



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
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Draft Minutes

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Vigo | Friday 04 July 2025

1 Welcome and introductions

The Chair Alexandra Philippe welcomed all participants to the meeting. Apologies were received from Jean-Marie Robert (LPDB), Suso Lourido (Puerto de Celeiro), Gérald Hussenot (BlueFish), and Durk van Tuinen (Nederlandse Vissersbond) who were unable to attend the meeting in person but assigned proxies for this meeting. The agenda was adopted.

Action points from the last meeting (12 March 2025, Paris)

1	Secretariat to review minutes from previous ExCom meeting suggest relevant updates based on discussion with members.
	Follow up in progress
2	Secretariat to set up task force for the review of the Chair procedure and meeting conduct policy.
	Update under agenda item 8
3	Secretariat to include budget item on website update in Year 21 budget application to the amount of €12.500 with the rest of Year 19's additional income to be used as financial buffer.
	included
4	Secretariat to send email request to members for input to the Year 21 Work Programme.
	Email circulated 13/03, deadline 28/03, comments integrated

2 Keynote address – Marta Villaverde Acuña, Conselleira do Mar, Xunta de Galicia

The Chair welcomed the Regional Minister for the Sea Marta Villaverde Acuña to the meeting recalling that Villaverde Acuña has spent most of her professional career working in the Galician primary sector, both in the maritime and rural sectors, holding positions as a veterinary officer between 2001 and 2006 and as head of the Food Safety Department from 2014 to 2016. She also worked as a fisheries inspector in the Inspection and Control of Resources Service of the Sub-Directorate General of the Galician Coast Guard from late 2012 to April 2014.

The Conselleira do Mar welcomed participants and stated that Galicia is honoured to host the AC meeting in Vigo, recognising its strong ties to the AC through its significant fishing fleet in community waters, shared challenges like the reform of the CFP, and active participation in the AC's governing bodies. She highlighted the value of the AC's work, which has promoted dialogue among European fisheries stakeholders for over 20 years adding that the region commends the collaborative efforts



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between industry, civil society, and other interest groups in shaping a more sustainable EU fishing and aquaculture policy. “Galicia champions participatory governance, or “co-governance,” believing it strengthens economic resilience and supports marine ecosystem conservation.” She outlined that Galicia agrees that scientific knowledge should underpin all debates to accurately reflect the sector's reality, guiding decision-making processes with consensus-backed advice. Decisions should not be made in isolation if complex problems are to be solved. Continued support for fishers and coastal communities through unified effort is crucial.

The Conselleira emphasised that the AC has proven to be a model for stakeholder involvement in effective fisheries policy development, collaborating with Member States and the European Commission to achieve balanced results that consider industry and coastal community interests. In her opinion, a new opportunity exists to define and develop a fair new CFP. Galicia, like the AC, emphasises maintaining a balance between social, economic, and environmental dimensions, with management based on the best scientific knowledge and an ecosystemic approach. “The AC plays a fundamental role as a source of useful advice for the Commission and Member States, serving as platforms for open debate and contributing to non-regionalised approaches. Since its creation, the AC has been recognised as a key stakeholder in the CFP, fostering dialogue, building trust, and integrating stakeholder knowledge.”

Villaverde Acuña outlined that Galicia advocates for fisheries resource management based on the sector's reality, considering its social and economic viability, and proportional compliance with environmental protection criteria. This requires practical, flexible, and realistic goals that acknowledge and adapt to the specific singularities of each region. Balanced stakeholder input is vitally important for policy. She added that in 2022, Galicia presented a unified proposal for a CFP opinion, which forms the basis of a strategic dialogue presented to the Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans in April in Brussels and outlined ten key demands:

1. Promoting regionalisation of fishing policy to ensure proactive regional authority participation in EU decision-making.
2. Empowering generational renewal to make fisheries and aquaculture professions sustainable and profitable for European youth.
3. Protecting the European internal market for food sovereignty and security.
4. Providing a common, broad definition of artisanal fishing tailored to each maritime basin.
5. Updating the concept of “highly dependent fishing zone” to provide differentiated treatment and preferential quota distribution.
6. Adopting an ecosystemic approach to maritime fishing activity for improved management.
7. Setting realistic goals for the maritime fishing sector to address environmental and energy challenges and climate change adaptation.
8. Configuring a community market based on level playing field principles.
9. Preserving tangible and intangible historical, industrial, and cultural heritage linked to the



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sea.

10. Prioritising blue economic development, with fishing, shellfish harvesting, and aquaculture at the centre of future ocean policies.

