

NWWAC Minutes

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Online via Zoom

16 October 2025

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair, Alexandra Philippe, welcomed all participants. Apologies were received from Pauline Stephan (CNP MEM), Emiel Brouckaert and Sander Meyns (Rederscentrale). John Lynch (ISEPFO) also conveyed his apologies, as he would have to leave before the end of the meeting. The Chair also noted that Elaine Croke (DAFM) was unable to join the meeting due to illness. Consequently, the agenda was adopted with the removal of the item “Dialogue with NWW MSG – Elaine Croke, Irish Presidency of the NWW Member States Group.”

Action points from the last meeting (04 July 2025, Vigo)

1	Members to send written queries for Susan Steele (Executive Director) following her keynote speech on EFCA work.
	The Secretariat apologised for not emailing a reminder on this action point, but not queries were received from members,
2	Members to send written queries for Fabrizio Donatella (Director DG MARE C5 following the dialogue with members.
	The Secretariat apologised for not emailing a reminder on this action point, but not queries were received from members,
3	Focus Group Control to review the issue of access ladders as raised by EFCA and potentially develop advice
	FG Control members met on 08 September. The advice on boarding ladder has been developed and the NWWAC procedure for adoption ended on 15 October.

2. Approval of action points from the Working Groups (Slides - Link)

The WG1 action points will be shared with the ExCom following the meeting scheduled for 29 October.

Working Group 2 – Celtic Sea & West of Scotland

1	Discussion on 2004 hake regulation with the Commission in January
2	Meeting to be organised on hake between scientists and industry, either as part of the VERMAR project or by NWWAC
3	Secretariat to circulate main articles of FMSY project and members to identify next steps
4	WG to hold discussion on spurdog and potential recommendations to be developed by the AC

The action points from WG2 were approved.

Working Group 3 – Channel

1	WG to follow up on topics of red mullet and lemon sole once more information is available from the NWW Member States Group
2	Secretariat to organise a FG Seabass meeting as soon as new information is available from Ifremer
3	WG to follow up of the Multi Year Strategy implementation on scallop
4	Secretariat to organise a meeting of the FG Scallop.

Action points 1-3 were approved.

Horizontal Working Group

1	Members to send queries following the Commission's presentation to the Secretariat.
2	Members to send queries following the ILIAD project presentation to the Secretariat.
3	Members to send queries following the IMBUS project presentation to the Secretariat.
4	Secretariat to send information on IMBUS project to Working Groups and ask for input regarding priorities for the project.
5	Secretariat to add standing agenda item to HWG agendas on review of advice submitted and responses received.
6	NWWAC to add query regarding which forum UK MPA designation is discussed to Inter-AC Brexit agenda.
7	NWWAC to raise query on guidance on the "Do No Significant Harm principle" announced in the Commission's proposal on MFF 2028-2034 at upcoming Inter-AC meeting.
8	Secretariat to ask for expressions of interest for participation in Advice Drafting Group on small-scale fisheries.
9	Working Groups to add standing agenda item on small-scale fisheries.
10	Proposal to determine on a case-by-case basis if financial support is available to active fishermen from the same PO if attending AC meeting, specifically with regards to the proposed meeting between Irish and French fishermen to discuss scallop measures planned for January/February 2026

Action points 1-9 were approved.

A discussion took place regarding the following related action points:

- WG3 action point 4: Secretariat to organise a meeting between French and Irish scallop fishermen.
- HWG action point 10: Proposal to determine on a case-by-case basis if financial support is available to active fishermen from the same PO if attending AC meeting, specifically with regards to the proposed meeting between Irish and French fishermen to discuss scallop measures planned for January/February 2026

John Lynch mentioned recent contact with CNPMEM on the matter and referred to a suggestion to hold trilateral meetings between France, the UK, and Ireland on scallop issues. He asked whether the proposed Ireland–France meeting would take place before the trilateral meeting or in tandem with it, and how the process would be organised. Mo Mathies suggested to first discuss matters within the Focus Group Scallop to clarify what is needed before any wider meeting. Manu Kelberine’s commented that Ireland and France could meet first before involving the UK in a trilateral format, stressing the importance of a clear order and structure. J. Lynch agreed with the previous speakers and suggested that a focus group meeting could take place before Christmas to plan a way forward, potentially followed by an Ireland–France meeting in January and then a trilateral meeting.

