

General Assembly

Minutes

Friday, 27 January 2023 (13:30 – 15:00 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 (20.09.22): adopted

General Assembly and Executive Committee

- **Presentation of the candidacies for Chair for the 2023-2026 period**

The Chair reminded that he had not submitted an expression of interest for the position in the 2023-2026 period. The Chair expressed satisfaction with his experience with two terms and committed to continue participating as an active member in future meetings. He informed that one expression of interest was received from Ms Yobana Bermúdez on behalf of AIPCE-CEP and recalled that, in line with Article 24 of the Statutes and with point 2(a) of Annex III of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation, the appointment must be by consensus.

- **Appointment**

The General Assembly appointed, by consensus, Ms Yobana Bermúdez as Chair of the MAC for the 2023-2026 period.

Yobana Bermúdez (Conxemar) thanked Mr Pastoor for his work and dedication as Chair of the MAC. Ms Bermúdez thanked AIPCE-CEP for the trust in putting forward her candidacy. She also thanked her fellow members, including production, processing, retail, and NGOs members, for the appointment.

Ms Bermúdez expressed her commitment to dedicate herself to the MAC and to cooperation to achieve positive results. She thanked the Spanish members, highlighting that the production and processing sectors are an important part of the GDP of Spain, which demonstrates the importance of participating in the MAC. She also thanked the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of Spain for attending the meeting as observers.

The Chair expressed his best wishes to Ms Bermúdez in her appointment and highlighted that she was first female Chair amongst the 11 Advisory Councils. He informed that, with the conclusion of his term, Ms Bermúdez would chair the next meeting.



The Secretary General thanked the Chair for the work, assistance, cooperation and trust in the previous years. The Secretary General congratulated Ms Bermúdez in her appointment.

Executive Committee

- **Presentation of the candidacies for membership for the 2023-2026 period**

The Chair recalled that, in line with point 2(a) of Annex III of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation, 60% of the seats of the Executive Committee are allotted to sector representatives, while 40% are allotted to representatives of the other interest groups. The Chair further recalled that, at the founding General Assembly meeting, there was agreement on a distribution of seats in the Executive Committee of the sector organisations across the supply chain. In accordance with Article 4.4 of the Commission Delegated Regulation 2015/242, the sector organisations and the other interest groups designate the appointments to their respective seats.

The Chair explained, for the “processors, traders, supplier and retailers” section of the sector seats, eight expressions of interest were received for seven seats. The Chair invited the interested members to present their candidacies.

Maria Luisa Álvarez Blanco (FEDEPESCA) emphasised her organisation’s proximity to the market and to consumers, which demonstrated their relevancy to the Executive Committee. Ms Álvarez argued in favour of some rotation of the members present in the Executive Committee, even though she was not opposed to the composition of the Executive Committee in the 2020-2023 period.

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) requested information on the format of the ballot, particularly on the possibility to vote on up to seven members in the “processors, traders, suppliers and retailers” category.

The Secretary General presented the format of the ballot, which listed the eight members applying for the “processors, traders, suppliers and retailers” category, allowing members to vote in favour of seven maximum. The seven member organisations with the most votes would be considered appointed to the Executive Committee for the 2023-2026 period. Therefore, abstentions were possible. The Secretary General also explained the procedure to cast the vote via secret ballot.

- **Appointment**

The representatives of the sector organisations voted, via secret ballot, on the allocation of the seven allotted to the “processors, traders, supplies and retailers category”, for which there were seven candidacies. The votes were counted by Ms Vitikkala (MAC Secretariat) with the independent supervision of Ms Cécile Fouquet (AAC Secretariat). The results were the following:

- Euro Commerce: 41 votes
- CEP: 40 votes
- AIPCE: 39 votes
- European Fishmeal: 38 votes
- FEDEPESCA: 37 votes
- Conxemar: 35 votes



- ANFACO-CECOPESCA: 28 votes
- FRUCOM: 22 votes

There was a total of 43 ballots cast, including 2 invalid ballots.