The Conselleira concluded that Galicia is committed to achieving these proposals and will continue to address common challenges through a strong European common front, fostering communication and collaboration among regions with shared fishing interests. “Galicia is a long-standing example of responsible and sustainable activity, believing that caring for the sea is not just the best way, but the only way, to safeguard the future.” The sector is crucial to the European coastal economy, and collective efforts through the AC's deliberations will ensure its continued success. She thanked the AC again for choosing Galicia as the host region for these meetings.

The **Chair** thanked Villaverde Acuña for a key note address and for sharing her acknowledgement of the role of the AC. She recognised that AC members are really proud of what the AC does, and acknowledged similar challenges. However, she felt that the same opportunities also exist, and by working together, best practices can be shared as well as finding best solutions. Philippe commented that the AC provided advice to the European Commission on the CFP evaluation with some similarities, including regionalisation, generational renewal, food security, realistic goals, level playing field and more. She then opened the floor for questions.

Patrick **Murphy** stressed that the fishing industry is at a crossroads due to spatial squeeze, where the available ocean and sea basins for fishing are continuously shrinking, and the number of active participants in the industry is also declining. He urged the Conselleira to continue raising concerns about the future of the industry, stressing the importance of food security, coastal communities, and heritage.

3 **Keynote address – Susan Steele, Executive Director; Patricia Sanchez, Deputy Head of Unit Strategy and Cooperation EFCA**

The Chair welcomed Susan Steele, EFCA Executive Director, to this meeting and thanked her for her availability to join the ExCom members.

Susan Steele thanked the Chair for the invitation to the meeting and acknowledged its EFCA's in being based in Vigo, a city deeply connected to the oceans. She outlined EFCA's critical role in aligning with European priorities within the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and contributing to the success of the recently adopted European Ocean Pact. Its core mission is to ensure **compliance with the CFP**, promote sustainable fishing, and support effective ocean governance. She commented that the advice received from stakeholders is fundamental to the agency's work. EFCA is committed to nurturing relationships within the fisheries control community to add value. Referring back to the previous day's meeting she commented that **Joint Deployment Plans** (JDPs) are the cornerstone of EFCA's work. EFCA coordinates inspections by Member States in the Western Waters to ensure harmonisation, a level playing field for the industry, and cost efficiency. In the past year, the Western Waters JDP conducted



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4,187 land inspections and 808 sea inspections in the northwestern and southwestern waters. This JDP also focuses on non-European vessel activities in European waters and post-landing activities. Intense work and specific actions followed risk assessments conducted well in advance for all JDPs. These actions focused on compliance with the Landing Obligation, misreporting, area and temporal closures (including Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems - VMEs), and gear requirements, as well as misrecording.

Steele emphasised that a significant concern is the issue of **boarding ladder safety**. Safety is paramount for everyone working at sea. There have been serious incidents, though no accidents yet, where inspectors have had to be rescued from the water due to faulty boarding ladders. Issues include broken steps, misplaced ladders, and slippery surfaces, particularly during disembarkation. She urged the audience to spread awareness among their members about checking and maintaining boarding ladders, as it is not only a legal obligation but crucial for the safety of all seafarers. Steele outlined EFCA's continued coordination in the Western Waters JDP, deploying patrol vessels, drones (ORPAS), and fixed-wing aircraft. The cooperation model extends to the broader maritime community by supporting National Coast Guard functions. Collaboration with Frontex and EMSA is tangible and relevant, involving multi-purpose maritime operations focusing on fisheries control alongside other areas like oil pollution response and search and rescue.

Beyond JDPs and multi-purpose operations, EFCA collaborates closely with Member States on important projects. The weighing project provided recommendations and best practices, and EFCA has published updated OEM technical guidelines. EFCA remains at the forefront of innovation for its stakeholders by preparing technology and innovation for the fisheries control community. Steele reiterated her thanks for the advice, participation in meetings, and the close, reliable, and loyal partnership in achieving the common goal of sustainable fisheries governance.

The Chair thanked Steele for her address and commented that the ACs' via their involvement in EFCA's advisory board support this useful ongoing dialogue. She then opened the floor to questions.

Dominic **Rihan** recalled that the European Commission is working towards simplification and reducing costs, however, he felt that the new control regulation was achieving the exact opposite with far more complexity added. While the fishing industry supports a robust control system, the added rules and layers of the new regulation add to the administrative burden and in his opinion are not achieving the objective of better control. He felt that EFCA had a role to play in designing tools that actually do bring about simplification and in helping fishermen comply with the legislation in a way that they can understand without fear of vicimisation.

