



The Role of Advisory Councils under the Common Fisheries Policy

**An event with Members of the European Parliament by the
Market, the North Sea and the Aquaculture Advisory
Councils**

**Monday, 27 January 2025
European Parliament, Brussels**

Welcome and introduction by Sander Smit MEP

MEP Smit excused MEP Rodrigues who was unable to host the event due to unexpected circumstances. MEP Smit emphasized that the event was a unique opportunity to recognize the significant role of the Advisory Councils and reflect on their future role in the political decision-making process.

The Advisory Councils are the cornerstone of inclusive and balanced approach, which demonstrate that a diverse quorum can successfully provide input in one of the most crucial policies of the European Union. The work of the Advisory Councils is precious, and it is the foundation for sustainable management of fisheries while safeguarding the industry and stakeholders.

The Advisory Councils cover a wide range of maritime regions and topics. This regional diversity is the strength of the Advisory Councils. MEP Smit particularly follows the work of the North Sea Advisory Council, since he is from the Netherlands. MEP Smit also mentioned the substantial contributions of the Advisory Councils on several topics.

MEP Smit mentioned that the European Parliament should establish a practice of assigning each Advisory Council with a designated Member of the PECH Committee to further enhance the political relevance and the visibility of the work of the Advisory Councils. MEP Smit thanked the representatives of the Advisory Councils for their work which is an example that

collaboration can actually work. MEP Smit looked forward to the discussion and the continued collaboration with the Advisory Councils.

The Role of Advisory Councils: Stelios Mitolidis, Director, DG MARE D3

Mr Mitolidis highlighted that the Common Fisheries Policy introduced the Advisory Councils to bring stakeholders closer to decision making process, since its objectives cannot be achieved properly without a large community of stakeholders

The Advisory Councils offer a possibility for stakeholders to bring everyone together on several topics and areas. Mr Mitolidis explained that Advisory Councils are independent stakeholder led organisations, with both sector organisations and other interests' groups which is crucial. The common goal is to contribute to policy making to achieve balance, with a participation with 60% of sector organisations and 40% of other interests' groups. The Advisory Councils bring expertise, knowledge and they are able to support the Commission on management plans, fishing gears, ecosystem-based approach, aquaculture among other topics.

Mr Mitolidis emphasized that the Advisory Councils have mastered the possibility to achieve consensus to provide advice. The new Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans, Costas Kadis, is very engaged in the process and dialogue. Mr Kadis met the Advisory Councils on the third day of his term, and he is putting an emphasis on strengthening dialogue with stakeholders. It is an important endeavour, and the European Commission will follow it closely.

Mr Mitolidis highlighted that this is how the European Commission sees the process of consultation. He mentioned the evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy. The public consultation was published on the same day. Mr Mitolidis asked for the help of the Advisory Councils concerning how they see the policy and participative process, while evaluating the future of the Common Fisheries Policy regulation. Mr Mitolidis also mentioned the "fisheries and ocean" package from 2023, where the Advisory Councils were also closely associated to the consultation process. The European Commission is always looking to have the maximum engagement possible from the Advisory Councils to these processes.

Mr Mitolidis mentioned the impact of the Advisory Councils on various topics such as the market, energy transition, decarbonisation or fisheries management. The European Commission considers the important role of the Advisory Councils and finds them extremely valuable.



The North Sea Advisory Council: Kenn Skau Fischer, Chair of the Executive Committee, NSAC

Access the presentation here: https://www.nsrac.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/NSAC-presentation-27-01-2025_1.pdf

Mr Skau Fischer explained that the objective of the North Sea Advisory Council is bringing together stakeholders for sustainable North Sea fisheries. Mr Skau Fischer then outlined the structure and membership of the NSAC and the main topics on which they are working. Mr Skau Fischer then presented how the Advisory Councils can assist decision-makers but also what policymakers can do for stakeholders.

Finally, Mr Skau Fischer also outlined the future aspirations of the North Sea Advisory Council. It included direct involvement of dedicated experts and scientists, broader NGO development, balanced representation, exploring ways to share relevant data while safeguarding trust and sensitive data protection, making a difference and helping fisheries transition, importance of informal contact and exchanges, and producing meaningful targeted advice with a focus on the North Sea's specific issues.

The Market Advisory Council: Yobana Bermúdez, Chair of the Executive Committee, MAC

Access the presentation here: <http://aac-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/MAC-Chair-Presentation-27.01.2025.pdf>

Ms Bermúdez provided an overview of the EU seafood market, including the world production of fisheries and aquaculture products with the biggest 15 producers, the consumption of fishery and aquaculture products by Member States and the EU apparent consumption and self-sufficiency rate for fisheries and aquaculture products.

Ms Bermúdez explained that the Market Advisory Council is EU-wide with a wide horizontal composition. The priorities of the Market Advisory Councils include the Common Fisheries Policy and the Common Market Organisation, the Trade Agreements and Trade Policy Instruments, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, forced labour, EUMOFA, landing obligation, the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries and the Fisheries Control Regulation. Ms Bermúdez then outlined the structure and membership of the MAC, the deliverables for Year 9 (2024-2025) and listed the most recent recommendations and the upcoming meetings.

The Aquaculture Advisory Council: Brian Thomsen, Chair of the Executive Committee, AAC



Mr Thomsen briefly presented the Aquaculture Advisory Council and its membership. He then provided an overview of the EU aquaculture sector and its specificities. The various institutions of the European Union have expressed the ambition to unlock the potential of the EU aquaculture sector for more than two decades, but it has not happened in reality. EU aquaculture production has stagnated in volume since 2000. Mr Thomsen also presented the European Union strategies on aquaculture.

