



**MINUTES**  
**WORKING GROUPS 2 AND 3**  
**EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH MEP LINNEA ENGSTROM**

Wednesday 25 April 2018  
15:00-17:00  
Leopold Hotel Brussels EU  
Rue du Luxembourg 35-1050 Brussels

The Chair of the MAC, Guus Pastoor, welcomed those present and expressed thanks to MEP Linnéa Engström for accepting the invitation to the exchange of views.

The Chair made a brief introduction on the work of the MAC, particularly regarding the dossier on the Control Regulation which constitutes an important item under the remit of the Advisory Council. He informed that the MAC will continue working on the matter over the coming months and acknowledged the challenging way ahead, given the broad spectrum of stakeholders comprising the MAC.

**Linnéa Engström, MEP: Presentation INI report on the implementation of control measures for establishing the conformity of fisheries products with access criteria to the EU market**

MEP Engström thanked for the invitation and started her presentation stressing the positive reactions received from several members of the industry and NGOs with regards to the adoption of her INI Report on EU market access rules (adopted on the 24 April by the Fisheries Committee of the European Parliament). The report received broad support from her colleagues in the Committee.

The proposals addressed in her report are extremely necessary, particularly after the [Special Report of the Court of Auditors](#) examining the effectiveness of the EU's fisheries control system, which highlights the weaknesses thereof. The report is particularly relevant in light of the upcoming file on Control Regulation. She stressed the dialogues held with industry and NGOs in this regard and the ambition of the report.

**Exchange of views with members of the MAC and way forward**

Opinions were divided with regards to the content of the INI report.

Processors and traders questioned the relationship between the Control Regulation and the IUU Regulation as they have different targets. Furthermore, data on the possible access of IUU products to the EU market are not enough. It is not clear whether IUU products penetrate the market due to a poor implementation of the control system.

MEP Engström praised the good implementation of the IUU regulation, which has improved trade flows with some carded countries. However, in some Member States the control on imported products from IUU fishing is not properly functioning. Enhanced data collection and full traceability are of utmost importance to address these difficulties.



Processors and traders also expressed their discomfort with the mentioned discrimination between EU products and imports. They would support a call to Member States and Commission to ensure a level playing field across the EU, which does not exist even among Member States.

They feel this is a sensitive issue for the reputation of the industry which affects the future market trends. In order to avoid illegal fishing products entering the production chain, it is fundamental to have more data. The IUU regulation does not address labour and environmental matters at the moment and in terms of global trade it is impossible to demand the exact same standards that the EU complies with to third countries. This sector misses positive messages on the compliance with the rules of most of the fisheries products and would like to ensure there is no negative picture for the consumer.

MEP Engström, referring to the dimension of the EU market in terms of imports, insisted that precisely because the EU is the biggest importer of fish products in the world, it can and should raise standards. IUU and Control Regulation are two complementary regulations that are part of the same structure. Regarding the reputation of the market, although understanding the point made by some members, she represents and defends the right of citizens to trace the product they consume.

NGOs welcomed the report as it reflects the efforts needed to ensure sustainability standards are applied to all fish products consumed in the EU, regardless of their origin. Some imported products currently do not respect the same sustainability standards and do not bear the same burdens that the external EU fleet had to bear to adapt to sustainability requirements laid out in the CFP. Free trade agreements have to be more ambitious when it comes to ensuring fish products traded come from environmentally and socially sustainable sources. Traceability represents the link between the IUU and the Control Regulations, and foresees the identification of the fisheries and the boat.

The catching sector expressed their agreement in being held to EU standards and expressed their commitment to social and environmental aspects required from them. They found rather unfair having to compete, not only with products from IUU, but with cheaper imports or products subject to different standards in terms of size. These differences clearly undermine the level playing field. They invited the whole chain to be more ambitious in taking steps towards the new CFP.

MEP Engström agreed that the IUU does not refer to labour/environment rights but discussions in the context of IUU never take place without considering labour issues. The standards from fisheries being imported are different. Once it lands in the market, the product falls under the same labelling, traceability and veterinary rules. But before they arrive there could be differences, due to different standards. In order to arrive in the EU market, it has to be a different standard for fish not fished by EU vessels. The standards of the EU are more wide-ranging; but for imports it only has to be demonstrated that imported fish is legal. If the products are declared legal by the flag state but the flag state does not require other standards such as labour, health, environmental standards EU cannot currently impose a barrier for those importations.

The Chair resumed the discussions and stressed the importance of this exchange of views, which did not take place before within the MAC due to a lack of time. He indicated that the intention behind the different views is the same but opinions differ in how far the market access rules should go.

Regarding IUU, he stressed the importance of having data and figures to draw a conclusion on the implementation of the control system of imports. As many of the issues raised seem to relate to imports of



tuna, he suggested targeting species and areas to narrow the discussion. Further, the MAC should examine in detail the different rules applicable to both EU and imported products to map possible differences as there appear to be many misunderstandings about this.

The Chair thanked attendees, and in particular MEP Engstrom, for their participation in the exchange of views.

Attendees:

- Andrew Kuyk – CEP
- Beatrice Gorez – CFFA
- Brian O’Riordan – LIFE
- Christine Absil – Good fish foundation
- Cynthia Benites – Copa-Cogeca
- Eszter Hidas – WWF
- Guus Pastoor – AIPCE
- Ivan Lopez – Europeche
- Jose Basilio Otero Rodriguez – Cofradias Lugo
- Kirsten Ruckes – EU Parliament
- Linnea Engstrom – EU Parliament
- Maria Aira – EBCD
- Matthias Keller – Fischverband
- Michael Earl – EU Parliament
- Pier Antonio Salvador – Copa-Cogeca
- Sandra Sanmartin – MAC
- Vanya Vulperhorst – OCEANA