

There are currently less than 10 people in this FG so we really hope that we can get more members to join.

**Chair:** If there are no interventions then the ExCom approves this Focus Group and its ToR.

#### **viii. Joint NWWAC/PELAC Focus Group Seismic (Patrick Murphy)**

Both the NWWAC and PELAC had the same concerns about the effects of seismic activities on stocks and spawning grounds, and both submitted separate requests to the Commission seeking for ICES advice on these subjects.

In May 2020, the NWWAC Secretariat was approached by the PELAC in the hope of establishing a joint FG on seismic activities. A WebEx meeting was arranged on 15 June. Chair of this FG is Gonzalo Carvalho (Sciaena), and I was nominated as vice-chair.

Both ACs were looking for similar requests, an ICES working group to investigate the impacts of seismic activities on the life stages of our relevant commercial stocks. Three main topics we considered important which were seismic surveys, the effects of wind farms and cabling. There is an ICES working group for offshore wind development and fisheries, and it was suggested to broaden the scope to include impacts of wind farms, redraft the special requests to ICES to focus specifically on seismic impacts and circulate the FG comments, and approval and present final draft request for both the NWWAC and PELAC early July.

It was agreed to create a second request on wind farms impacts and see if research and questions can be incorporated directly into the terms of reference of the ICES working group. Finally, a shared folder was created for information dissemination.



#### **ix. Joint NWWAC/NSAC Focus Group Skates & Rays (Secretariat)**

The joint FG Skates & Rays was proposed and approved at the meeting of the HWG in Madrid. It's a joint FG with the North Sea AC. The chair is Irina Kingma, who is currently still a member of this ExCom until the end of year 15. The vice-chair is Manon Joguet.

The focused group has met twice in April to prepare a response to requests from the Scheveningen group on the harmonization of the management of skates and rays in the North Sea, NWW and the SWW, as different advices have been submitted to the Member States and to the Commission from both the NSAC and the NWWAC in 2018 and 2019.

The response to that request was developed and approved and sent to the Member States on 01 May, and this ExCom approved that advice piece. There is a second part to the work of this joint FG to continue discussing management issues for skates and rays in the concerned sea basins. The chair Irina Kingma has proposed to postpone any future work until face to face meetings are possible again. We do not know yet when the next meeting on this will be happening and will have to wait and see how the situation develops.

**Chair:** No interventions.

**Secretariat:** There was one point that was overlooked earlier on. Following the MEDAC's approval of the advice on the implementation of the single-use plastics directive, the Secretariat received an email a few days later from the MEDAC Secretariat that one of their members had been in touch with some comments after their deadline had closed and after their ExCom had approved our advice. The MEDAC has asked us, would we still consider looking into these comments, or is it a procedural issue for them that their member was too late? The question is to the NWWAC ExCom on how to proceed, as the MEDAC ExCom had approved the advice and their own member was in contact with them after the deadline and after the approval.

**Chair:** That is a MEDAC issue. It is up to them to decide if they continue the endorsement of our advice or supporting their advice or not. It is their prerogative to change their opinion and to let you know what should be done with it. We can move on to item B of information points.

#### **b) Update Rules of Procedure, ExCom election process (Secretariat)**

The most recent Rules of Procedure were approved in 2013. Over the past year, the Secretariat has mentioned repeatedly that we were reviewing the RoP and updating them. However, as we are facing Brexit, we can expect changes, we just are not sure what changes these may be. The Secretariat is proposing to wait with any approval and any further changes until we have a clearer picture of the changes that we have to address as it is highly likely that they will affect our statutes and rules of procedure.

**Chair:** If there are no questions from the floor on this postponing we can move on first to the budget, and then to the work programme before I have another piece of information.



### c) Budget Status (Secretariat)

As an information point on this for the ExCom, this information point was not on the agenda last year, and we would have only looked at the year '16 or the following year's proposed budget at the meeting in September.

We recently had a financial seminar with the Commission going over the financial guidelines. In the guidelines, it clearly states that the AC should submit their proposed grant application, the proposed work programme and the proposed budget two months ahead of the financial year, which is why we are today looking ahead at year '16 to give you an overview on this.

