



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,  
MARE/CV

Dear Ms Philippe,

Thank you for the Advisory Council's recommendations of 19 June on the "Energy Transition Partnership for the EU fisheries and aquaculture". The Commission welcomes your input and appreciates the time and effort dedicated to the Energy Transition Partnership (ETP) and investment in preparing these recommendations.

The Commission has taken note of the recommendations. The Commission will carefully consider the challenges and needs identified by the North-Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC) in the context of the ongoing work on the energy transition roadmap for the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector.

The Commission recognises the need for the development of alternative and innovative green technologies, as well as carbon-neutral fuels and energy sources. We agree that an adapted infrastructure and energy supply in ports are essential to the energy transition. My services are working closely with other Commission services on the development of the EU Ports strategy and ongoing energy policies and initiatives, such as the Industrial maritime strategy and the Sustainable transport initiative plan.

Furthermore, the Commission continues addressing the need for innovation and technology through studies, such as recently on available technologies, costs, and benefits<sup>1</sup>, and through research and innovation initiatives, such as the energy efficient vessels and low-carbon fishing techniques, promoted under the Mission Ocean calls. We are also overseeing a €2.2 million pilot project aimed at developing a demonstrator vessel to test innovative energy transition technologies<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup><https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a8d20a8c-39eb-11ef-87a1-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

<sup>2</sup> [EU-funded HY2FISH project sets sail for greener fishing](#)

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As regards the integration of artificial intelligence and smart technologies, the Commission has recently published a call worth €23.30 million on “Digital technologies and energy transition in fisheries and/or aquaculture”. This call shall demonstrate how digital technologies can address the need to reduce energy consumption and associated economic and environmental costs in European fisheries and/or aquaculture. It will provide real-time, accurate, and actionable data and information to reduce energy use, including artificial intelligence solutions.

We will continue seeking opportunities to fund projects supporting the energy transition under the existing EU instruments and exploring options in cooperation with the European Investment Bank. Moreover, we remain committed to raising awareness of viable techniques by periodically updating our Compendium of best practices for the energy transition in the sector<sup>3</sup>, which was initiated back in 2023 when the Commission launched the strategic approach to energy transition of fisheries and aquaculture.

The Commission agrees on the needs for upskilling and reskilling to achieve the energy transition. We recognise the sectoral issues regarding the lack of generational renewal and the aging workforce in general. I can ensure you that work is ongoing through the evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) Regulation and around the 2040 vision for fisheries and aquaculture included in Commissioner Kadis’ mission letter. This work will address the different challenges faced by the sector, including generational renewal and skills.

It is essential that fishing remains an economically and socially sustainable and therefore attractive profession, so that future generations are motivated to enter the sector. This is why a key focus of our policy is the sustainable management of fisheries, an essential prerequisite for generational renewal.

Fleet renewal and modernisation is important for the future of the sector. Investing in new vessels is part of the business cycle. The rules of the CFP allow for the construction of new fishing vessels with private financing, along with safeguards to prevent the fleets’ fishing capacity from increasing. This is a key element of the business model to ensure long-term economic sustainability of the sector.

The European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) aims to support the development of new solutions for the fleet through innovation and testing of new technologies. The EMFAF also aims to support investments in mature technology to modernise the fleet such as investments on board to improve gear selectivity, safety on board, energy efficiency and ergonomics. The EMFAF is focused on actions that generate collective benefits and common good (e.g. innovation, science, dissemination of knowledge) and its budget is limited.

The proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) is a fundamental redesign of the EU budget to make it more streamlined, flexible and impactful. Fisheries and ocean related policies are very well reflected to ensure a robust financial support for EU fishers, aquaculture producers, coastal communities and the blue economy, and the conservation of marine biological resources. The new structure not only gives Member States more flexibility to tailor their budget in accordance with national and local needs. It is also complemented by the new European Competitiveness Fund which provides

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<sup>3</sup> [Best practices - European Commission](#)

businesses in the blue economy many more opportunities to get direct support for increasing the competitiveness of their operations, including on energy transition. The overall result delivers a more targeted impact where EU support matters most and gives a faster and more flexible access to the sectors that need it the most.

Regarding the framework for State aid rules in the fishery and aquaculture sector, the Regulation on *de minimis* in the fishery and aquaculture sector<sup>4</sup> together with the Regulation on Fishery Block Exemption Regulation<sup>5</sup> indeed prohibit public aid for the construction and modernisation of vessels. Nevertheless, the State Aid Guidelines in the fishery and aquaculture sector<sup>6</sup> provide for, under Section 3.2, the possibilities for a Member State to grant aid for the replacement or modernisation of a main or ancillary engine. This may, provided that the measure respects the conditions set out in this Section of the Guidelines, constitute a suitable tool to encourage undertakings, among other things, to increase energy efficiency and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The Commission also reminds that for State aid in research, development and innovation, Member States could refer to the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER)<sup>7</sup> and specifically its Article 30 which provides for aid for research and development in the fishery and aquaculture sector. If the budget of the measure is higher than the thresholds provided under Article 4 of the GBER, Member States should notify to the Commission the aid for research and development in the fishery sector under the communication on the framework for State aid for research and development and innovation.<sup>8</sup>

On the need for a study to identify the investment required for fleet decarbonisation, the Commission is currently conducting a study to determine the greenhouse gases (GHG) reduction costs, scenarios, and pathways for EU fisheries to achieve net-zero by 2050. The results of this study, to be published by the end of 2025, will inform the Commission on the most effective solutions in the short and the long term to achieve net zero emissions, including the investment required for the fleet decarbonisation.