Addressing the issue of boarding ladders **Murphy** explained that his members face restrictions in material usage and that ladders can break during deployment. He suggested working



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together to establish protocols or testing regimes for ladders, emphasising that no one in the fishing industry wants to be called ashore due to a broken step, and that such breakages are not intentional. He acknowledged that the issue is complex and proposed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between EFCA and the fishing vessels.

Emiel **Brouckaert** recalled that the NWWAC delivered the advice on the control regulation. Echoing Rihan's comment, he asked what involvement EFCA has in analysing the delegated and implementing acts, especially regarding assisting fishers in being compliant.

John **Lynch** emphasised the need for a unified procedure for compliance with the new control regulation, acknowledging the work done on REM and weighing. He highlighted that the weight of fish constantly changes after being caught, suggesting that the regulation should designate a single point in time for weighing for accuracy. Regarding boarding ladders, Lynch supported Murphy's earlier comments and noted that the current regulatory description for ladders is outdated (300-400 years old), still specifying Manila rope and timber steps. He advocated for modernising these specifications to include more reliable, dependable, and stronger materials for improved safety for all. He suggested collaborating, perhaps through the AC, to prepare an advise on changing the regulatory description and materials used for boarding ladders.

Manu **Kelberine** recalled that also based on the previous day's exchange, the proposed stowage plan presents a real problem for mixed fisheries. He added that it would be beneficial to see more flexibility introduced in delegated acts.

Steele indicated that many regulatory questions would be better suited to the Commission's intervention later during the meeting. She clarified that the simplification of regulations, while a European priority, is not within the agency's remit whose role is to ensure harmonised application of existing regulations. Regarding legislative training, she agreed that it is crucial due to the complexity of legislation but stated it is not typically a control authority's role to provide such training, as other bodies in Member States usually handle this. She reiterated that this is outside the agency's remit but emphasised EFCA's commitment to transparency, with information available on its website. Concerning boarding ladders, Steele thanked the speakers for their support and acknowledged the outdated nature of current regulations specifying Manila rope and wood. She added that inspectors are instructed not to board if boarding is unsafe, making an assessment first. She reiterated the seriousness of recent incidents and highlighted that ladders also need to be safe for crew to use for disembarkation into life rafts. On the topic of weighing fish, Steele agreed with the principle of "weighing it once and weighing it right". She noted that this is the aim of the new control regulation and the weighing projects, acknowledging that while seemingly simple, it requires significant ongoing work. The agency's role in this is the harmonisation of fisheries control. She concluded that questions on mixed species will also have to be passed on to the Commission representative, as the agency follows existing regulations and derogations.

Murphy contended that if different competent authorities provide varying advice on the same legislation, harmonisation is impossible. He felt that while EFCA might not directly deliver



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training, it could oversee how it is delivered to ensure harmonisation and effectiveness. He highlighted a concern regarding the implementation of REM (Remote Electronic Monitoring) stating that during trials, there were multiple infringements due to a lack of understanding, not due to deliberate non-compliance. With REM soon becoming law, he felt that there would be no grace period, making proper training and understanding crucial. The industry is striving for compliance and sustainability, especially newer fishermen, but they require assistance to achieve it. Murphy asked EFCA to consider backing up the ACs in this effort in a collaborative approach.

Steele noted that many issues, particularly regarding REM and their learning process, were raised during EFCA's presentation the previous day. She affirmed that harmonisation of legislation across different countries is 100% EFCA's role, i.e. working with Member States to ensure a level playing field and consistent interpretation of regulations, emphasising the importance of feedback from those "on the ground" as "eyes and ears" to ensure high-level initiatives are effective at every level. Regarding REM she clarified that the agency has no role in the implementing regulations as its involvement begins after these regulations are established. Drawing a parallel to the initial introduction of square mesh panels in 1991, which faced initial resistance but are now widely accepted for their effectiveness, Steele expressed hope that current control measures, including REM, will similarly be seen as successful in 20 years.

4 Dialogue with DG MARE – Fabrizio Donatella, Director DG MARE C5

The Chair welcomed Fabrizio Donatella, Director MARE C5 here in Vigo and expressed her gratitude for his active engagement over the past years with this Executive Committee at nearly every meeting.

Fabrizio Donatella acknowledged Philippe's new role as Chair of the North Western Waters Advisory Council and thanked Emiel Brouckaert for his previous chairmanship. Recognising Vigo as a key centre for fisheries and the wider blue economy, he emphasised the importance of staying connected to the industry's realities and challenges.

