

Executive Committee

Minutes

Friday, 27 January 2023 (15:15 – 17:00 CET)

NH Brussels EU Berlaymont

Interpretation in EN, ES, FR

Welcome from the Chair, Guus Pastoor

Click [here](#) to access the Chair's presentation.

Adoption of draft agenda and of the last meeting's minutes (07.07.22): adopted

Action points of the last meeting

- **State-of-play of the decision made during the last meeting - information**
- Work Programme of Year 7 (2022-2023):
 - Secretariat to prepare document, to be published in the Member Area, summarising the status of implementation of the Work Programme
 - Amended draft Work Programme to be formally submitted to DG MARE and put forward for approval by the General Assembly. If, prior to that, there are substantial preliminary comments from MARE A4, draft to be recirculated to the Executive Committee
 - Draft budget to be formally submitted to DG MARE and put forward for approval by the General Assembly
 - Secretariat to encourage Member States to provide financial contributions of €3.000
 - Document on status of implementation of the Work Programme – in development
 - Work Programme and budget submitted to DG MARE and approved by the General Assembly (2022 – 2026 Framework Partnership Agreement and the 2022-2023 Grant Agreement were signed)
 - Member States have been encouraged to contribute with €3.000
- European Green Deal & Farm to Fork Strategy:
 - Background paper to be published on the Member Area and continuously updated
 - Background paper published
- Inter-ACs Brexit Forum:
 - Secretariat to check with other AC Secretariats and with DG MARE on the preferred way to address the confidentiality of meeting reports
 - Meeting reports are not to be circulated or publicly published



- Biodiversity in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ):
 - Agenda item to be scheduled under the draft agenda of the next Working Group 3 meeting, including update on the upcoming UN Intergovernmental Conference
 - Item scheduled under the draft agenda of the 20 September 2022 meeting
- AOB:
 - Concerning the draft advice on Maximum Levels of Sulphites for Crustaceans, Secretariat to proceed with the written procedure
 - Concerning the approved letter requesting information, per Member State, on volume of catch certificates, Secretariat to send the letter to DG MARE
 - Advice on Maximum Level of Sulphites for Crustaceans adopted 27 July 2022 (reply from DG MARE on 27 September 2022)
 - Letter on volume of catch certificates sent on 7 July 2022 (reply from DG MARE on 5 October 2022)

Membership of the General Assembly

- **Endorsement of new member Syndicat National du Commerce Extérieur des produits congelés et surgelés (SNCE) from France**

Click [here](#) to access the presentation.

Alexandre Bannou (SNCE) informed that he was Secretary General of SNCE with responsibilities on regulatory and scientific matters. His organisation is composed of 69 members representing approximately 6 billion euros in turnover and around 7700 direct jobs. The products covered are mainly frozen fishery products (raw or processed), and incidentally fresh and canned products. The companies covered include traders, food industrials, customs representatives, packaging operators, and analytical laboratories.

The missions of SNCE are the representation of the members at national and European level, information and advice to the companies regarding the existing and future regulatory framework applicable to their products/operations. There are three active workings on food quality and food safety, packaging, and food fraud, respectively. SNCE is a member of ANIA, the national association of food industries, and of AIPCE-CEP, the European federation of importers and processors of aquatic products. SNCE works together with national and EU-level federations, public authorities, and technical partners.

Mr Bannou provided an overview of the French market of fishery products, highlighting that the French are the 4th largest European consumers at about 33.3 Kg per capita in 2020 (compared to 23.6Kg for the EU on average). French catches and production represent approximately 30% of the consumption. The rest of the consumption is composed of imported products, which are sold for direct consumption or as raw materials for the HORECA sector or the food industry.

The Executive Committee endorsed, by consensus, SNCE, as new member of the MAC.



General Assembly and Executive Committee

- **Presentation of candidacies for Vice-Chair(s) for the 2023-2026 period**
- **Appointment**

The Chair recalled that, in line with Article 25 of the Statutes, the Vice-Chairs were appointed by the Executive Committee. Concerning the call for expressions of interest, Ms Christine Absil (Good Fish) expressed interest in continuing as Vice-Chair, on behalf of the other interest groups. Mr Julien Lamothe (EAPO) expressed interest in the position of Vice-Chair, on behalf of the sector members, replacing Mr Sean O'Donoghue in his positions. The Chair thanked Mr O'Donoghue for his contributions in the past years.