M. Mathies noted that the developments mentioned by J. Lynch had not been discussed in Working Group 3 and proposed removing the matter from the current agenda until more details are available. She suggested that the focus group meet online first to clarify what is actually needed, rather than immediately organising a meeting involving multiple countries, and raised a concern about the AC’s remit, noting it may not be responsible for organising the trilateral meeting.

M. Kelberine explained that the France–Ireland meeting is intended to discuss positions between fishermen before broader discussions, emphasising that France needed internal alignment, particularly with CNPMEM, before engaging with Irish counterparts, and that the French position should be finalised before any trilateral meeting.

Patrick Murphy supported M. Mathies’s suggestion to hold an online meeting first rather than meeting all parties together immediately. He also noted that the UK might react negatively if they felt the EU was “ganging up” on them, potentially complicating agreement.

The Chair observed that there were still many uncertainties, including meeting dates and trilateral arrangements. She suggested bringing the matter of financial assistance to the management team first before moving potentially to a written procedure. She recommended removing the relevant action points both from the Horizontal Working Group and Working Group 3 until the details are clarified, emphasising the need to ensure the proposal remains within the remit of the AC, particularly concerning cost implications.

Actions:

- Action point 4 in WG3 was changed to: “Secretariat to organise a Focus Group Scallop meeting to discuss progress and potential additional meetings in 2026.”
- Action point 10 to be removed from HWG action points list

3. Dialogue with DG MARE – Thomas Brégeon, Deputy Head of Unit DG MARE C.5

The Chair welcomed Thomas Brégeon and thanked him for his presence during the meeting. T. Brégeon expressed his pleasure at being present and conveyed Donatella’s regards and his willingness to engage in the next iteration of discussions. He mentioned that he would start with preliminary remarks but emphasised that the primary purpose of the session was to foster an exchange of views and answer questions from the members.

He reminded participants that the involvement of ACs was seen as vital in policymaking and fisheries management across all regions, describing ACs as key instruments under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). T. Brégeon stressed the continued importance of ACs in sustainably managing stocks, highlighting that this had been the case for more than a decade despite ongoing challenges such as climate change and geopolitical pressures. He noted that his department, C.5, interacts smoothly with ACs, although the autumn period is particularly busy due to preparations for consultations and the negotiation of non-papers with member states. He acknowledged that this hectic period involves intensive engagement to ensure that the EU’s position is robust, clear, and successful, especially in anticipation of the December Council, when agreements on quotas and management measures are expected to be finalised.

T. Brégeon addressed the AC’s request for feedback on several topics.

- Referring to the **Fishing Opportunities for 2026**, he indicated that the advice provided by ACs is highly valued. He explained that the advice is essential for preparing internal reflections, cross-checking approaches, and understanding the state of different fisheries. He underlined the importance of the quality of scientific advice provided by ICES and highlighted the crucial role of data from commercial fisheries, including catches, location, and fishing effort, as key inputs for assessments. T. Brégeon encouraged continued cooperation with ICES and participation in initiatives such as the MIACO platform, which facilitates alignment between scientific assessments and practical experience from the fleets. He acknowledged the AC’s consistent emphasis on the impact of climate change, affirming that it is a priority that is recognised and addressed within scientific assessments and management discussions. T. Brégeon highlighted the value of continued collaboration between Member States (MS) and ACs to achieve state-of-the-art, regionalised fisheries management. He cited the operational success of ad hoc measures, such as the King scallop exchange held the previous year, as examples of effective cooperation that produced tangible results.
- Turning to the **EU-UK negotiations**, T. Brégeon explained that preparations for the mandate are ongoing. Discussions with MS occur frequently, both bilaterally and within the Council’s