On the Commission's recent communication on **Sustainable Fishing in the EU**, Donatella outlined that while challenges exist, the overall sustainability of fisheries continues to improve in some sea basins. He acknowledged efforts by Member States, officials, and stakeholders to fish at Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) and stated that fish stocks in the Northeast Atlantic are generally healthy. However, serious concerns remain, particularly for cod, whiting, haddock, and herring in the Celtic Sea, and cod in the Irish Sea, all of which have received zero-catch advice from ICES due to factors such as climate change, rising temperatures, and stock distribution disruptions. A lack of agreement among Coastal States on managing Northeast Atlantic stocks is also a worry. The focus remains on implementing the CFP, not just reaching MSY, but maintaining stocks at MSY levels where targets have been met.



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Donatella then explained that the **UK's implementation of management measures for offshore MPAs in English waters** is progressing in four stages, with Stage 3's public consultation running from 09 June to 01 September. This extensive initiative covers 43 MPAs, spanning nearly 31,000 square kilometres, and largely involves prohibiting fishing with bottom-towed gears. He emphasised that the Commission encourages Advisory Councils and Member States to engage with the UK's formal consultative process. While sharing ambition with the UK to improve ecosystem protection, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) requires adherence to principles of scientific advice, proportionality, and non-discrimination. The implementation of these unforeseen aspects of the TCA creates significant work, necessitating strategic focus on contributions.

Regarding the **EU-UK Negotiations Calendar** (2026) Donatella commented that negotiations are tentatively scheduled to begin the week of October 27th for 2026. A preliminary meeting at the delegation level with the UK will occur in the third week of September to confirm dates. A significant positive development is securing full reciprocal access to waters until 30 June 2038, which was agreed upon at the May EU-UK summit. This means no change in access conditions from 01 July next year, no quota transfer or financial compensation to the UK, and access will not be subject to annual consultation, preventing a highly challenging negotiation scenario. However, the negotiations will still be challenging due to situations like the zero-catch advice for certain Celtic Sea and Irish Sea stocks, reduced recruitment, and some advice being published later than usual.

Commenting on the Commission's response to the **11 Advisory Councils' joint letter on the MFF** Donatella stated that this was closely related to discussions on the Ocean Pact. The Ocean Pact emphasises the need for adequate financial resources and investment for ocean-related activities. The Commission aims to present its proposal for the next MFF around mid-July, providing clarity on the overall EU budget, not just DG MARE's specific proposal. This proposal seeks to mobilise additional funding mechanisms, both private and public. The public consultation for this topic is open until the end of August. The MFF aims to support investment and address challenges, including environmental aspects, from a broad perspective, not solely focusing on fisheries or the blue economy. The debate will be difficult, and the ACs are encouraged to channel further input to the Commission, authorities, and those involved in the broader debate.

The Chair thanked Donatella for his detailed update and opened the floor for questions.

Pauline **Stephan** wondered how Donatella saw the link between the agreement on full reciprocal access and the measures proposed in the UK MPA consultation.

Murphy referred to the complexities of fisheries management, particularly concerning the landing obligation and zero-catch advice for boarfish. He called for a review of the landing obligation and the system, arguing that climate change and shifting stock behaviours create an impossible scenario where current regulations cannot be met. Murphy also addressed the impact of the proposed UK MPA measures, arguing that these are changing the "ground rules"



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despite the 12-year access agreement. He stated that this proposal changed from what was understood in the TCA negotiations, and the impact on the EU fleet would be worse than Brexit. He outlined that fishermen traditionally fish in areas that maximise their vessel's return; being forced to move to less abundant areas increases effort and potentially harms fishing grounds. This displacement of boats into smaller areas needs to be evaluated, and the speaker urges the Commission to collect critical data and understand the situation, as it is not believed to be adequately done by the UK.

Donatella clarified that the 12-year access period to UK waters provides stability with no additional conditions beyond those already established. However, he acknowledged the regulatory autonomy of coastal states like the UK, which is fully foreseen by the TCA, allowing them to manage their waters, including through measures like MPAs. While the process of the UK's MPA proposals is compatible with the TCA, he noted AC members' concerns about the impact on fishing grounds, affecting both EU and English fishermen, contributing to a "spatial squeeze." Donatella felt that the key question in the debate is whether this reduction in fishing space can be compensated, guided by scientific advice. He added that this process is creating a significant workload given limited resources. Regarding the landing obligation, he commented that it is part of the ongoing CFP evaluation review, aiming for better operationalisation. However, he firmly stated there will be no return to the previous situation of 40% fish discard rates, emphasising that future solutions must align with the outcomes of the CFP evaluation.