The Executive Committee appointed, by consensus, Ms Christine Absil and Mr Julien Lamothe as Vice-Chairs of the MAC for the 2023-2026 period.

Sean O'Donoghue (EAPO) recalled that, following the consensus appointment, the procedures would be launched for his replacement by Mr Julien Lamothe as director in the Belgian registration of the MAC ASBL.

Participation of Observers

- **Agreement on guidelines on the participation of observers in meetings**

The Chair explained that an updated version of the draft guidelines on the participation of observers in meetings was circulated ahead of the meeting.

The Secretary General recalled that, at the 6 July 2021 meeting, a first version of the draft guidelines was considered. At the meeting there were several suggestions for amendments, plus the European Commission updated the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/242 of 9 October 2014 laying down detailed rules on the functioning of the Advisory Councils under the Common Fisheries Policy. An updated version of the draft was circulated ahead of the meeting.

The Secretary General provided an overview of the draft guidelines. The first section covers public access to the meetings, specifically by passive observers. The second section covers active observers, which in line with the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation, do not require an invitation to participate in the meetings. The updated version includes a footnote to clarify that the dispositions will be interpreted to cover all interests of the supply chain. The third section covered active observers with invitation requirement.

The Secretary General explained that, in the updated version, there was a reminder that, in line with paragraph 2 of Article 6 of the Commission Delegated Regulation (EC) 2015/242, Advisory Councils may contribute to the travel and accommodation expenses of representatives of the sector and other interest groups from third countries. Under the guidelines, in the case of the MAC, contributions will only be provided in exceptional cases.



The Secretary General informed that, prior to the meeting, there was a suggestion of amendment from Mr Guillaumie to paragraph 7 of section III. Based on the amendment, members registered to a meeting would be informed, five days prior to the meeting, about the attendance of invited active observers, provided the possibility of explicit opposition by the majority of the registered members.

The Chair commented that the draft guidelines were quite balanced and allowed the possibility of opposition to certain invitations. In general, observers should be welcomed to attend.

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) wanted confirmation that active observers could be invited to meetings of the Working Groups and of the Focus Groups, since these would not be open to the public.

The Secretary General explained that “open to the public” referred to passive observers. In line with Article 2(g) of Annex III of the CFP Regulation, anyone could be a passive observer to meetings of the General Assembly and the Executive Committee. The sections about active observers covered meetings of the General Assembly, the Executive Committee, Working Groups, and Focus Groups. As an example, in line with points (i) and (j) of paragraph 2 of Annex III of the CFP Regulation, a representative of the Spanish fisheries and aquaculture authorities could not be prevented from observing a Working Group meeting. The Secretary General suggested the inclusion of the wording “passive observers” in the title of section I for clearer reading.

The Executive Committee expressed agreement with the guidelines on the participation of observers in meetings.

Reimbursement Rules

- **Update of daily reimbursement rates for accommodation costs**

The Chair highlighted that, in the recent period, costs for accommodation and travel had been increasing significantly. At the same time, members should be willing to invest in their participation in the MAC. Therefore, a balance was needed in the daily reimbursement rates.

The Secretary General recalled that, under Commission’s rules applicable to the Advisory Councils, each Advisory Council was allowed to set their reimbursement rules for the participation of members and experts in meetings. The Commission encourages the Advisory Councils, when developing reimbursement rules for members and experts, to mirror their rules on the participation of experts. This is the approach that has been followed by the MAC, which means a 100 euros flat rate per night payable to members where an overnight stay is required, a daily allowance of 92 euros (reduced to 64.40 euros when lunch is provided), and 350 euros maximum for travel costs.