working party for fisheries and are essential for preparing consultations with the UK. He indicated that consultations with the UK would begin at the end of the month, followed by intensive daily negotiations, all conducted in close cooperation with MS and industry stakeholders. He clarified that a key change this year is the long-term stability of access to UK waters, following the agreement reached in May, extending current conditions until 2038. This stability allows negotiations to focus primarily on fishing opportunities rather than annual access arrangements. T. Brégeon reiterated that fishing opportunities are based on MSY advice from ICES and within the legal framework of the CFP and multi-annual plans. He acknowledged challenges for certain stocks, such as cod and haddock in the Celtic Sea, where zero catch advice poses sensitive negotiation issues. At this stage, negotiations remain ongoing, and detailed information cannot yet be provided until the Council's mandate is finalised.

- Addressing the management of the **spurdog fishery**, T. Brégeon noted that a joint request with the UK had been sent to ICES to explore alternative management scenarios. The report was published on 07 October, and the Commission is now analysing the findings to prepare for engagement with the UK during annual consultations, again subject to the Council mandate.
- T. Brégeon discussed the **Ocean Pact**, describing it as a European initiative that unifies ocean policies within a cohesive framework to benefit ocean protection, ecosystems, coastal communities, and the economy. He stressed that the Ocean Pact aims to break down silos, build synergies across different fields, and address challenges over both the short and long term, with goals extending to 2030, 2040, and 2050. He explained that the Pact's implementation phase is a collective exercise involving multiple actors, including ACs, with ambitious deliverables in terms of scope and timing. A high-level Ocean Pact board is scheduled for early 2026, supported by a monitoring dashboard. One of the first actions will be the Ocean Act, which builds on the revision of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive to ensure coherent implementation while reducing administrative burdens. T. Brégeon highlighted the Ocean Pact's focus on a healthy ocean and a sustainable blue economy, noting the relevance for fisheries within the broader framework that includes climate policy, maritime transport, industrial strategy, and port strategy. He also referenced the forthcoming Blue Generational Renewable Strategy in 2027, which will further integrate the social dimension of the blue economy.
- Regarding the **evaluation of the CFP and Vision for fisheries and aquaculture 2040** T. Brégeon commented that work is ongoing with results expected in spring next year, providing a basis for informed decisions regarding the CFP's future, including revisions where necessary. He connected this to the Commissioner Kadis' mission to prepare a Vision 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture, aiming to support job creation, competitiveness, and sustainability across the sector. He outlined that internal preparations for the Vision 2040 have begun, focusing on four main areas: demand, supply, workforce, and tools to ensure comprehensive coverage. The vision builds on previous exercises such as the foresight study "Fishers of the Future" and incorporates engagement with stakeholders. It

will also integrate outcomes from ongoing work, including the CFP evaluation, the energy transition roadmap, the midterm review of aquaculture guidelines, and preparation for the Fisheries External Action Communication. Vision 2040 will align with broader Commission initiatives, including the Competitiveness Compass, Nature Restoration Law, multi-annual financial framework discussions, and simplification efforts.

T. Brégeon concluded by welcoming questions from members. The Chair thanked him for the overview and the points addressed. She invited members to share their questions.

Dominic Rihan thanked T. Brégeon for a comprehensive briefing and highlighted two linked points. Addressing regionalisation, D. Rihan stated that since Brexit, regionalisation “doesn't work” and is “not fit for purpose.” He described stakeholder engagement as minimal, citing his experience with both Pelagic AC and NWWAC. He explained that interactions with Member States Groups are limited, and that ACs are given very short notice, sometimes just 24–48 hours, to comment on lengthy documents, describing this as “broken” though acknowledging the concept itself is innovative.