Brouckaert highlighted the difficulty of adhering to current quotas and taxes in certain fishing grounds and asked "why can't other catch options provided by ICES be considered, instead of being legally bound solely by the "top line advice"?" He argued that many solutions could be found in these alternative options and that listening more to what is happening on the ground is crucial, especially given that current assessments are sometimes based on data that is two years old. He felt that the core question is whether the EU Commission can reconsider its current working method and incorporate more real-time, on-the-ground information.

Donatella acknowledged that the Commission is working diligently on the issue raised and reiterated the legal obligation to follow the headline advice from ICES. However, he emphasised that, particularly in the context of the UK and situations where the headline advice is incomplete, the Commission goes beyond simply following the headline. The process involves proposing a negotiation mandate to the Council, which is then implemented, potentially differing from the Commission's initial proposal. This multi-step process, especially with the UK, allows them to consider all aspects of the ICES advice, not just the headline, during negotiations. Donatella clarified that this broader approach is not about re-evaluating catch options, but about exploring remedial measures and other activities when ICES advises zero-catch due to reasons beyond fishing pressure. He assured participants that the Commission is not limited to what is legally binding but uses the negotiation process as an opportunity to delve deeper into the ICES advice.



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Kelberine expressed his concerns about the cumulative impacts of anticipated UK MPAs, particularly when combined with areas designated for wind farms, e.g., in the Celtic Sea. He felt that this could lead to complete exclusion of European ships from these waters. Another point of concern is the environmental justification for some of the largest MPAs, which he felt were not well designated. He highlighted that if European vessels are excluded from these MPAs, their fishing effort will be redirected and intensified in remaining European waters, leading to potentially damaging consequences for fish species and habitats.

Donatella emphasised the need for a data-driven and scientific approach when addressing concerns about UK MPAs. He felt that to effectively engage in dialogue with the UK, it is crucial to refer back to the conditions and criteria outlined in the partnership agreement with the UK. This means demonstrating, with scientific evidence, whether proposed management measures for MPAs are supported or not. He added that it is essential to provide precise, concrete data on various aspects, including fleet activity displacement, i.e. how MPAs might shift fishing efforts; environmental impact, i.e. what might the environmental consequences of this displacement be; concentration of fishing activity, i.e. how might this concentration affect areas with vulnerable populations like breeders or juveniles. This scientific and impact-based justification will allow for a dialogue focused on the merits of the environmental and scientific rationale, rather than simply the opportunity of a given measure.

Rihan expressed his concerns about the rapid introduction of new legislation, implementing acts, and delegated acts to enforce the control regulation believing that this rushed approach will alienate fishermen and make their lives much harder. He criticised the weighing regulations suggesting there are too many different weighing requirements when only one should be necessary urging careful reconsideration of these rules to ensure they achieve their goals in a way that encourages compliance and eases the burden on fishermen. Rihan also wondered about lessons learned from the sand eel case asking if the industry can prepare better to assist the Commission should a similar situation arise in relation to the proposed UK MPA measures. Referring to the ICES advice he pleaded for greater consistency in the advice provided for similar fish stocks. He highlighted that differences in how advice is presented for comparable stocks, such as Rockall Cod and Northern Prawn, significantly impact managers and can put them "in a real bind." Referencing a discussion with the Commissioner in Ireland regarding the MFF he stated that the Commissioner had suggested an "envelope of funding" dedicated to the marine/fisheries/seafood sector. Rihan expressed his concern about the progress of this idea, fearing that without a dedicated fund, the fishing industry, being a small sector, will lose out if it has to compete within a broader MFF debate.

Regarding UK MPAs **Lynch** stated that initially, MPAs were planned including coexistence with fishing, allowing various fishing activities in defined areas outside of protected features. He noted that the UK has now indicating a much stricter and more concentrated approach, almost completely limiting bottom towed gears and even static bottom-contacting gear in some places. He emphasised the need for Europe to learn lessons from the UK's actions when establishing its own MPAs, ensuring fairness and a progressive manner. Lynch also highlighted



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the landing obligation as a significant concern, especially in mixed fisheries scenarios arguing that its rigidity creates difficulty. While acknowledging the importance of not discarding dead fish, he advocated for greater flexibility in managing the landing obligation. Finally, Lynch expressed deep concern about the advice and the situation in the Celtic and Irish Seas, urging a new and open look at how stocks are managed in these areas.