The Secretary General explained that he had received comments from several members that the rising inflation costs meant that hotel costs were quite high, which meant that it was difficult to find a hotel for 100 euros per night in Brussels. At the same time, in the context of the European Green Deal, the European Commission was encouraging the Advisory Councils to reduce costs related to travel and accommodation. Several Advisory Councils were reviewing their reimbursement rules to face the increasing prices. As a balanced approach, the Secretariat was proposing to maintain the amount



foreseen for travel costs and for daily allowances, while increasing the flat rate per night for accommodation.

The Secretary General further explained that the proposal would be to use the “Commission decision of 12.1.2022 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework” as inspiration for the revised amounts for accommodation costs. Under the new approach, the accommodation per night would vary in accordance with the country where the meeting took place. As an example, in Belgium, the rate would be 137 euros. According to a basic estimate, this change would represent an increase in costs of 4.500 euros.

Jaroslav Zieliński (PFPA) expressed doubts that 137 euros was a realistic amount to cover accommodation costs in Brussels. Mr Zieliński called for the Advisory Councils to jointly ask for an increase in the operational grant, so that the increased accommodation costs can be covered. In his view, to ensure in person participation of members, the reimbursement rates should be more balanced. Otherwise, less members would participate in the meetings, since not all organisations have high budgets.

The Chair proposed for the Executive Committee to agree on the increase in the daily reimbursement rates. At a later opportunity, there could be a discussion with other Advisory Councils to propose an increase to the European Commission. It could be included as an agenda item in a future Inter-Advisory Councils meeting. The Chair emphasised that it was necessary to be careful with the increases in the reimbursements, since it implies higher expenses in the budget, while the operational grant from the Commission remains the same. The amount of the grant is essentially fixed for a certain period, plus a small indexation.

Christine Absil (Good Fish) wondered about the number of members experiencing difficulty with the price of hotels in Brussels. In her experience, through tactical booking, it was possible to find accommodation at a reasonable price.

The Executive Committee expressed agreement to the increase in the daily reimbursement rate for accommodation costs.

Inter-Advisory Council's Coordination

- **Reporting back on the following meetings:**
 - **Inter-AC Brexit Forum meetings (15 September, 20 October, 15 December 2022)**

The Secretary General recalled that the MAC, together with other Advisory Councils affected by Brexit, was a part of the Inter-AC Brexit Forum. There were meetings on 15 September, 20 October, 15 December 2022. The meetings were attended by himself and by the Chair. The main agenda items were updates from the Commission about the Specialised Committee on Fisheries and the corresponding Working Groups. There were also points on non-quota species multi-year strategies. The topics were mainly directed at the regional Advisory Councils, since no market topic was covered.



- **DG MARE – AC Secretariats meeting (11 October 2022)**

The Secretary General informed that he attended, on 11 October 2022, a meeting organised by the European Commission between DG MARE and the AC Secretariats. The Commission provided some information about the report on the Common Fisheries Policy. There were questions put forward by the Advisory Councils concerning the lump sum approach, the invitation of Commission representatives to meetings, follow-up to written questions, and the promotion of Advisory Councils.

The Secretary General informed that he put forward the item on “follow-up to written questions”. Sometimes, at meetings, Commission representatives are not able to answer the questions of the members, so, as encouraged by DG MARE, the Secretariat submits these as written questions later. Nevertheless, there is not always a reply. At the 11 October 2022 meeting, Commission representatives informed that efforts were being made to respond to the written questions.

Concerning the promotion of the Advisory Councils, the Secretary General reminded that, in the past, the topic has been raised by the MAC. Presently, the issue was being raised by the NWWAC Secretariat. The aim was for the Commission to promote membership applications to the Advisory Councils, including through publications on the matter.

- **Inter-Advisory Councils meeting (17 November 2022)**

The Secretary General informed that an Inter-Advisory Councils meeting, organised by DG MARE, took place on 17 November 2022. The aim was for the Commission to present policy initiatives that were relevant for several Advisory Councils. On behalf of the MAC, the Chair, Ms Yobana Bermúdez (Conxemar), Mr Pierre Commère (ADEPALE), Mr Paul Thomas (EAPO), Ms Christine Absil (Good Fish), Mr Daniel Voces (Europêche), Ms Marine Cusa (Oceana), Mr Yannis Pelekannakis (FEAP), and Mr Alessandro Manghisi (MSC), plus the Secretary General and the Financial Officer attended.