D. Rihan linked this to ongoing issues in the Celtic Sea, particularly concerning gadoid stocks. While he acknowledged the science, he emphasised that the Irish industry has no visibility or input into discussions on remedial technical measures with the UK. Referring to rumours of spatial closures and gear modifications he reiterated the lack of transparency and meaningful stakeholder input, expressing concern over being presented with a *fait accompli* in early December that would dictate fishing practices from 01 January. He concluded by appreciating the Commission's small team while noting the minimal flow of information back to stakeholders.

P. Murphy echoed D. Rihan's concerns, noting that the issue seemed predominantly Irish. He referred to 33 UK MPAs being implemented in productive fishing grounds, warning that exclusion from these areas could have impacts worse than Brexit. He questioned the Commission about the management of these areas and their impact on stock rebuilding, emphasising the decline in active boats in the Celtic Sea over the past 20 years. He expressed concern for coastal communities and fishers, stating that the CFP was decimating them and that the situation was hard to accept.

T. Brégeon acknowledged the concerns on regionalisation, agreeing that Brexit has created challenges for the tool designed under the CFP to ensure bottom-up policymaking with active stakeholder contributions. He noted that the UK's use of regulatory autonomy has been rapid, creating a need for adjustment in engagement processes. He explained that the role of regional groups in consultations is a responsibility of MS, and the Commission is associated with this work primarily when adopting delegated acts derived from joint recommendations. He urged stakeholders to engage with their authorities to understand ongoing discussions.

Addressing P. Murphy's point on access to UK waters, T. Brégeon noted that the May deal provides legal security until 2038 but acknowledged the concerns raised regarding MPAs. He emphasised that conservation measures must be proportionate and non-discriminatory, reflecting principles set out in the TCA. He cited the sandeel case as an example where the EU

ensured that interests of all sectors were respected, showing the capacity and willingness to act when necessary. He reassured stakeholders that the EU is monitoring incoming MPAs to maintain a level playing field and highlighted ongoing dialogue with the UK, particularly through public consultations and notifications of measures.

M. Kelberine also commented on the UK stage 3 of MPAs, addressing the level playing field, noting that British fishermen themselves are generally quite unsatisfied, and commenting on the overlap of different blue economy sectors in the area. On the seabass, M. Kelberine then asked whether the European Commission's is willing to commit to the SCF on a multi-annual assessment regarding future recruitments, rather than a precautionary approach. T. Brégeon recognised concerns about spatial planning and cumulative pressures from MPAs, offshore energy development, and other uses of maritime space. He discussed the importance of integrating fisheries into planning processes and mentioned ongoing efforts for a more annual management of certain species like seabass. On the latter, T. Brégeon replied that he will share this point with colleagues, but he knows that work is going on.

Gérald Hussenot raised the issue of socio-economic balance, questioning how the EU would ensure protection of professional sector populations amid global trade and environmental policies, referencing the Ocean Pact and other international agreements.

T. Brégeon highlighted that the UK's consultations on MPAs do provide opportunities for non-British stakeholders to contribute, and that there are informal dialogues between European and UK professional fleets. He stressed the importance of accounting for cumulative impacts and ensuring proportionate measures. Regarding maritime space competition, he outlined the Greater North Sea Basin Initiative (GNSBI) as a coordinated effort among countries in the North Sea to plan maritime uses, including fisheries, shipping, cables, and offshore energy. He noted the Commission's active participation, and the integration of fisheries concerns into planning.

J. Lynch asked whether the Commission would support a similar initiative in the North Western Waters and how it would be set up, querying whether this would involve ACs, MS, or the Commission.

P. Murphy added a follow-up, asking whether the Commission could play a role in mitigating negative impacts if fishing efforts are forced into less productive areas, which would increase environmental pressures and have socio-economic consequences for fleets.