The General Assembly agreed, by consensus, on the remaining composition of the Executive Committee for the 2020-2023 period. The full agreed composition was:

Value Supply Chain	
Primary Producers (Catching)	
	EAPO
	Europêche
	COPA-COGECA
	KFO
	Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne
Primary Producers (Aquaculture)	
	EMPA
	FEAP
Processors, traders, suppliers and retailers	
	AIPCE
	CEP
	European Fishmeal
	EuroCommerce
	CONXEMAR
	ANFACO-CECOPESCA
	FEDEPESCA
Workers (Trade Unions)	
	ETF
Other Interest Groups	
	MSC
	Oceana
	WWF
	ClientEarth
	EJF
	Good Fish



Working Groups

- **Presentation of the candidacies for Chairs for the 2023-2026 period**

The Chair recalled that there were three Working Groups. One expression of interest was received per Working Group, representing a change in Working Group 1 and continuation in Working Group 2 and in Working Group 3. The expression of interest for Working Group 1 was received from Mr Julien Lamothe on behalf of EAPO. The Chair thanked Mr Sean O'Donoghue for his dedication to Working Group 1, which translated into the adoption of a significant number of recommendations, and congratulated Mr O'Donoghue for his recent appointment as Chair of the Baltic Sea Advisory Council.

Sean O'Donoghue (KFO) expressed his willingness to continue as an active member of the MAC, but added that, due to his new commitment under the Baltic Sea Advisory Council, it was too difficult to maintain both positions. Mr O'Donoghue thanked the members of Working Group 1 for their work and the continued achievement of consensus when drafting advice.

Julien Lamothe (ANOP) highlighted his experience with the Advisory Councils, particularly in the North Western Waters Advisory Council and in the South Western Waters Advisory Council. Mr Lamothe also highlighted his experience of more than 20 years in production activities, which also included marketing activities for the valorisation of French products. He thanked Mr O'Donoghue for the work done, expressing his willingness to continue, via consensus, with an active Working Group. He also thanked his fellow members for their trust.

- **Appointment**

The General Assembly made the following appointments, by consensus, for the 2023-2026 period:

- *Mr Julien Lamothe as Chair of Working Group 1 (EU Production)*
- *Mr Pierre Commère as Chair of Working Group 2 (EU Markets)*
- *Mr Benoît Thomassen as Chair of Working Group 3 (EU Control and Sanitary Issues, Consumer Rules)*

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) asked about the lack of appointment of Vice-Chairs for the Working Groups, which were particularly relevant for the chairing of meetings when the respective Chair is unavailable. Mr Ojeda highlighted the positive experience in the Aquaculture Advisory Council with Working Group Chairs designated from the sector membership and Working Group Vice-Chairs designated from the other interest groups.

The Chair expressed agreement with Mr Ojeda, highlighting that, in the earlier operational years, there were Working Group Vice-Chairs designated from the other interest groups. The Chair encouraged members to consider presenting candidates for Working Group Vice-Chair, particularly amongst the other interest groups.

The Secretary General highlighted that the call for expressions of interest for the 2023-2026 included the positions of Working Group Vice-Chairs, but that no expressions of interests were received, especially due to lack of capacity amongst the other interest groups. The Secretary General recalled



that, in accordance with Article 4.2 of the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/242, the principle of designating a Vice-Chair from the other interest groups, when the Chair was designated from the sector category, should apply, where possible, to the Working Groups.

Sean O'Donoghue (KFO) suggested the scheduling, under the draft agendas for the March 2023 meetings of the three Working Groups, of agenda items to discuss the appointment of Vice-Chairs. The Working Groups could suggest Vice-Chairs for appointment by the Executive Committee.

The Chair expressed agreement for Mr O'Donoghue's suggestion.

The Secretary General thanked Mr O'Donoghue for all his work as Chair of Working Group 1.

European Year of Skills 2023

- **Presentation by Andy Kontoudakis (MARE A1)**

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

Andy Kontoudakis (DG MARE) delivered a presentation on the designation of 2023 as the “European Year of Skills”, while highlighting other initiatives for skills development, such as under the Pact for Skills and under the Blue Careers Call under EMFAF. The European Year of Skills was announced by President von der Leyen in her State of the European Union Address. 2023 will be dedicated to creating awareness, boost participation and promote cooperation on initiatives and policies on skills development led by the Commission, Member States and a vast array of relevant stakeholders. The aim is to increase involvement of stakeholders in the development of skills actions.

The aim of the European Year of Skills is to tackle the skills mismatch in the labour market, labour market shifts and changing demographics. There are sectors with older employees that require reskilling, new industries that require new skills, and industries that are rapidly transforming. Besides an aging workforce, industries also need to import talent. Ms Kontoudakis encouraged stakeholders to publicise their initiatives on skills, upscale their activities, develop relevant curricula and training programs, promote policies at regional and national levels, and identify the necessary skills in their sectors in a coordinated manner. These initiatives could involve the EU institutions, Member States, existing platforms and networks, and even international actors (because of a sea-basin approach).

Besides a communication campaign and a corporate web platform, tools are also available to assist stakeholders, regional governments, national actors, and social partners. EU funds and financing tools are available for skills development, such as the European Social Fund Plus, Erasmus+, the Recovery and Resilience Facility - and for the blue economy is specific, the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund.