In terms of agenda items, the Secretary General informed that, at the meeting, Mr Frangiscos Nikolian (MARE A4) provided an update on the report on the functioning of the Common Market Organisation. The report was still being drafted, but, based on the preliminary presentation, the conclusions seemed similar to the MAC’s advice on the matter.

At the meeting, there was presentation on the European Sustainable Food System Framework, which was also mentioned at the 27 January 2023 meeting of Working Group 3. The Commission informed that work was underway for the development of the terms of reference of the next Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet. According to the information provided, the advice adopted by the MAC in 2022 about the matter was being considered for the terms of reference. There was a presentation about the European Year of Skills, a topic that was also addressed at the 27 January 2023 meeting of the General Assembly. There were several agenda items that were not directly relevant for the MAC, namely on the deep-sea access implementation, and an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management. Financial and organisation matters were also addressed.



- **Roundtable discussion with Commissioner Sinkevičius (5 December 2022)**

The Secretary General informed that, on 5 December 2022, a roundtable discussion with Commissioner Sinkevičius took place in Brussels. The Commissioner invited the Chair and Other Interest Groups Vice-Chairs of all Advisory Councils to discuss fishing opportunities for next year for fish stocks in the EU waters of the Atlantic Ocean, Kattegat and Skagerrak, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The meeting was attended, on behalf of the MAC, by Mr Pastoor and Ms Absil.

The Chair reported that, besides the official theme of the roundtable, there was also an opportunity to raise other topics. At the roundtable discussion, the Chair drew attention to market developments. The Chair expressed satisfaction with the organisation of the roundtable, adding that the Commission expressed willingness to organise roundtable discussions again in the future. Several members of the Cabinet expressed interest in the work of the Advisory Councils, including to be added to the distribution list of the MAC.

Christine Absil (Good Fish) reported that, at the meeting, she had raised concerns from adopted advice on the Sustainable Food System Framework, the revision of the marketing standards, and the Product Environmental Footprint Category Rules. Ms Absil that a Cabinet representative expressed satisfaction that these topics were raised.

- **AC Chairs and Secretariats meeting (11 January 2023)**

The Secretary General informed that, on 11 January 2023, a meeting between the AC Chairs and Secretariats took place, which was organised by the Baltic Sea Advisory Council. These meetings usually happen annually, in order to facilitate coordination. The meeting was attended by the Secretary General and by the Chair.

At the meeting, there was a roundtable about the work programmes for 2023 and coordination tools. There was a discussion about the organisational and structural aspects of the Inter-AC Brexit Forum, including agreement to continue with a rotation of the Secretariats that organise the meetings. Participants exchanged about the internal functioning of the Advisory Councils, including external representation, codes of conduct/good practices/procedures, recognition of the Advisory Councils, participation of Commission participation in meetings, and reimbursement ceilings.

The LDAC sent a letter to DG MARE expressing concern about the lack of attendance of representative in their meetings. Director-General Vitcheva replied informing about limitations in staff and in budget, which means that some topics will be addressed in Inter-Advisory Council meetings. Several Advisory Councils are reviewing their reimbursement ceilings to provide slight increases.

At the meeting, there were also exchanges about financial and administrative matters. The Advisory Councils are still in the early stages of implementing the new lump-sum approach, so it was not possible to share experiences. The Commission committed to an update of the financial guidelines, but the update is still pending. For some Advisory Councils, there were some difficulties with qualified electronic signature.



The Secretary General informed that the NWWAC Secretariat suggested the submission of a joint letter to Director-General Vitcheva encouraging the promotion of membership application to Advisory Councils, including in bilateral meetings and in communication strategies. The Secretary General recalled that, in advance of the meeting, the draft letter, prepared by the Secretariats, had been circulated. Procedures of approval were underway in all the Advisory Councils.

The Chair expressed his support for the draft letter, adding that it was a positive way to encourage the European Commission to promote the Advisory Councils more.

