



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels
MARE.D.3

Subject: NSAC/NWWAC Advice on STECF Work on the Social Data in Fisheries

Dear Ms Philippe, dear Mr Skau Fischer,

I would like to thank the North Sea and the North Western Waters Advisory Councils for their joint advice on the social data in fisheries.

Social aspects have indeed historically received less attention than the environmental and economic dimensions. In the past two years, we have been actively working to catch up with this pillar of the Common Fisheries Policy, in close collaboration with the STECF, ICES as well as Data Collection Framework (DCF) correspondents working on data collection at national level.

We have been working on developing both quantitative (indicators) and qualitative (National Fisheries Profiles, Community Profiles) data on the social dimension of the fisheries sector. We just published 16 National Fisheries Profiles for [Belgium](#), [Bulgaria](#), [Croatia](#), [Cyprus](#), [Denmark](#), [Estonia](#), [France](#), [Greece](#), [Ireland](#), [Italy](#), [Latvia](#), the [Netherlands](#), [Portugal](#), [Slovenia](#), [Spain](#) and [Sweden](#), while the German Thünen institute has published a [German Profile](#) based on the STECF template. In 2026, we will also publish national profiles for Malta and Finland and are actively looking for national experts to produce profiles for the 3 missing coastal Member States (Romania, Lithuania and Poland).

In addition, we have been working closely with the national correspondents in charge of socio-economic data collection for the DCF to test the collection of additional social indicators identified by the STECF in its [24-05 report](#). To date, six Member States (Belgium, Croatia, Finland, Greece, Spain, and Sweden) have set up or will be setting up such pilots, the results of which will be studied by the STECF expert working group (EWG) on social data during its next meetings. In parallel, the ICES Working Group Social is also investigating social indicators in fisheries: we are actively part of this group and follow these discussions closely.

Regarding community profiles, a standard template was developed by the STECF EWG on social data in 2024 (see the 24-05 report) as well as a preliminary list of fishing communities that would prove particularly interesting to study. EU budgetary constraints

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mean that DG MARE cannot fund the development of all these profiles but encourages national research institutes to do so. The Netherlands and Spain have already started, and we hope more will follow suit.

In this context of ongoing effort, I take due note of your recommendations to have annual updates of the National Fisheries Profiles, to include social indicators on mental health and well-being, to address existing gaps in community profiles and to increase recognition of recreational fisheries. Your reference to diversification opportunities - particularly for small-scale fisheries - is a potential path for further exploration, especially in the context of the upcoming implementation dialogue on small-scale and coastal fisheries.

I can only agree on the importance of further developing these different aspects in close concertation with the Advisory Councils, who can, as you state, “help with the timely detection of emerging issues”. I know that you are already actively engaging with the STECF chairs of the EWG on social data and encourage you to invite DG MARE colleagues working on the social dimension of fisheries to participate in your focus group’s discussions, as you have done in the past.

After the publication of the first social report following the STECF March plenary, it will be an opportune moment to reflect, in collaboration with Advisory Councils, on the next steps for the development of social data. This reflection can then feed the STECF EWG reflections in 2026. In doing so, we will have to be pragmatic about priorities, given existing constraints on human resources and budget.

Rest assured that the Advisory Councils will continue to play a central role throughout this process. I encourage you to discuss this with your counterparts in other Advisory Councils, so that all sea basins present their views, allowing to identify future priorities based on converging interests.

I look forward to our continued fruitful cooperation on the fisheries and aquaculture policy agenda. Should you have any further questions, please contact Ms. Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

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