

NWWAC Executive Committee

12 March 2025

Paris and online

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair (Emiel Brouckaert) welcomed all participants. Apologies were received from Geert Meun (Visned), Gérald Hussenot (Blue Fish), Dominic Rihan (KFO), Durk Van Tuinen (Nederlandse Vissersbond) and Suso Lourido (Puerto de Celeiro). All absent provided proxies for their votes. On the adoption of the agenda, Irene Prieto suggested to move the point on Chair Election before the coffee break. Members agreed and the revised agenda was adopted.

Action points from the last meeting (21 October 2024, virtual)

1	Members to submit additional questions for DG MARE to the Secretariat for written response.
	Email circulated on 25/10, no replies received
2	AC to follow up on necessary responses to UK FMPs consultation.
	FMP response to skates & rays submitted to Defra 08 January
3	NWWAC to put forward to the Commission ideas on changes in management principles, for example spurdog.
	Advice submitted to COM 27 January, waiting for response
4	FG Spatial Dimension to address socio-economic assessment of developments within MSP.
	Advice submitted to NWW MSG 17 February, waiting for response
5	AC needs to clarify that it was not consulted as part of the JR VME. Identify FG to follow up on discussion points re VME to take forward work.
	JR postponed until STECF plenary in March, JR circulated to members for review
6	Vice-Chair elections are postponed until March 2025.
	Agenda item 8 -6
7	Secretariat to initiate next steps in the procedure for the appointment of a new AC Chair.
	Agenda item 7 -5
8	AC needs to make an effort in addressing conflict within the AC to reestablish trust and cohesion.
	Need for further action in consideration after several individual contacts with members
9	Members to review Work Programme and ensure that proper action is taken on the items identified.
	Email circulated on 25/10
10	Members to revert to either the Secretariat or Stephan directly to establish if their country is interested in developing the ACFishMap in other ACs.
	Followed by Pauline Stephan

John Lynch enquired about his comments on the minutes of the last meeting. The Chair replied that addressing these is Secretariat work in process.

2. Approval of action points from the Working Groups

WG1

1	Follow up with BIM to keep the AC informed on the upcoming gear trials which will take place during spring/ summer this year.
2	WG to develop query to the Commission regarding the monetisation of carbon credits for the fishing industry.

WG2

1	Further engage with AZTI following the presentation and dissemination of the Northern Hake Stock dynamic
2	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 necessary. Asking the EC to organize a specific request to ICES could be developed.
3	Include a presentation of the <i>Nephrops</i> Porcupine Survey by BIM during WG2 meeting in July.

WG3

1	Secretariat to contact ICES to present the seabass benchmark results to the FG seabass and discussion on the implications for advice and future management of stocks.
2	Secretariat to organise next meeting of FG Scallop to discuss technical measures
3	Working Group to follow the Member States Group's discussions on lemon sole and red mullet
4	Working Group to follow the results of the Benchmark on flatfish in the Eastern Channel and the related advice

HWG

1	NWWAC to develop advice on the "Vision for Agriculture and Food" roadmap.
2	Secretariat to circulate draft CFP response and ask for additional input on strategic topics. Next meeting of FG CFP to be organised for end of March to continue advice drafting.
3	Secretariat to circulate invitation for ICES WGENGAGE.

4	Secretariat to share ICES documentation from MIAC/MIACO in NWWAC Members Area. AC to keep pressure on addressing categories 5 & 6 stocks and follow up in HWG topics from MIAC and MIACO possibly for July meetings.
5	Secretariat to contact LDAC regarding next meeting of Inter-AC Brexit Forum and emphasise the importance of including detailed update on TCA review 2026. Possibility to formulate request to Commission regarding increased AC involvement on this topic.
6	FG Climate & Environment to meet and prepare advice on Energy Transition Partnership.
7	Secretariat to contact UK Seabass group again for AC inclusion in work. Secretariat to organise next meeting once benchmark results are available.
8	Proposal to the joint FG Social Aspects to include in ToR a case study of area 7d.

All action points from the Working Groups were approved.

3. Dialogue with NWW MSG– Noelia Cuervo, Spanish presidency of the NWW Member States Group

The Chair welcomed Noelia Cuervo, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Spain, who provided an update from the Spanish presidency of the NWW MSG on the work programme for the first half of this year. Two meetings of the Technical Group already took place. The information was circulated by the Secretariat and is available on the website in the Members Area.

During the first semester of 2025, under the Spanish Chairmanship, Cuervo explained that the North Western Waters (NWW) Group will focus on a comprehensive work programme aimed at continuing and enhancing regional collaboration, technical development, and stakeholder engagement. The following topics are proposed for discussion:

1. Joint Recommendations (JRs) – Discards Plan and Technical Measures

- JR on Discards Management (DM) for Lemon Sole: Continued development or follow-up actions concerning discard plans specific to lemon sole.
- JR on Mesh Sizes for Squid: Proposal and evaluation of appropriate mesh sizes tailored to squid fisheries, with the aim of improving selectivity and sustainability.