The Executive Committee expressed agreement on the joint letter to the European Commission for the promotion and encouragement of the Advisory Council's work.

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

- **Reporting back on MIAC and MIACO meetings (12-13 January 2023) by Pedro Reis Santos, Secretary General**

The Secretary General recalled that ICES organised an annual meeting with the Advisory Councils (MIAC) and an annual meeting with the Advisory Councils and other observers. The Secretary General attended the meetings of 12 and 13 January 2023 in Copenhagen. Topics covered included the socio-economic dimension in ICES advice, rebuilding plans, stocks of specific areas, quality control, stakeholder engagement, renewable energy, benchmarks and reviews, emerging science needs, mixed fisheries, and 2023. The Secretary General highlighted that the topics were not market related, but more relevant for the regional Advisory Councils.

European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA)

- **Reporting back on Advisory Board (24 October 2022), Seminar on the Five-Year Independent External Evaluation (25 October 2022), and Administrative Board (26 October 2022) meetings**

The Secretary General recalled that all Advisory Councils were part of the Advisory Board of EFCA. Meetings of the Advisory Board usually take place twice a year and the purpose was to provide advice to EFCA. A meeting of the Advisory Board took place on 24 October 2022, which was attended by the Chair and by himself. At the meeting, there was a roundtable for each Advisory Council to provide an update on their state-of-play. EFCA representatives provided an update on the EFCA multiannual work programme 2023-2027 and their annual work programme 2023. There was also an update on the rotation of the representative in the Administrative Board.

The Secretary General informed that, on 25 October 2022, there was a seminar on the five-year independent external evaluation of EFCA. The seminar was attended by the Chair, the Secretary General, and Ms Francesca Peretti (ClientEarth). Topics covered included evaluation findings, operational coordination, international dimension, and cooperation with other EU agencies. In terms of market-related topics, EFCA is undertaking projects on the weighing of fish products.



The Secretary General recalled that EFCA had an Administrative Board composed of representatives of the European Commission and of the Member States. An observer of the Advisory Board also takes part in the meetings of the Administrative Board. The Secretary General attended the 26 October 2022 meeting of the Administrative Board of EFCA. At the meeting, the Administrative Board agreed on recommendations from the external evaluation and adopted the programming document.

The Secretary General informed that EFCA launched new chartered patrol vessels. On 17 January 2023, there was a naming event and onboard tour of the vessels. The event included speeches from the Director-General of DG MARE, the Minister of Agriculture of Portugal, the Secretary-General of Fisheries of Spain, the Mayor of Vigo, among others. At the event, Director-General Vitcheva announced that, the following month, the Commission would be publishing communication on the Common Fisheries Policy, the report on the Common Market Organisation, the action plan for conservation of marine resources, and the energy transition initiative. On behalf of the MAC, the event was attended by the Secretary General and by Mr Daniel Voces (Europêche).

The Chair, in the context of the collaboration with EFCA, from a market perspective, underscored the importance of the topics of IUU fishing and of fisheries control.

The Secretary General highlighted that there were EFCA representatives included in the distribution list of the MAC and that, occasionally, they attend meetings of the MAC.

AOB

- **Consideration and potential approval of draft advice and draft terms of reference**

The Secretary General informed that Working Group 1 reached agreement on several pieces of advice on the topics of: disturbances in the market of fisheries and aquaculture products due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, STEC's Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet (2023), awareness on the role of Producer Organisations, EUMOFA: suggestions of studies to be integrated in the work programme. Working Group 2 reached agreement on advice about the STECF's Economic Report on the Fish Processing Industry (2021).

The Secretary General further informed that Working Group 2 agreed on draft terms of reference for an external study on forced labour in the fisheries and aquaculture market. The proposal would be for contract of "very low value" (€1000.01 - €15000 with VAT included). To accommodate the new expense, costs connected to meeting venues would need to be reduced. If required, savings from previous operational years could be used.

Katarina Sipic (CEP) wondered if there was an adequate representation of the different parts of the supply chain in the Steering Committee, since representatives of the aquaculture and retail sectors were not included.



