



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/C.5/PV/JB/ac/Ares(2024)

Dear Mr Kenn Skau Fischer,
Dear Mr Emiel Brouckaert,

Thank you for the letter of 21 December 2023 regarding the joint advice provided by the North Sea Advisory Council (NSAC) and by the North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC) on recreational fisheries (Advice Ref. 03-2324). Your letter provides a useful overview of the recreational fishing sector, highlighting its significant importance in terms of the number of recreational fishers, associated jobs and overall socio-economic impact of this activity for coastal communities.

The Commission recognises the high relevance given by both Advisory Councils to the social dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)^(1,2,3), by creating a specific NSAC / NWWAC Joint Focus Group on Social Aspects of the CFP, responsible for

-
- ⁽¹⁾ European Commission, DG MARE, Studies for carrying out the Common Fisheries Policy: Lot 3 - Socio-economic dimensions in EU fisheries, MARE/2011/07, Final Report, October 2013, https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2016-09/final-report_en.pdf
- ⁽²⁾ Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Social dimension of the CFP (STECF-20-14), Doering, R., Fitzpatrick, M. and Guillen Garcia, J. editor(s), EUR 28359 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020, ISBN 978-92-76-27169-7, doi:10.2760/255978, JRC123058, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/255978>
- ⁽³⁾ Gallizioli, G. (2014). The Social Dimensions of the Common Fisheries Policy: A Review of Current Measures. In: Urquhart, J.; Acott, T.; Symes, D.; Zhao, M. (eds) Social Issues in Sustainable Fisheries Management. MARE Publication Series, Vol 9. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-7911-2_4

Mr Kenn Skau Fischer (NSAC Chairman)
North Sea Advisory Council - NSAC (7th floor)
Louis Braillelaan, 80
2719 EK Zoetermeer
THE NETHERLANDS
ksf@dkfisk.dk

Mr Emiel Brouckaert (NWWAC Chairman)
North Western Waters Advisory Council - NWWAC
Crofton Road c/o BIM Dun Laoghaire
Co. Dublin A96 E5A0
IRELAND
emiel.brouckaert@rederscentrale.be

providing recommendations aiming to improve the social and economic aspects of inter alia recreational fisheries and agrees that recreational fisheries require improved regulation, monitoring and data collection.

In this context, the new Control Regulation, Regulation (EU) 2023/2842 in force since 9 January 2024, aims at improving data collection on recreational fisheries to facilitate a more accurate assessment of their impact on fish resources, and in turn improve the conservation, management, and sustainable exploitation of marine resources.

Accurate data helps us understand the impact of recreational fishing, leading to more reliable stock assessments and better-informed management decisions. This data is valuable for scientific research, monitoring regulatory compliance, and ensuring sustainable practices. Additionally, enhanced data collection and transparency can raise public awareness about sustainable fishing practices and encourage fishers to participate in conservation efforts. The data to be collected and reported should meet these objectives.

In this regard, Article 55 of the new Control Regulation introduces several requirements to enhance transparency, data collection, reporting, management and sustainability. From 10 January 2026, coastal Member States must ensure that natural persons engaged in recreational fisheries for species or stocks subject to Union conservation measures (e.g. quotas, catch-limits, bag limits) are registered.

- According to Article 55(3), coastal Member States must also ensure that recreational fishers targeting these species or stocks record and report their catches daily via an electronic system. For this purpose, Member States need to have an electronic system in place to collect data, which will need to be shared with the Commission.
- According to Article 55(2), for additional species, stocks, or groups of stocks for which fishing opportunities are set by the Union, and which are covered by a multiannual plan, or subject to the landing obligation, Member States need to collect data (according to a method of their choice) to understand the impact of recreational fisheries on the overall fish stock. This data must be shared with the Commission, at least once a year.
- According to Article 55(1), Member States may ask the Commission to develop an electronic system to meet their new catch reporting obligations. Several Member States have made this request, and the Commission will proceed with developing an electronic system to improve the data currently available on recreational fisheries in EU waters and promote a level playing field between the recreational and commercial fishing sectors. Additionally, this technical development, along with the discussion regarding new implementing rules for recreational fisheries, will provide an opportunity to clarify definitions, fisheries segments, data needs and reporting requirements.

As you are well aware, the Commission has been regularly meeting and actively engaging at technical level with Member States and relevant stakeholders from the recreational fisheries sector (e.g., European Anglers Alliance – EAA, ICES WGRFS, DCF RCG, etc.). Our aim is to better understand the concerns and to listen to suggestions and proposals. In this context, I would like to highlight two specific examples of the

Commission's efforts and commitments regarding recent or ongoing initiatives for pollack and seabass.

On 18 April 2024, an expert meeting was convened to receive updates on the latest scientific advancements related to commercial and recreational fisheries data for pollack. The discussion focused on identifying data gaps and exploring both short- and long-term opportunities to support the EU and UK's initiative in developing a roadmap for the 2025 benchmark for pollack in areas 6 and 7. Presentations on the magnitude and issues of recreational catches were made by France, Ireland and the UK. These presentations provided catch estimates, including associated errors, and highlighted the challenges in generating robust estimates of recreational catches and potential biases. Despite the uncertainties, recreational catches are a significant source of pollack mortality, and one of the key priorities is to include recreational catch as an input for the stock assessment. There is a consensus between the EU and the UK that this work should be supported and progress in time for the ICES data compilation workshop later this year, with the goal of completing recreational catch estimates by October 2024.

Unlike pollack, recreational data on seabass are already incorporated into assessments. However, in 2022, an EU and UK advice request was sent to ICES, asking for an update to the current seabass catch allocation tool. This special request should be structured and integrated into the benchmark hopefully still this year and thus the seabass catch allocation tool will be updated in 2025. The integration aims at aligning the tool as closely as possible with assessment outputs and at utilising the same data, both commercial and recreational, wherever possible. Updating the seabass catch allocation tool can lead to more effective, adaptive, and sustainable management of the stock, benefiting both recreational and commercial fisheries.

Finally, but not less importantly, the preparation of the CFP evaluation presents a great opportunity for all interested parties to have their say. I am deeply convinced that the full evaluation will provide the next mandate with a solid basis to make informed decisions on how best to continue implementing the policy and if necessary, propose adjustments in the years ahead.

I am looking forward to our continued and fruitful cooperation. Should you have any questions on this reply, please contact Mr Paulo Vasconcelos (Paulo.VASCONCELOS@ec.europa.eu), Mr Jurgen Batsleer (Jurgen.BATSLEER@ec.europa.eu) and Ms Julia Rubeck, coordinator for the Advisory Councils (functional mailbox: MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu).

Yours sincerely,

Charlina VITCHEVA

c.c.: Tamara Talevska: tamarat@nsrac.org
Kateryna Urbanovych: katerinau@nsrac.org

Mo Mathies: mo.mathies@nwwac.ie
Matilde Vallerani: matilde.vallerani@nwwac.ie