2. Technical Measures

- Exemptions Regarding VMEs → JR on the Exemption for the “Piedrabola” Gear: Assessment of a joint recommendation related to the exemption of traditional gear "piedrabola" and its potential impact on VMEs.
- Implementing Acts: Review and discussion of any necessary implementing acts relevant to ongoing and future measures.
- New or Amended Joint Recommendations:
 - JR on Red Seabream

- JR for the Celtic Sea
- Consideration of Measures for Red Mullet: Potential development of new JRs or updates to existing ones, including possible amendments, extensions, supplements, repeals, or derogations from current technical measures.

3. Landing Obligation – Exemptions and Scientific Needs

- Follow-up on the application and scientific basis for exemptions under the Landing Obligation, including the identification of knowledge gaps and future data needs.

4. MoU – NWW Regional Group: Review and potential revision of the MoU to reflect current priorities, streamline collaboration, and ensure coherence with evolving regional governance needs.

5. Advisory Councils (NWWAC) – Feedback and Advice

- Scallop Fishery
- Brown Crab: Consideration of NWWAC input on key species, with the objective of integrating stakeholder views into regional decision-making processes.

6. UK Fisheries Management Plans and Consultations: Monitoring and discussion of the UK's Fisheries Management Plans and preparation for upcoming consultations of relevance to the NWW region.

7. Any Other Relevant Topics: Opportunity to bring forward additional matters of interest or concern from members of the NWW Group, ensuring an inclusive and adaptive work agenda.

Meeting dates foreseen for 1st half 2025

- Technical group: 7 February; 26 February ; end March/first April; May; June
- High level group: April (TBC); May-June (TBC)

4. Dialogue with DG MARE – Fabrizio Donatella (Director), Thomas Brégeon (HoU), C5

The Chair welcomed Fabrizio Donatella, Director MARE C5, Thomas Brégeon, Deputy Director MARE C5, and Jessica Demblon, Policy officer MARE C5. The Chair thanked Director Donatella for his ongoing interest in and engagement with this AC and his regular attendance at NWWAC ExCom meetings over the past years. Similar to previous years, Donatella will provide us with an update on key files in the Commission.

Fabrizio Donatella thanked the AC for the invitation and emphasised the importance of the ACs' work for the Commission. He commented that the Commission is facing important

challenges in terms of capacity, time and availability and apologised if the EC cannot always be present.

- **CFP evaluation:** The consultation process is intended to be finalised by early 2026, at a time when the sector will be facing additional challenges. The Commission is aware of the NWWAC's work regarding contributions to the public consultation process. He stated that individual contributions are also highly recommended, as the consultation is an important exercise to prepare for the next steps. The survey will form the basis for making informed decisions, with step-by-step progression. Feedback will be taken in consideration, however, he felt it is not possible to anticipate the outcome.
- **EU Ocean Pact:** Donatella highlighted that this is a policy initiative aimed to ensure coherence across all policy areas concerning the ocean. The Ocean Pact will focus on a number of key aspects and principles: healthy oceans, marine knowledge, blue economy, international ocean governance and cooperation for shared stocks, resilience of coastal communities and islands. Regarding the timeline, the Commission is committed to delivering the Ocean Pact in time for major political and sector related events, possibly for the European Maritime Day in Cork in May 2025 and in any case for the UN Ocean conference in June 2025. Donatella underlined that the next 6 months will start to shape the future on how we look at the ocean, as the Commission will also proceed in relation to internal and external negotiations. The Ocean Pact will establish a road map to concretely implement measures and provide simplification and clarity of the key priorities. The Ocean Pact will be clear in terms of measures and objectives, and particular attention will be given to small-scale fishers, vulnerable ecosystem and assist on administrative burden.
- **Fishers of the Future:** The final report was published in January 2025, which will be followed by additional steps. The Commission is not trying to predict the future but rather considering specific elements in order to anticipate potential developments. Donatella highlighted that the final report is not a policy proposal but a study on the main elements that need work. He commented that Commissioner Kadis already outlined that this will be a continuous exercise with the intention to prepare a Vision for Fisheries and Aquaculture 2040. He felt that this was an important piece for reflection and inclusion keeping in mind the socio-economic aspects of future proposals.
- **Relation EU-UK - post 2026:** Donatella highlighted that there are several key principles the EU is working on for the TCA. It is important, for mutual interest, to secure legal certainty, stability, predictability and access arrangements for all fishers. Continued work with UK shall be carried out for a transparent and balanced framework. He noted that both parties enjoy access to each other's waters and markets, which will be considered when thinking about post 2026, in order to maintain stability for fishers.
- **2026 annual consultation:** The Commission always aims to guarantee a balanced and beneficial agreement. Regarding the timeline, the advice will be delivered for most of the stocks on 27 June. Based on that, the consultation will start the week of 27 October. EU and

UK have already reached an agreement for sand eel for 2025. Donatella felt it was important to mention this as it helps understand the mood for future consultations.