The Chair agreed with Ms Sipic about the importance of an adequate representation of the relevant stakeholders.

Pierre Commère (AIPCE) also agreed with Ms Sipic. Mr Commère volunteered to join the Steering Committee. Considering his role as Chair of Working Group 2, his participation could also strengthen the relationship between the consultant and the Management Team.

Massimo Bellavista (COPA COGECA) recalled an intervention by Mr Daniel Voces (Europêche) at the 26 January 2023 meeting of Working Group 2. The social partners for fisheries, composed of COGECA, Europêche, and ETF, also commissioned a study on forced labour. Therefore, there should be contact between the external consultants.

Els Bedert (EuroCommerce) requested a few additional days to determine the availability of an EuroCommerce representative to join the Steering Committee.

Rosalie Tukker (Europêche) informed that the project of the social partners was launched in September 2022 and would run for two years. The results will be made available online. Ms Tukker expressed willingness to coordinate the work, avoiding duplication.

The Executive Committee agreed with the terms of reference for a study on forced labour in the fisheries and aquaculture market, including the allocation of up to €15.000 for such expense.

The Chair proposed that, to allow a final opportunity for verification by the members, the five pieces of draft advice agreed by the Working Groups would be put forward for consideration and approval through an urgent written procedure.

- **Conclusion of Mr Pastoor's 2020-2023 term as Chair of the MAC**

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) thanked Mr Pastoor for his dedication and efforts to drive the MAC, which resulted in a robust Advisory Council.

The Chair thanked the members for their trust. The Chair expressed satisfaction with the functioning of the MAC, particularly taking into account the increasing number of members and of adopted pieces of advice. The Chair thanked Mr Reis Santos for his positive and loyal cooperation as Secretary General, which led to a more professional working method. The Chair recalled that, in the earlier operational years, the European Commission was dissatisfied with the functioning of the MAC, but that the situation had changed completely.

The Secretary General thanked Mr Pastoor for his dedication and impartiality in the role as Chair.



Summary of action points

- General Assembly and Executive Committee
 - Secretariat to initiate the administrative procedures to replace Mr Sean O'Donoghue with Mr Julien Lamothe in the MAC ASBL, including publication in the Belgian Official Gazette
- AOB
 - Draft advice agreed by Working Group 1 (Ukraine, Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet, awareness on the role of Producer Organisations, EUMOFA studies) and by Working Group 2 (Economic Report on the Fish Processing Industry) to be put forward for consideration and approval through an urgent written procedure



Attendance List

Representative	Organisation	Role
Asmira Sophie Sandermann	European Fishmeal	Member
Benoît Thomassen	Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP)	Member
Bruno Guillaumie	European Molluscs Producers Association (EMPA)	Member
Christine Absil	Good Fish	Member
Dawlat Bik	Market Advisory Council	Secretariat
Els Beder	EuroCommerce	Member
Emiel Brouckaert	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)	Member
Francesca Peretti	ClientEarth	Member
Georg Werner	Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)	Member
Guus Pastoor	EU Fish Processors and Traders Association (AIPCE)	Chair
Isabel Mariño Prieto	Conxemar	Member
Jaroslaw Zieliński	Polish Fish Producers Association (PFPA)	Observer
Javier Ojeda	Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP)	Member
Jean-Marie Roberto	Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne	Member
Julien Lamothe	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)	Member
Katarina Sipic	European Federation of National Organizations of Importers and Exporters of Fish (CEP)	Member
Massimo Bellavista	COPA COGECA	Member
Marine Cusa	Oceana	Member
Paul Thomas	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)	Member
Pedro Reis Santos	Market Advisory Council (MAC)	Secretariat
Pierre Commère	EU Fish Processors and Traders Association (AIPCE)	Member
Roberto Carlos Alonso Baptista	ANFACO-CECOPECA	Member
Rosalie Tukker	Europêche	Member
Sean O'Donoghue	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)	Member



Representative	Organisation	Role
Vanya Vulperhorst	Oceana	Member
Yobana Bermúdez	CONXEMAR	Member