Donatella acknowledged the impact of control rules and their implementation on the fishing sector but emphasised that these rigorous controls have positioned the EU as a leader in control policy, especially in surrounding sea basins. This leadership allows the EU to push other nations to adopt similar high standards. While this may not comfort those directly affected by the controls, he felt that the EU has transitioned from a situation with serious monitoring issues to one where its commitment to control cannot be questioned. Donatella highlighted the unique system in Europe, including the work of EFCA and the deep interactions between its staff and Member States, which have led to a high level of shared information on what is normally a national competence. He commented that the sand eel case served as the first joint "stress test" of the legal framework and international agreements within the TCA and helped reach a new level of maturity in implementation, defining how future cases will be addressed. He stressed the importance of providing data, assessments, and evidence to demonstrate concerns, which is essential for the Commission to defend cases effectively in the future. Finally, concerning the landing obligation, Donatella acknowledged its rigidity in mixed fisheries while reiterating that nobody wants to go back to discarding fish. He concluded that after ten years of progressive implementation, it is the right time to evaluate its effectiveness.

Aodh **O'Donnell** highlighted that Ireland faces significant challenges despite some positive aspects of the TCA as it locked in a disproportionate situation for Ireland's fishing industry for 12 years. He added that Ireland is grappling with zero catch advice for the Celtic Sea, posing a serious threat to its fleets. Furthermore, UK MPAs are expected to negatively affect Ireland's fleets, as are the VMEs, which have already reduced fishing opportunities by 10%. The industry also faces a spatial squeeze from offshore renewables, further limiting fishing grounds. He emphasised the need for collaborative effort to address these issues as part of the ongoing CFP review.

The **Chair** concluded the exchange by reiterating a few key points expressing her appreciation of the mention of the NWWAC's role in the staff working document, highlighting it as a positive step in showcasing the AC's importance. She felt that a significant concern raised is the absence or insufficient consideration of climate change in crucial regulations such as the Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), and the CFP. She emphasised the need to develop mechanisms for addressing the impacts of climate change and natural disasters within these frameworks, suggesting this could be a focus for the AC's Focus Group Climate & Environment. Finally, she underscored the UK MPA case as a priority for the AC which intends to actively address the situation and explore the legal perspectives involved.



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Donatella returned to a question about financial matters, stating that the proposal for mobilising public and private funding for an ambitious ocean policy, including fisheries, is still work in progress with no clear outcome yet. This initiative aligns with what the Commissioner previously mentioned during his visit to Ireland and the "Ocean Pact". He concludes by thanking the audience for the invitation and the valuable discussions, noting that all concerns and priorities expressed will be debriefed in Brussels.

5 Dialogue with NWW MSG– Elaine Croke, Irish presidency of the NWW Member States Group

The Chair welcomed Elaine Croke, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Ireland, online to this meeting as Ireland has taken over the presidency of the NWW Member States Group as of 01 July.

Elaine Croke, Deputy Director in Sea Fisheries, Policy and Management Division, introduced herself as the new lead for the NWWAC Member States Group and ICAT matters, explaining that Ireland will chair this group for the next six months, aiming for continued meaningful engagement and close working relationships with the AC.

The MSG's work plan for the coming months includes:

- Scheduling a first meeting in July to agree on an indicative meeting schedule, which will then be shared with the AC.
- Progressing work on Brown Crab, acknowledging the AC's significant contributions to this issue.
- Exploring how the Member State Group can contribute to the European Commission's evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).
- Seeking an update from the NWW Control Experts Group on issues impacting control.
- Feeding into EU-level work on rebuilding strategies for key Celtic Sea stocks.

Croke assured participants that feedback from today's dialogue will be brought back to the Member States and invited any further suggestions from the AC for the MSG's consideration. She apologised for having to leave early for another meeting but noted her colleague Michelle Toomey will remain online.

The Chair thanked Croke for her presentation and opened the floor to questions.

Murphy urged the Irish presidency of the NWW MSG to take into account pressures and impacts of climate change on various stocks and their movement in their discussions.

The **Chair** inquired about the work on Brown Crab, noting Ireland's national working group on the topic. She asked if there is an intention to involve the AC and incorporate its input on this issue. Additionally, she highlighted that the UK MPA consultation is a top priority for the AC and



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expressed curiosity about how the MSG plans to proceed with this work, hoping it will also be treated as a top priority.

Croke acknowledged the key concerns raised, specifically climate change and brown crab confirming the existence of a brown crab working group in Ireland. She also understood the AC's strong prioritisation of the UK MPAs consultations. From Ireland's perspective, Croke committed to relaying the importance and priority of these issues to their director. Following this, these issues will be presented to the MSG for their consideration, ensuring the context of today's discussions is fully understood.