Today's presentation is on the year '15 overview of the budget income and expenditure and the year '16 forecasted budget.

The total budget for the year '15 approved by the Commission was for € 374,000. As of today, the remaining budget is about €160,000, so 45% of the total budget. There is 22% left here from the budget that was allocated for wages, which will cover for the remaining three months and for the revenue and taxes. On the participation in meetings, there is about 69% left from the budget, and that is because of these meetings that are going online. The funds will be reallocated towards the online organization of meetings and the translation of the large documents.

On the operating costs, we have only 6% left, and this will cover the rent of the office and other expenses related to annual AC operations. On E, we have the interpretation and translation and here as well we have 72% of the budget that is free to use, so we used just about 30% of the funds. However, this does not include the July meetings and the September GA that have to be organized and paid.

We have 37% that are left from the funds, so this is the overall budget for now.

If there are no questions, we'll look now at the year '16 forecast. The total amount that the Commission will allocate for the NWWAC for the next financial year is €330,000. This is just a proposed forecast budget only for the ExCom approval prior to be sent to the European Commission for approval.

We have forecasted only €43,700 from the membership contributions as we lost the UK members, which will remain members of the AC for the remaining three months until the end of December 2020. The budget includes the Member States' contribution of 22,000. The total forecasted budget is €395,700. We have allocated for the staff €182,000, for the participation in meetings €10,120, preparation of meeting €6,410, operation costs of €21,080, interpretation and translations €50,900, and other contracts of €24,702. This is the proposed budget for the year '16.

**Chair:** Final approval of this budget will be at the next ExCom and GA meetings. If anybody from the ExCom has any comments, questions, or suggestions in respect of this budget, don't hesitate to approach the Secretariat in order to anticipate and prepare the approval of the budget at our next meeting which is scheduled for September.

#### **d) Work Programme report (Secretariat)**

Presentation on the Year 15 work programme update and proposed Year 16 work programme available [here](#)

As mentioned previously, we need to submit our grant application to the Commission two months ahead of our financial year, which is the end of July. As part of this, as you can see up there in the top line year '16, 1st of October 2020 to 30th of September. I've put it in brackets, October 2021. The Secretariat is proposing to change the financial year for the NWWAC if possible.

believe that it would be more suitable for the AC to have its financial year running from October to October. It would give a little bit more time between the July and September meetings. We would have a little bit more freedom and a little bit of extended time to draft advice. August tends to be a month where very few people are available for meetings and it is hard to get replies on any queries from anybody.

Additionally, our own auditors for the budget can only attend to the North Western Waters Advisory Council in November. We always get our audit certificate only in November, which always makes it very tight for us to submit it to the Commission so that we can actually get the next round of funding. If we changed our financial year, it would enable us to be in touch with the Commission in a more timely manner, than what we can actually do at the moment. The Secretariat will develop a document with all our proposals, queries, and questions to the general membership and the ExCom prior to the September meeting.

**Commission:** It seems that this is very complicated. It is only because we are giving you an operating grant and such an operating grant cannot last for more than one budgetary year. It is quite a specific situation for such expenditure.

**Secretariat:** This issue was discussed with the Commission's financial advisor prior to her retirement earlier this year who did not indicate that this was difficult. In fact, she indicated that the Baltic Sea Advisory Council had changed their financial year, which is why this proposal was put forward today. The Secretariat will get in touch with the Commission again directly on this topic.

**Chair:** If members have any questions on the budget or the work programme, please contact the Secretariat directly.

#### **e) Executive Secretary proposal (Chair)**

You are aware, and the Secretariat distributed the message that Michael Keatinge as Executive Secretary of the NWWAC, has stepped down from his function officially retiring at the end of June. This had not been anticipated after his prolonged absence, which preceded that. We looked at the procedure regarding this with Secretariat, with the chairs and the vice-chairs of the ExCom. In the current statutory requirements and Rules of Procedure, it is noted that the Executive Secretary is appointed by BIM, the hosting entity of North Western Waters AC Company.