The fishing capacity ceilings are essential to prevent overfishing, by setting an upper boundary to the total volume and power of the fleet. It is also essential for sustaining the profitability in the fisheries sector. We are aware of the potential challenges that fleet

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<sup>4</sup> Commission Regulation (EU) No 717/2014 of 27 June 2014 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to *de minimis* aid in the fishery and aquaculture sector; available here: [EUR-Lex - 02014R0717-20231025 - EN - EUR-Lex](#).

<sup>5</sup> Commission Regulation (EU) 2022/2473 of 14 December 2022 declaring certain categories of aid to undertakings active in the production, processing and marketing of fishery and aquaculture products compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, C/2022/9139, OJ L 327, 21.12.2022, pp. 82–139, available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02022R2473-20231213>.

<sup>6</sup> Communication from the Commission Guidelines for State aid in the fishery and aquaculture sector 2023/C 107/01 C/2023/1598 OJ C 107, 23.3.2023, pp. 1–48, available here: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AJOC\\_2023\\_107\\_R\\_0001&qid=1679568286704](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AJOC_2023_107_R_0001&qid=1679568286704).

<sup>7</sup> Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty Text with EEA relevance, OJ L 187, 26.6.2014, pp. 1–78, available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:02014R0651-20230701>.

<sup>8</sup> Communication from the Commission Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation 2022/C 414/01, C/2022/7388, OJ C 414, 28.10.2022, pp. 1–38, available here: [EUR-Lex - 52022XC1028\(03\) - EN - EUR-Lex](#).

capacity ceilings can pose for the energy transition, improving safety on board and attracting young generations. During the Horizontal Working Group on 3 July 2025 the Commission presented the state of play of the evaluation of the CFP Regulation to the NWWAC. The evaluation will provide an evidence-based assessment of whether the regulation is still fit for purpose or where lessons can be learned for improving, with a particular attention to all three pillars of sustainable development (environmental, economic, and social). The evaluation will incorporate studies such as the study on the landing obligation, the aspects of fleet policy, the work on energy transition, common organisation of the markets (consumer information and producer organisations) as well as how the CFP Regulation is part of and contributing to the environmental *acquis* and addressing challenges. Based on the “evaluation first principle”, the Commission is committed to always evaluate an existing legal basis before possibly revising it. The Commission aims to finalise the evaluation of the CFP Regulation by Spring 2026. In the meantime, we cannot prejudge the outcome of the evaluation.

The Commission takes note of the NWWAC's opposition to the inclusion of fisheries in the scope of the Energy Taxation Directive (ETD). While acknowledging the progress the fishing sector has made until today to reduce its climate impact, the proposal for the revision of the ETD, as the current Directive, aims at harmonising the taxation of energy products and electricity. Fuel used for intra-EU waterborne regular service navigation, fishing and freight transport would be subject to the same EU minimum rates as defined in Article 8(2) for purposes such as agriculture. These proposed minimum rates are substantially lower than those applicable to the general use of motor fuels – acknowledging and addressing the risk of bunkering outside the EU. The minimum rate would be €0.9/GJ for gas oil and heavy fuel oil (corresponding to € 32.7 EUR/1000 litres or 3.27 eurocent per litre for gas oil). This is less than 1/10th of the minimum rate applicable to road transport. Furthermore, over a transitional period of 10 years a minimum rate of zero will apply to sustainable biofuels and biogas, low carbon fuels, renewable fuels of non-biological origin, advanced sustainable biofuels and biogas and electricity. Reduced minimum rates will apply to these products after the transition. Member States would be able to apply total or partial exemptions to electricity supplied to vessels berthed in ports (no need to apply for national derogations). Additionally, it needs to be mentioned that applying a different treatment to the taxation of fuels used in fishing compared to maritime transport may also result in problems in the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreements. Negotiations in the Council are still ongoing and require unanimity among Member States. We will continue to follow these discussions closely under the leadership of Commissioner Hoekstra.

The Commission agrees that it is essential to respect regionalisation and local engagement in the development of the energy transition roadmap. This is one of the objectives of the ETP, which engages with local stakeholders through its working group. The Commission is also in close contact with regional organisations, such as the Conference of peripheral maritime regions (CPMR), which participated as a speaker at our workshop during the European Maritime Day 2025 in Cork<sup>9</sup>.

The Commission appreciates the contributions to the development of the ETP recommendations to the roadmap. We are committed to working closely with the sector and other stakeholders to support the transition towards a low-carbon economy and to

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<sup>9</sup> [849ead7a-462e-42e0-a536-aa3be259eb1f\\_en](#)

ensure that the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector remains competitive and sustainable in the long-term.

I would like to inform you, that the ETP is currently finalising its recommendations. These will serve as key input to the roadmap we are preparing and planned for adoption in the first half of 2026. The recommendations from the Advisory Councils will also be taken into account in the shaping of the roadmap. To close the stakeholders consultation process and the delivery of the recommendations by the energy transition partnership, we will organise a high-level conference, to be attended by Commissioner Kadis, on 17 February 2026 in Brussels.

I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox [MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu](mailto:MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu).

Yours sincerely,

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