- **Specialised Committee on Fisheries:** Donatella highlighted the excellent work with the UK in this regard, which is an important investment for building closer relations in parallel and before the annual consultations. The Commission is dealing with a growing number of proposals coming from the UK (i.e., MPAs, FMP). At the same time, the Commission is gathering data and assessments provided by national administration and stakeholders.
- **Non quota stocks:** The Commission is continuing its work on this topic in line with the 2021 and 2022 written records. Measures on the management for the pilot species scallop need to be developed which means more technical work, and the development of a common understanding of science across the different areas. Once this exercise has been completed, it is envisaged to hold a dedicated workshop with both administrations and stakeholders.
- **Control regulation:** The Commission committed to adopting implementing and delegated acts. The multi-AC workshop was an important forum for constructive exchange and for the ACs to share their views with DG Mare.

Lynch asked Donatella when the report of the evaluation of the CFP will be available. On the Ocean Pact, he wondered which measure will take the socio-economic aspect into account. On the Fishers of the Future, he pointed out that the critical points raised in the past could be useful to improve the management of fishing activity and resources. On the non-quota species scallop, he noted that a second EU-UK workshop could be useful to further discuss common management measures.

Alexandra Philippe commented firstly on Ocean Pact, noting that it is good to have more coherence on the different policies. However, she expressed her concern that some pillars (i.e. blue economy and marine conservation) may seem distant from each other and should be more integrated. On the Vision for Agriculture and Food, she recalled the intervention made during the meeting of the Horizontal Working Group the previous day emphasising the need to improve the link between fisheries and food security. For these reasons she recalled the need to prepare AC advice.

Jean-Marie Robert asked some clarification about the implementing act on VMEs, acknowledging at the same time that the work is slow but still ongoing.

Donatella responded:

- On the CFP evaluation, the goal is to publish it by early 2026.
- On the Ocean Pact: socio-economic impacts are being taken into account by the Commission throughout a broad consultation process to have the feedback of different stakeholders. The Pact will not be a legislative proposal, so the socio-economic impact will be included with a careful analysis.
- On non-quota species, he agreed that organising another workshop would be useful.

- He reassured participants that the Commission is working to guarantee coherence of policies and measures dealing with oceans and seas.
- On VMEs: The Commission is waiting for information from the STEFC and will come back regarding the ACs' submission on ICES advice.

Bruno Dachicourt noted that pollution from land should be also included in the Ocean Pact, as it is a real challenge to the marine ecosystem and fishing activity.

Patrick Murphy underlined the number of policies related to oceans which need coherence. On Fishers of the Future, he noted the importance of looking at the present and the current challenges that the sector is facing.

Manu Kelberine supported Murphy's intervention. He requested more information regarding scallops and the need for common scientific understanding. He felt that the scientific platform already exists, with a lot of information readily available.

Donatella responded:

- The Commission is working to tackle land pollution, and the Ocean Pact will also focus on land-based solutions. The Commission is fully aware that this is an important issue.
- On scallop, he noted that there is no gap scientifically speaking. He clarified that the important thing is to proceed with a common management with the UK.

The Chair then commented on the consultation around the evaluation of the CFP Regulation, asking about the weight of AC advice in comparison with e.g. advice by an individual. He also referred to the recent study on the Landing Obligation published by CINEA, enquiring how its findings would be considered. Regarding the Agrifood Vision, he noted that while Ramon mentioned the Ocean Pact, there was no reference to the CFP. In relation to the Ocean Pact and the Fisheries of the Future initiative, he referred to the frequent reference to small-scale fisheries (SSF) and suggested to change SSF into SMEs. On the TCA, he questioned the use of the term "post-2026", noting that changes are expected as early as July 2026. On the bilateral consultations on fishing opportunities 2026 the Chair asked if as usual a Commission communication on the CFP performance is planned in June. Finally, concerning the Control Regulation, he agreed that the Inter-AC workshop recently organised was highly valuable and noted that AC advice is currently being prepared.

Donatella explained that 01 July 2026 marks the end of the automatic access regime, which is a deadline for consultations about a new approach as of 2027. However, he clarified that the Commission does not intend to wait until that date to provide clarity on the future regime. On the Commission communication in June, there is no indication of change. He also agreed with moving away from SSF and taking SMEs will be duly into account in the development of various measures.