Further, with regards to other skills initiatives the sector could tap into: Under the European Skills Agenda, the Pact for Skills (PfS) aims at sectorial cooperation for the creation of largescale partnerships for skills development. It calls on businesses, social partners, education and training providers, associations, cluster organisations, national, regional and local authorities, chambers of commerce, employment services, among others, to joint forces. Ms Kontoudakis provided an



overview of the PFS in the 14 industrial ecosystems, each one now hosting a large-scale skills partnership, involving over 1000 organisations from all Member States and sectors. The commitment under the various skills partnerships is to provide up- and reskilling opportunities to close to 6 million people in the coming years. The Commission representative provided examples of commitments in several sectors, with emphasis on 2 blue economy sectors, offshore renewables and shipbuilding.

Ms Kontoudakis also provided an overview of the various financing tools the EU offers for investment in skills in the 2021-2027 period: the European Social Fund, Erasmus+, European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers, Invest EU, Horizon Europe (Marie Curie actions), under the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund, +React-EU, the European Regional Development Fund, the European Solidarity Corps, etc.

Finally, Ms Kontoudakis highlighted the recent call for proposals, under the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund, on blue careers for a sustainable blue economy. The purpose would be to fund bottom-up projects from stakeholders concerning skills gaps and training ideas. The deadline of the call was 31 January 2023. Around 50 proposals were expected for assessment and approval. The Commission representative encouraged the members to look for successful proposals in their local context, in order to benefit from these projects, contribute towards their activities, etc.

- **Exchange of views & way forward**

The Chair highlighted the relevance of the presentation, especially considering the broad scope of the fisheries and aquaculture sector, which covers production, logistics, and retail. There are increasing difficulties in attracting talent, especially for the first sections of the supply chain. The available opportunities in the sector must be promoted, so that new workers join and the current works do not leave the sector.

Katarina Sipic (CEP) requested information on the periodicity of the call for proposals under the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund.

Andy Kontoudakis (DG MARE) responded that, normally, calls for blue careers for a sustainable blue economy are launched every two years. There will be consideration to include a fourth call under the Commission's work programme of 2025, subject to budget availability.

Massimo Bellavista (COPA-COGECA) recalled his past experience in the area of training. The issue is not only about training, but also about safety on board. The EU should promote the ratification of the International Labour Organisation's Work in Fishing Convention N.º 188. Mr Bellavista encouraged the Commission to work together with the International Maritime Organisation about safety on board.

Mr Bellavista informed that COPA-COGECA will be undertaking a project, together with Europêche and other partners, on professional skills under the current Call on Blue Careers. Soft skills and sustainability are essential, but the lack of basic skills must also be considered. He highlighted the



high costs of organising training in the fishing sector, since fishers are at sea every day. In the case of Italy, there is no training sector for fisheries. It is the only Member State that does not require training for professional fishers.

Mr Bellavista further informed that COPA-COGECA will be involved in a project about the link between renewable energy and the fishing industry. In the context of the ongoing crisis and the development of renewable energies, studies are lacking on the impact of the renewable energy industry on the fishing industry.

Andy Kontoudakis (DG MARE), concerning the certification for the fishing professions, explained that these are national competencies. The role of the Commission would be to encourage Member States to take action and to exchange best practices. In relation to basic skills, Ms Kontoudakis stated that digital skills would need to be integrated. In the fishing sector, there are ongoing processes of digitalisation and the impact of energy transition requires technical/technological abilities too. She encouraged the submission of workshop proposals for the European Maritime Day by the Advisory Council. These should be debating on the existing gaps at the national level.

Pierre Commère (ADEPALE) emphasised that, in the past years, the topic of employment and skills became pivotal, since there are availability issues, particularly during seasonal peaks. As an example, in the summer period, there is competition with the HORECA sector. Mr Commère wanted to know if the Commission was counting on the Member States or on sector associations to take action. For dissemination by the sector associations, documentation in the national languages would be needed. He wanted to know if the EYS website would be translated into other languages.

Andy Kontoudakis (DG MARE) responded that the website of the European Year of Skills, which includes materials on communication, information, and other documentation, will be translated in the different EU official languages. The Pact for Skills website and information was developed in English, but the Commission is relying on associations and stakeholders that could translate the messages at the local level. The aim of both the EYS or the creation of large scale partnerships would be to have a sophisticated workforce with lifelong learning possibilities. Attracting and retaining talent could be achieved through providing locally vocational training and skilling schemes.