T. Brégeon explained that the GNSBI is a development from the existing sea basin strategies which cover multiple issues including maritime spatial planning. He noted that while offshore renewable energy competition is a major concern in the North Sea due to limited space, in the Atlantic it is less acute, though still significant. The Atlantic Strategy covers Spain, France, Ireland, and Portugal, with less overlap of interests, but the Commission remains committed to coordinating and ensuring fisheries are considered alongside other uses.

The Chair noted that the Horizontal Working Group had invited GNSBI representatives to explain their structure and remit, highlighting that while the NSAC is more connected, the remit of GNSBI also covers North Western Waters. The group is beginning the process of engaging with GNSBI, and the Chair suggested including a state-of-play update on this engagement in the next

Horizontal Working Group, noting that this goes beyond Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) alone.

Regarding MPAs, the Chair emphasised their importance for the AC. She expressed reassurance at the Commission's approach compared to previous discussions, noting that proportionality can still be assessed despite similar challenges faced by both UK and EU fishers. She proposed raising MPAs at the Inter-AC Brexit Forum to identify where discussions are taking place and to ensure a proper stakeholder engagement channel.

On Offshore Renewable Energy, the Chair highlighted the potential impact on fisheries, noting that ORE installations effectively prevent fishing and do not constitute technical measures. She also commented on regionalisation, suggesting it is "injured" rather than "broken" due to Brexit, and recommended addressing this in the Inter-AC Brexit Forum.

The Chair noted that the Ocean Act is built on MSP and highlighted the coherence of targets outlined in the Ocean Pact. She raised questions about whether targets will become binding, even the aspirational ones, particularly regarding the Marine Action Plan and the bottom trawling ban in MPAs. She also expressed concern about conflicting messages from different administrative bodies and sought clarification on whether policy decisions originate with the Commissioner or the services.

In response, T. Brégeon clarified that the Commissioner provides policy direction, which the services follow. He acknowledged the Chair's comments and indicated that they would be relayed to the relevant colleagues. He emphasised the importance of open discussion and thanked participants for their contributions.

Action points:

- Members to send queries to the Secretariat following the dialogue with the Commission.
- Secretariat to add update on NEAFC to next HWG meeting agenda
- Secretariat to add update on GNSBI to next HWG meeting agenda
- Chair to address point on regionalisation at Inter-AC Brexit Forum including reference to lack of information on discussion of remedial measures in the Celtic Sea
- Chair to address at the Inter-AC Brexit Forum und agenda item on MPAs the possibility of financial aid to EU vessels should the UK MPA measures be implemented in full
- Chair to address at the Inter-AC meeting under agenda item on MFF the possibility of financial aid to EU vessels should the UK MPA measures be implemented in full

4. Dialogue with NWW MSG – Elaine Croke, Irish presidency of the NWW Member States Group – cancelled

Noting the absence of the representatives from the Member States Group due to sick leave, Geert Meun suggested that it might be possible to request a document outlining the topics currently under discussion within the NWW Member States Group. He emphasised that,

without such input, there could be a gap of over six months with no information from the group and proposed seeking a written response from the MSG outlining their current objectives.

The Chair noted that while it was always possible to make such a request, the MSG has not met since July. She clarified that whenever the AC was invited to a meeting, the Secretariat prepared a report summarising the discussions and the issues raised, ensuring AC members were kept informed. She added that the update provided by E. Croke at the Executive Committee meeting in July was still valid.

M. Mathies stated that a report from the July meeting of the NWW MSG was available both in the Members' Area of the website and via email. She confirmed that no additional meetings had occurred since then and that there was no information regarding the next scheduled meeting.