Donatella also responded that CINEA's LO evaluation will feed into the CFP evaluation process. Regarding the Vision for Agriculture and Food, he noted that the CFP may not have been

explicitly mentioned, not due to a lack of importance, but because it is naturally encompassed within the Ocean Pact.

The Chair thanked the DG Mare representatives.

5. NWWAC Chair nomination (Secretariat)

The Secretariat outlined the procedure and results of the Chair appointment. Alexandra Philippe was appointed as the new Chair of the NWWAC as of 1 April 2025. She expressed her gratitude to the members for their trust and support, as well as to the Secretariat and to Emiel Brouckaert. She assured members of her full availability and commitment in her new role.

Several members congratulated Philippe and expressed their confidence in her. At the same time, they thanked Emiel Brouckaert for his years of service.

John Lynch suggested to amend the Rules of Procedure on Chair appointment, recalling previous difficulties, as well as the code of conduct at meetings.

Action point: Secretariat to set up task force for the review of the Chair procedure and meeting conduct policy.

6. Election of NWWAC ExCom Vice Chairs- (Secretariat)

The Secretariat asked for nominations and secondments from the present ExCom members explaining that three spaces need to be filled. Following this, John Lynch, Irene Prieto and Jean-Marie Robert were unanimously appointed as the new NWWAC ExCom Vice-Chairs.

7. Approval of NWWAC advice on the EU Oceans Pacts (Secretariat)

On 20 January, the European Commission launched a call for evidence to help shape the European Ocean Pact. Announced by President von der Leyen in her political guidelines for the next European Commission (2024–2029), the Pact is a political initiative aimed at promoting sustainable ocean management, ensuring the health, resilience, and productivity of the oceans, and supporting the prosperity of the EU's coastal communities. While the deadline for the public consultation has passed, the Advisory Councils were granted an extension for their submissions until mid-March, which has now been reached. The Secretariat prepared a draft response, taking into account the outcomes of the High-Level Roundtable held in Brussels on 21 February, attended by the Chair, and the Fisheries & Ocean Dialogue session held on 5 March as part of the European Ocean Days.

The HWG approved the initial draft, which was subsequently shared with the Executive Committee. Following this, several comments were received, and after the meeting held in Brussels last week, additional suggestions were incorporated into the text by the Secretariat.

The updated version of the document was circulated to all members on Monday. The Secretariat invited the members of the Executive Committee to approve the revised document for submission to the European Commission.

No objections were received to the document and it was approved for submission.

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

Slides can be found [here](#).

Mo Mathies, NWWAC Executive Secretary, provided an overview of the state of play of the work programme and budget for the current financial year. She outlined the financial surplus from Year 19 referring to previous electronic communication to ExCom members regarding use of these additional funds. A discussion followed regarding specific uses.

Action point: 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.

9. AOB - none

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

1	Secretariat to review minutes from previous ExCom meeting and suggest relevant updates based on discussion with members.
2	Secretariat to set up task force for the review of the Chair procedure and meeting conduct policy.
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.
4	Secretariat to send email request to members for input to the Year 21 Work Programme.

The outgoing Chair congratulated Alexandra Philippe and the three newly appointed Vice-Chairs. He expressed his sincere thanks to all members, ex-members, members of the Secretariat, Commission representatives, Member State representatives, science representatives and many other speakers at NWWAC meetings for their cooperation throughout his tenure as NWWAC Chair. He then formally closed the meeting.



Participants

NWWAC ExCom members		
Emiel	Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
Bruno	Dachicourt	ETF
Manu	Kelberine	CNPMEM
John	Lynch	Irish South & East Fish Producers Organisation Ltd
Sander	Meyns	Rederscentrale
Patrick	Murphy	Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation
Alexandra	Philippe	EBCD
Corentine	Piton	France Pêche Durable et Responsable
Irene	Prieto	OPPF4
Dominic	Rihan	KFO
Jean-Marie	Robert	Pêcheurs de Bretagne PO
Arthur	Yon	ANOP
Experts & Observers		
Tetyana	Albers	France - DGAMPA
Thomas	Brégeon	DG MARE
Noelia	Cuervo Álvarez	MAPA-Spain
Fabrizio	Donatella	DG MARE
Franck	Le Barzic	OP COBRENORD
Gérald	Hussenot Desenonges	Blue Fish
Suso	Lourido	Puerto de Celeiro SA OPP 77
Llibori	Martinez Latorre	IFSUA
Aodh	O'Donnell	Irish Fish Producers Organisation (IFPO)
Pauline	Stephan	CNPMEM
NWWAC Secretariat		
Ilaria	Bellomo	
Mo	Mathies	