Maria Luisa Álvarez Blanco (FEDEPESCA) highlighted that, in 2007, the Spanish sector of traditional fishmongers, had 15000 points of sale, while, in 2023, there were 10000 points of sale. The problem was not merely the existence of other points of sale, but the lack of generational renewal. Since the 1960s, the HORECA sector received public and free education. In Spain, the agri-food sector employs half a million people, but no public vocational training is available, which means that qualified workers are lacking. This represents a discrimination of the sector.



Ms Álvarez informed that, in 2015, FEDEPESCA participated in the Erasmus+ programme, with the collaboration of FEAP and other partners, which was very successful, but that, unfortunately, was not possible to continue. The requirements under the calls do not always match the needs of the market. Nevertheless, she expressed interest in applying again in the future.

Andy Kontoudakis (DG MARE) recognised the competing space between tourism industries and more traditional industries. These depend on the incentives provided at the national level. The lack of literacy on the variety of opportunities in coastal economies makes it more difficult to attract personnel. Ms Kontoudakis suggested the development of a pitch for a pilot project, such as a training model to be included in a national academy or regional vocational training. This would attract new professionals and boost the growth of the sector at the local level. Once a project is successful, it becomes easier to convince local and national governments to take action.

AOB

None.



Attendance List

Representative	Organisation	Role
Alen Louvrinov	Omega 3 Producers Organisation	Member
Alonso Abreu Lozano	Asociación de Armadores Punta del Moral (OPP80) / ETF (via proxy)	Member
Alexandre Bonneau	SNCE	Member
Andy Kontoudakis	European Commission	Expert
Anna Boulova	FRUCOM	Member
Anna Rokicka	Polish Association of Fish Processors (PSPR)	Member
Annie Seng	SNCE	Member
Asmira Sophie Sandermann	European Fishmeal	Member
Benoît Thomassen	Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP)	Member
Bruno Guillaumie	European Molluscs' Producers Association (EMPA)	Member
Cécile Fouquet	Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC)	Observer
Christine Absil	Good Fish	Member
Eduardo Míguez López	OPP-77 Puerto de Celeiro / CEPESCA (via proxy)	Member
Els Bedert	EuroCommerce	Member
Emiel Brouckaert	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO) / VisNed (via proxy)	Member
Fabián Ben Conde	Federación Nacional de Cofradías de Pescadores (FNCP) / FECOPESCA (via proxy)	Member
Francesca Peretti	ClientEarth	Member
Garazi Rodríguez Valle	APROMAR	Member
Georg Werner	Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)	Member
Guus Pastoor	EU Fish Processors and Traders Association (AIPCE) / Visfederatie / Bundesverband der deutschen Fischindustrie und des Fischgroßhandels e.V. (via proxy)	Chair
Isabel Mariño Prieto	Conxemar	Member
Jaroslaw Zieliński	Polish Fish Producers Association (PFPA)	Member
Javier Ojeda	Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP)	Member
Jean-Marie Robert	Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne	Member



Representative	Organisation	Role
Jérémie Souben	FEDOPA	Member
Juana Maria Parada Guinaldo	OR.PA.GU. / OPP72 (via proxy)	Member
Julien Lamothe	ANOP	Member
Katarina Sipic	European Federation of National Organizations of Importers and Exporters of Fish (CEP) / Danish Seafood Association (via proxy)	Member
Maria Luisa Álvarez Blanco	Federación de Asociaciones Provinciales de Empresarios Detallistas de Pescados y Productos Congelados (FEDEPESCA)	Member
Marine Cusa	Oceana	Member
Massimo Bellavista	COPA COGECA	Member
Miguel Lizaso	European Commission	Expert
Patrick Murphy	Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation (IS&WFPO)	Member
Paul Thomas	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)	Member
Paulien Prent	Visfederatie	Member
Pedro Luis Casado López	Asociación de Armadores Punta del Moral (OPP80)	Member
Pedro Reis Santos	Market Advisory Council (MAC)	Secretariat
Pierre Commère	ADEPALE / Eurothon / ANCIT (via proxy)	Member
Pim Visser	VisNed	Member
Roberto Carlos Alonso Baptista	ANFACO-CECOPECA / FEICOPESCA / Unione Italiana Food (via proxy)	Member
Rosalie Tukker	Europêche / OPPC-3 (via proxy)	Member
Sean O'Donoghue	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO) / Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation (KFO) / Pelagic Fisher Trawler Association (via proxy)	Member
Sergio López García	OPP Puerto de Burela / OPESCAYA (via proxy)	Member
Tintti Vitikkala	Market Advisory Council	Secretariat
Vanya Vulperhorst	Oceana	Member
Yobana Bermúdez	CONXEMAR	Member