G. Meun thanked them for the clarification.

P. Murphy intervened to express concerns over the lack of engagement with the MS, noting that the Commission had advised the AC to increase such engagement. He highlighted that the absence of the MS raised serious concerns, particularly regarding technical measures, for which very little information was being provided. He emphasised the urgency of addressing issues with potentially severe financial implications for the industry. P. Murphy then highlighted the significant financial challenges facing the fleet due to potential restrictions in fishing areas. He raised concerns about the practical implications for vessels and referenced prior agreements under the Brexit negotiations, noting that substantial sums had already been invested in securing access to fishing grounds. He questioned whether the AC should proactively address the need for financial support in light of forthcoming measures, similar to how support was sought during Brexit negotiations. He clarified that he was referring to financial measures to facilitate adjustments, such as transitioning to different fisheries or temporary cessation of activities, rather than compensation, and stressed that failing to request such support could result in being denied it by the Commission.

The Chair sought clarification on whether P. Murphy was referring to financial compensation or broader financial measures, to which he confirmed it was the latter. His concerns were specifically related to measures introduced under MPA management, where the potential exclusion of European vessels would necessitate financial support from the Commission for lost fishing grounds. P. Murphy elaborated that, according to STECF evaluations, the most productive areas could be affected, resulting in additional costs and operational challenges if fleets are forced to relocate, and emphasised that the science underpinning some measures seemed more focused on protecting communities than the actual features being fished, which could double operational efforts and reduce financial viability. He argued that if European fisheries were to lose areas they had already invested in, this should be explicitly raised with the Commission for consideration in budget allocations.

The Chair suggested addressing the issue through the Inter-AC Brexit Forum and the upcoming Inter-AC meeting, particularly in the context of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), linking it with previously planned discussions on MPAs. She noted that further steps, such as drafting a letter, could be considered depending on outcomes. P. Murphy confirmed that this

issue would affect all members, not just Irish fleets, and sought the views of other ExCom members.

G. Meun expressed full agreement with P. Murphy, highlighting the ongoing challenges in the UK, including the loss of key fishing grounds and the need to incur additional costs to meet quotas elsewhere. He stressed the importance of discussing this with both the European Commission and the MS, given the likely continuation of UK measures to protect significant fishing grounds.

M. Kelberine supported the points raised, suggesting that linking requests for financial measures to budget discussions could be an effective way to pressure the Commission to clarify fisheries access. G. Hussenot reinforced P. Murphy's argument, noting that reductions in fishing space would have serious socio-economic consequences for the sector and disrupt market equilibrium.

The Chair acknowledged the concerns, particularly regarding the potential inability to fish agreed annual quotas under the TCA. She noted that this issue had already been raised in correspondence with the Commission earlier in the year and suggested a coordinated approach: addressing it in the Inter-AC Brexit Forum, in the Inter-AC meeting, and potentially in a letter or advice regarding the MFF. She emphasised the urgency and importance of the topic and confirmed she would communicate these concerns in upcoming meetings, suggesting that ExCom and Working Groups continue to reflect on this matter as part of ongoing discussions.

5. Review of NGO involvement in NWWAC work (Secretariat)

Slides can be found [here](#).

The Chair began by providing context for the discussion, explaining that the issue under review had been addressed previously at the General Assembly (GA). She reminded participants that a letter from the eNGOs had been sent to the Commissioner two weeks prior to the GA (25/09/25), and that the GA had decided it would be helpful for members to have an overview of actions taken to increase NGO membership and to understand the circumstances under which some NGOs had left. The Chair then invited M. Mathies to present the work she had undertaken to compile relevant data on the history of eNGO involvement, acknowledging the usefulness of her efforts in demonstrating the Secretariat's engagement to enhance membership.