O'Donnell highlighted two main concerns regarding the new control regulation and its implementation, noting that the margin of tolerance has been raised and remains a significant issue and stating that processes of sampling and speciation are causing considerable difficulties.

Croke reiterated her commitment of bringing the points of this discussion to the members of the NWW MSG under the Irish presidency.

Kelberine added that one problem is stowage stating that the exceptions to the separate stowage plans that are still not in place via a delegated act.

6 Approval of action points from the Working Groups

Working Group 1 – Irish Sea

1	Members to send written queries for Joanne Morgan following her presentation to the Secretariat
2	Members to send feedback on the fishing opportunities advice as well as the climate change impacts to the Secretariat.
3	Working Group to follow up on BIM trials at October meeting.

Working Group 2 – Celtic Sea and West of Scotland

1	Members to send written queries for Joanne Morgan following her presentation to the Secretariat
2	Members to send feedback on the fishing opportunities advice to the Secretariat.
3	WG2 to follow up in more detail on the validity of the 2004 regulation relating to hake fishery in the Celtic Sea at the October meeting.
4	From March meeting: WG2 to further engage with AZTI following the presentation and dissemination of the Northern Hake Stock dynamic
5	From March meeting: Declining SSBs while MSY-fished : members agreed to further dig in regarding the causes of the bad recruitments that several stocks are facing, leading to decreasing SSBs for several important stocks. Though not very specific at this moment, the idea would be to further look at inter-specific predation (boarfish, bluefin tuna..), intra-specific mechanisms (cannibalism), and should include analysis regarding the data collection for food stomachs analysis, that we could encourage to be funded if



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	necessary. Asking the EC to organize a specific request to ICES could be developed.
6	Members to send additional queries for Prof. Döring to the Secretariat for written follow up.
7	Members to send additional queries for Caroline Alibert-Deprez to the Secretariat for written follow up.
8	Members to send queries for Jonathan White to the Secretariat for written follow up.

Working Group 3 – Channel

1	Members to send written queries for Joanne Morgan following her presentation to the Secretariat
2	Members to send feedback on the fishing opportunities advice to the Secretariat.
3	Secretariat to initiate restart of the FG sea bass to develop advice on the ICES advice for 2026.
4	Secretariat to initiate the reestablishment of the FG Whelk
5	WG to follow up on MSG work on lemon sole and red mullet.

Horizontal Working Group

1	Members to send feedback on the fishing opportunities advice to the Secretariat.
2	Members to send written queries for Joanne Morgan following her presentation to the Secretariat.
3	Members to send written queries for Julia Rubeck and Herman Bos following the presentation on the CFP evaluation to the Secretariat.
4	FG Climate & Environment to review and potentially address the aspirational and binding targets included in the Ocean Pact
5	Members to send written queries for Cristina Morgado and Killian Chute (EFCA) following their update on JDPs and REM to the Secretariat.
6	Proposal for CNPMEM to develop a letter to the Commission requesting a political intervention regarding the UK MPA consultation and to contact the UK for an extension of the deadline, request from the Commission the carrying out of a study of the socio-economic consequences as well as potential impact of displacement of vessels, to be submitted if possible jointly with the North Sea AC.
7	CNPMEM to develop advice to the UK in response to the MPA consultation.
8	Management team to reflect on how advice is presented to the Commission and how to achieve the best responses
9	NWWAC Secretariat to circulate the form for the NWWAC members' spotlight as well as set up WhatsApp Community as a trial and engage with FG Control.

7 NWWAC Work Programme and Budget Year 20 – state of play (Secretariat)

Slides can be found [here](#).



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The Secretariat provided a detailed update on the AC's achievements under the current work programme as well as the state of play of the current budget. In relation to the budget she advised representatives that the Commission had made a mistake in their financial template which had been notified to DG MARE. The Secretariat is currently waiting for instructions of how to address this in relation to the current grant application for financial Year 21.

8 NWWAC Rules of Procedure (Chair)

Following from the meeting in March in Paris, the Secretariat sent out an email to all members for expressions of interest in participating in a task force to work on updating the RoP in relation to the appointment of the AC Chair, as well as a review of rules relating to conduct at meetings.

As Chair of the NWWAC, Philippe is heading this task force, with members from France, Spain, Ireland and the Netherlands.

The setting up of this task force took longer than expected, and a first meeting was only held on 25 June. Further work and follow up is in progress but will take more time. An update will hopefully be available for approval before the end of the year.