We did talk to all the members of the Secretariat at this point in time, who are Mo, Matilda, and Monica, and they all agreed with the proposal that has been put forward by Jim O'Toole, CEO of BIM, proposing Mo Mathies as the next Executive Secretary of the NWWAC. With this announcement, I officially would nominate Mo Mathies as the next Executive Secretary of our





organization and if no objections and no request from the floor of the ExCom, I'd like to be the first to congratulate Mo with her nomination.

#### 5. Call to vote for ExCom on extensions for current ExCom members and the ExCom Chair (Secretariat)

This has been mentioned in the Working Groups already. Due to the uncertainties around Brexit, but also the impact of COVID-19 the Secretariat suggests that the ExCom proposes to the GA at the September meeting that an extension of one year will be given to the existing structures until the GA meeting in 2021.

To maintain stability and the best possible effectiveness when facing the upcoming changes, this includes the current structure of the ExCom. Our two UK members of the ExCom will remain members as such until December 2020, and depending on what Brexit brings, it is highly likely that at that stage, they will have to, unfortunately, leave the ExCom. We also propose that the contract for the Chairman of the ExCom will be extended by one year.

We believe Emile has been doing an outstanding job and to keep the stability, we would like him to remain in his position for another year to basically keep the ship stable in these uncertain waters. This vote will take place in September at the GA, however, if any members do not agree with this proposal, please make this known to us as soon as possible. I have mentioned that we will put this together in a document in writing to all the members of the GA so that everybody is really clear on what we are proposing and can come back to us in due time before the September meeting so that we can arrange for any eventualities.

#### 6. Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

**Chair:** Thank you for asking me to stay on for another year, but I will leave that to the comments of other members of the ExCom. I also note all the messages coming in on the chat, so I'm pleased to see that everybody is agreeing with this. We've had a long meeting, and I think we can be pleased about the intervention of the commissioner, which basically took half an hour longer to talk to us on the topics, and this is also why we are a half an hour behind schedule. We have agreed a lot of actions which have been identified throughout the meeting and do not need to be summarized again here.

The Secretariat will distribute the actions that have been agreed, and we'll come together with the Vice-chairs, Chairs, and the Secretariat to organize and to agree the work to be done around it in this season of the summer. Thank you, everybody, for your attendance. Thank you for your contributions. Thank you for your approvals of all the things that we put forward to you for approval, and stay safe, stay healthy.

#### 7. Participants list

NWWAC participants – ExCom members	
Name	Organisation
Caroline Gamblin	CNPMEM
Bruno Dachicourt	ETF
Despina Symons	EBCD
Emiel Brouckaert (Chair)	Rederscentrale



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR  
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES  
SEPTENTRIONALES

**NORTH WESTERN  
WATERS**  
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA  
LAS AGUAS  
NOROCCIDENTALES

Geert Meun	Stichting van de Nederlandse Visserij
Jan Kappel	EAA
Jenni Grossmann	ClientEarth
John Lynch	IFO
Matilde Vallerani	NWWAC Secretariat
Mo Mathies	NWWAC Secretariat
Monica Negoita	NWWAC Secretariat
Patrick Murphy	Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation CLG
Puri Fernandez	ANASOL
Sean O'Donoghue	KFO
Suso Angel Lourido	Puerto de Celeiro S.A.
Sander Meyns	Rederscentrale

<b>NWWAC participants - Observers</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Hugo Boyle	ISEFPO
Jim Portus	South Western Fish Producers Organisation
David Curtis	EAA
Manu Kelberine	CDPMEM du Finistère
Jacopo Pasquero	EBCD
Dominique Thomas	OP CME
Jean Marie Robert	Pecheurs de Bretagne
Jean-Christophe Vandevelde	The Pew Charitable Trust

<b>Other participants</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Ghislain Chouinard	ICES
Pascale Colson	European Commission - DG MARE
Virginijus Sinkevicius	European Commission - Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries
Carmen Preising	Commissioner Sinkevicius cabinet
Erik Lindebo	European Commission - DG MARE