M. Mathies provided a timeline of eNGO involvement in the NWWAC. She noted that a meeting had been held in April 2019 between the then Commissioner and the eNGOs, but due to major staff changes within the Secretariat, both she and Matilde Vallerani had only joined at the end of April and May 2019 respectively, and were unaware of any prior issues. The first awareness of problems came in November 2019 during the inter-AC meeting, when an eNGO participant highlighted these concerns, which came as a surprise to the NWWAC Secretariat. Upon becoming aware, the Secretariat took action and arranged a meeting in Madrid in March 2020 together with the ExCom chair, OIG Vice-chair, Secretariat, and present eNGOs, but the

meeting was disrupted by the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, forcing attendees to leave unexpectedly. M. Mathies explained that from March to July 2020, there was a three-month period during which changes could not realistically be implemented, and by the time proposed changes were communicated to eNGOs, some had already decided not to renew their membership.

M. Mathies detailed that following the receipt of the eNGOs' letter to the Director-General, the Secretariat responded with a thorough overview of eNGO involvement, highlighting open opportunities for participation and the steps taken to address complaints. She noted that the official review of the NWWAC Rules of Procedure was initiated in September 2020, after the eNGOs had already exited, preventing them from participating in the review. Internal discussions then focused on increasing OIG and eNGO membership, which led to the hiring of Mindfully Wired Communications to develop a strategy, resulting in membership drives in June 2022 and May 2023, though neither resulted in new members. The 2024 membership drive was paused to reconsider strategy, and with Alexandra Philippe's appointment as the first AC chair from the OIG College, another targeted drive was initiated in September 2025 but had produced limited responses at the time of the meeting.

M. Mathies explained the membership drive process in detail. A letter signed by the Chair was sent to potential eNGO members highlighting AC achievements, advice submitted over the past year, recognition from the Commission, and recent updates to the Rules of Procedure addressing previous complaints. She acknowledged the difficulty in establishing the most effective means of outreach and noted the challenges in securing responses, despite efforts to contact previous and potential members. She summarised the reasons given by former members for leaving, including limited capacity, maternity leave, perceived ineffectiveness, and lower priority of this AC relative to other commitments. She noted that a positive response had been received from the Irish Wildlife Trust on the 2025 membership drive, with follow-up actions ongoing. She emphasised that the Commission had been provided with detailed records of these drives and responses, which highlights that lack of eNGO participation was not due to failures in the functioning or management of the AC.

Jean-Marie Robert reflected that the current Secretariat should not be considered responsible or guilty for the situation. He emphasised that influence and positioning had historically affected participation, with some eNGOs seeking direct engagement with the Commission for strategic reasons. He argued that the lack of responses or regrets from eNGOs was already evidence of broader challenges rather than the AC's failings. He suggested that the fundamental issue lies in the original design of the AC and the interest of stakeholders in engaging with it, particularly noting the benefits of having structured communication channels to the Commission.

The Chair agreed, noting that capacity issues impact eNGO participation. She acknowledged that some eNGOs felt minority positions were inadequately represented, and explained that even with a 40-60% rule, there were insufficient members to fill the OIG allocation fully. She highlighted efforts to establish the AC as a priority channel for the Commission, demonstrating the impact of AC advice on legislation, and reiterated the ongoing engagement with NGOs to

communicate the AC's work. The Chair also noted that not all eNGOs had signed the letter to the Commissioner and that the letter included proposals for changing the internal management of the ACs.

Llibori Martinez raised concerns for smaller organisations, noting that lack of resources can prevent participation and that measures should avoid discriminating against smaller entities. He supported the Chair's point that direct communication outside the AC cannot be prohibited and stressed that while the AC structure might privilege certain positions, this is an inherent aspect of how consultative advice is weighted.

The Chair agreed on the importance of establishing a priority communication channel with the Commission, while recognising that broader stakeholder engagement also remains valuable. She suggested that the Secretariat continue to reach out to environmental NGOs to maximise participation and to reiterate in discussions with the Commission and other ACs that this channel is the primary route for conveying advice.

J.-M. Robert agreed with the Chair, noting that although direct contact with competent authorities is possible, maintaining structured dialogue with the Commission ensures political and procedural clarity.

Finally, the Chair suggested that it might also be useful to provide a historical context of eNGO engagement to the Commission.