9 AOB

The Chair introduced the request received by the NWWAC Secretariat from IFSUA to review this AC's meeting policy which was approved by the members of the General Assembly in 2022 via written procedure. At that time, NWWAC GA members approved the policy by majority with two objections received (FREMSS, IIMRO). She invited Llibori Martinez (IFSUA) to put forward his proposal directly to ExCom members.

Martinez advocated for remote participation to be allowed in all AC meetings. In his opinion the NWWAC is an outlier in not permitting this, unlike the SWWAC and MEDAC. He felt that it is often impossible to be in two places at once, especially when AC meetings conflict with other ACs' events. He added that requiring a three-day in-person commitment for a single meeting is often impractical for members. He added that full remote access would allow members from smaller associations, who may lack the resources for frequent travel, to actively participate and share their expertise, enriching discussions. Martinez concluded that allowing remote participation would significantly improve the ACs operations and would not negatively impact in-person attendance.

Irene **Prieto** felt that while previous meetings offered both in-person and online participation, in-person attendance is more productive. She argued that being physically present fosters better networking, encourages more open discussion and sharing, and leads to more intense debates and feedback. She commented that online participants can still submit comments via email and also noted that this approach was agreed upon some time ago and had not caused any issues previously.



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Kelberine wondered if the AC could try to create a mix, while favouring face-to-face meetings but allow, in exceptional circumstances, the possibility for remote participation if duly justified. He also agreed with Prieto's intervention.

The **Chair** appreciated the open discussion about internal rules and acknowledged that the suggestions had been discussed by the management team. She noted the difficulty in ensuring in-person attendance at meetings, acknowledging that sometimes the option of remote participation can reduce physical presence. She expressed her understanding of the many demands on members, including overlapping meetings with different Acs. While the Secretariat tries to avoid clashes with other Acs, namely North Sea, Pelagic, and South Western Waters, she felt it is impossible to avoid all overlaps given the 11 Advisory Councils and similar topics arising at certain times of the year. Based on the exchanges Philippe concluded that the current policy regarding remote participation will remain. However, she suggested that member observers who cannot attend in person should submit their content queries, with the Secretariat happy to relay these to the relevant speakers. The goal of these rules is not to prevent participation, but to maintain connection.

Lynch expressed his full support for in-presence meeting.

Martinez suggested to trial remote participation for a year emphasising that that current restrictions on remote participation discourage engagement, particularly for members whose specific topics of interest might be brief. He felt that when connected remotely, contributions are diminished to written submissions that may not be fully addressed, and he questioned if membership in an AC would be worthwhile if remote participation was not possible. He believed that concerns regarding negative impacts from this change are based on speculation rather than evidence from other ACs where remote participation is common and effective.

In line with the Rules of Procedure the Chair asked members of the Executive Committee to vote by raising their hands:

In favour or keeping the existing meeting policy: 11

Abstention: 1

No opposing vote.

10 Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

1	Members to send written queries for Joanne Morgan (Executive Director) following her keynote speech on EFCA work.
2	Members to send written queries for Fabrizio Donatella (Director DG MARE C5 following the dialogue with members.
3	Focus Group Control to review the issue of access ladders as raised by EFCA and potentially develop advice



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Participants

NWWAC ExCom members		
Emiel	Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
Manu	Kelberine	CNPMEM
John	Lynch	ISEFPO
Geert	Meun	VisNed
Patrick	Murphy	ISWFPO
Alexandra	Philippe	EBCD
Corentine	Piton	France Pêche Durable et Responsable
Irene	Prieto	OPPF4
Dominic	Rihan	KFO
Arthur	Yon	ANOP
Experts & Observers		
Jose	Beltran	OPP-7 BURELA
Thomas	Brégeon	DG MARE
Elaine	Croke	DAFM
Bruno	Dachicourt	ETF
Fabrizio	Donatella	DG MARE
Gerald	Hussenot	Bluefish
LLibori	Martinez	IFSUA
Aodh	O'Donnell	IFPO
Cándido	Rial Rodríguez	Director xeral de Pesca - Xunta de Galicia
Pedro	Riveiro	Subdirector xeral de Pesca - Xunta de Galicia
Susan	Steele	EFCA
Pauline	Stephan	CNPMEM
Dominique	Thomas	OP CME MMN
Michelle	Twomey	DAFM
Dirk	Van Guyze	Agency of Agriculture and Fisheries
Marta	Villaverde Acuña	Conselleira do Mar - Xunta de Galicia
NWWAC Secretariat		
Ilaria	Bellomo	
Mo	Mathies	