Action point: Secretariat to continue formal membership drive targeting specifically eNGOs in the coming year.

6. NWWAC Work Programme and Budget Year 21 – state of play (Secretariat)

Slides can be found [here](#).

M. Mathies provided an overview of the Year 21 Programme noting that the calendar does not include FG meetings, as scheduling for these depends on several variable factors. Members approved holding the NWWAC March meeting in Brussels to facilitate the Commissioner's participation, acknowledging that this would require additional budget allocation.

The proposed changes to the NWWAC reimbursement rules, previously discussed at the GA, were presented to the ExCom, where the members approved the proposed amendments.

7. AOB

Bruno Dachicourt from ETF provided an update regarding National Fisheries Profiles published by DG MARE for each Member State, noting that the information is available online and includes links and relevant criteria for each country.

The Chair addressed the advice received through the Horizontal Working Group on the internal

management of the Advisory Council. She indicated that the process for this advice would be temporarily paused, as discussions with other ACs are necessary due to internal considerations. She highlighted that no comments had yet been received from the Horizontal Working Group and suggested that members review the advice to ensure alignment. M. Mathies added that, as an action point, the draft advice document could be recirculated to members, providing background information and requesting their comments on the best way to proceed. The Chair clarified that this step is solely for review and alignment purposes and does not constitute reopening or altering the formal procedure. It is intended to ensure that all members are aware of the advice and can provide informed input before further discussion with the other ACs.

Action points:

- Secretariat to circulate information on the National Fisheries Profiles as published by DG MARE
- Secretariat to circulate the draft joint-AC advice on AC functioning, provide information on the current state of play and ask members for comments

8. Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

1	Member to send queries to the Secretariat following the dialogue with the Commission.
2	Change WG3 action points regarding organisation of a meeting for fishermen to organisation of a meeting of the FG Scallop to discuss latest developments
3	Remove HWG action point on financial aid for fishermen to attend extraordinary meeting on scallop management for discussion in FG Scallop and NWWAC management Team, as well as review with Commission financial services if needed.
4	Secretariat to add update on the EU Atlantic Strategy to next HWG meeting agenda
5	Secretariat to add update on GNSBI to next HWG meeting agenda
6	Chair to address point on regionalisation at Inter-AC Brexit Forum including reference to lack of information on discussion of remedial measures in the Celtic Sea
7	Chair to address at Inter-AC Brexit Forum under agenda item on MPAs the possibility of financial aid to EU vessels should the UK MPA measures be implemented in full
8	Chair to address at Inter-AC meeting und agenda item on MFF the possibility of financial aid to EU vessels should the UK MPA measures be implemented in full.
9	Secretariat to continue formal membership drive targeting specifically eNGOs in the coming year
10	Secretariat to circulate the draft joint-AC advice on AC functioning, provide information on the current state of play and ask members for comments
11	Secretariat to circulate information on the National Fisheries Profiles as published by DG MARE



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

Participants

NWWAC members	
Bruno Dachicourt	ETF
Gerald Hussenot Desenonges	Blue Fish
Manu Kelberine	CRPM de Bretagne
Suso Lourido	Puerto de Celeiro
John Lynch	ISEFPO
Geert Meun	VisNed
Patrick Murphy	ISWFPO
Alexandra Philippe	EBCD
Corentine Piton	France Pêche Durable et Responsable
Irene Prieto	ARVI
Dominic Rihan	KFO
Jean-Marie Robert	Les Pecheurs de Bretagne
Durk van Tuinen	Nederlandse Visssersbond
Arthur Yon	FROM Nord
NWWAC observers	
Jan Kappel	EAA
Llibori Martinez Latorre	IFSUA
Experts & observers	
Thomas Brégeon	DG MARE
NWWAC Secretariat	
Ilaria Bellomo	Fisheries Strategy & Administration Officer
Mo Mathies	Executive Secretary