In one of its latest recommendations, the Aquaculture Advisory Council concluded that there is a need for an aquaculture policy reform. The main problem is the lower policy prioritization given to aquaculture in Member States compared to agriculture and fisheries. This reform would include five elements which are the establishment of an Aquaculture Sustainability Regulation, the introduction of a Performance and Evaluation Framework, the establishment of a CMO regulation on aquaculture products, an update of the legal framework for POs and IBOs, and the improvement of the coherence between aquaculture policy objectives and EU environmental directives. The Aquaculture Advisory Council notes that this reform will prepare the EU aquaculture sector for an overarching Common Food Policy.

Questions and exchange with the audience: moderated by Ana Miranda Paz MEP

MEP Le Callennec, Member of the European Parliament, mentioned that she discovered the Advisory Councils at the beginning of her mandate and find their work very interesting. She will contact the Advisory Councils for policies that the European Parliament will have to evaluate and make proposals. MEP Le Callennec also mentioned that the advice of the Advisory Councils could be very useful for the Members of the European Parliament.

Mr Ruben Farias, Chair of the Outermost Regions Advisory Council, emphasized that the Advisory Council for the Outermost Regions has different needs than the other Advisory Councils. He outlined that it is important to remember that quotas create enormous socio-economic problems in the outermost regions and people who decide or have a word in the decision need to remember that.

Mr Javier Ojeda, Member of the Aquaculture Advisory Council, mentioned that the work in the Advisory Councils is not always conclusive. An important part of the work is just discussing between stakeholders, which allows broader collaboration and further work outside of the Advisory Councils. The enrichment and improvement of dialogues between stakeholders

Mr Paul Denekamp, Vice-Chair of the Aquaculture Advisory Council, also mentioned that dialogue is very important. He emphasized that the interest of the fishes does not get enough

attention. The fish are suffering from fishers and farms. There is a need for more attention and research for improvements. It is represented in few Advisory Councils, but it is important for all Advisory Councils.

Ms Alexandra Philippe, Vice-Chair of the North Western Waters Advisory Council, mentioned that it is essential to seek to establish a link with the European Parliament and see how the Advisory Councils and the European Parliament can work together. She also believes that the advice of the Advisory Councils can really feed into the work of the European Parliament. The work of the Advisory Councils has already been mentioned in several reports of the European Parliament during the last mandate. She thinks that the collaboration can help. She also mentioned the possibility of the participation of the Advisory Councils in hearings.

Mr Antonio Marzoa Notlevsen, Chair of the Mediterranean Advisory Council, agreed with other colleagues. He asked a question to Mrs Bermúdez concerning her presentation. He wondered what the weight of the European Union as a market of consumers is, considering that the European Union is the ninth biggest producer in the world. Mrs Bermúdez answered that the European Union is the first market in terms of consumers in the world, with 70% of raw materials coming from third countries.

Mr Paul Thomas, Executive Secretary of the Pelagic Advisory Council, suggested that the eleven Advisory Councils could circulate a small summary of each Advisory Council with short introductory texts and advice to the PECH Secretariat, which could then send it to the PECH Committee members.

Ms Chloé Pocheau, Executive Secretary of the South Western Waters Advisory Council, emphasized the essential role of interpretation. The lack of interpretation is why the Chair of the South Western Waters Advisory Council could not come to the event. The role of the Advisory Councils is to bring knowledge and political dialogue to the stakeholders, which is why interpretation is essential to do that. She also highlighted the fact that discussions do come to success sometimes. She mentioned that, for the first time in five years, they approved by consensus a recommendation on cetacean by-catches.

Ms Vanya Vulperhorst, Vice-Chair of the Long Distance Advisory Council, invited Members of the European Parliament to attend the meetings of Advisory Councils. She was also interested in knowing what Members of the European Parliament think is the most interesting part of the advice of the Advisory Councils and how can they help the European Parliament.

Concluding remarks by André Rodrigues MEP



MEP Miranda Paz gave the final statements on behalf of MEP Rodrigues. Just before the event, Ms Charlina Vitcheva, Director General of DG MARE, participated to the PECH Committee meeting. MEP Miranda Paz highlighted the importance of the contribution and testimonies of the speakers, and her willingness to work together.

MEP Miranda Paz emphasized the crucial debate played by the Advisory Councils with the interest of fishers and fisheries communities at the heart of their action. She mentioned the importance of the Advisory Councils in the context of the regionalisation of the Common Fisheries Policy. Thanks to the Advisory Councils, the legislators have access to more accurate legislation and perspective of stakeholders, especially regarding the management of fisheries resources.

The regionalization process of the Common Fisheries Policy enabled a bottom-down approach, which allows stakeholders to participate in the fisheries management process. The involvement of the Advisory Councils is crucial to be successful, with the knowledge of reality. She also mentioned the role of Advisory Councils, ensuring consensus, with other interests' groups involved. This process of ensuring dialogue with relevant stakeholders is essential to inform the decisions of the European Union.

She emphasized the value of reality from the Advisory Councils. From the Outermost regions to the North Sea, the European Union gains a more gradual vision of the Common Fisheries Policy and its implementation. The challenge is now to continue strengthening the relationship between the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of the European Union and the Advisory Councils moving forward.

For the European Union to achieve a sustainable future included in the European Oceans Pact, they have to ensure a consultation mechanism, to ensure that the stakeholders don't feel neglected by the European Union, with a safe way of living, fair compensation for their work and the protection of biodiversity and resources.

MEP Miranda Paz outlined the particular importance of the Advisory Councils with the upcoming evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy. It is a good opportunity to hear the voice of the Advisory Councils in Europe. For her and for all the groups in the European Parliament, it is important to have the voice of the Advisory Councils in their legislative work. The Advisory Councils were already mentioned in reports. The Members of the European Parliament will also mention them in legislative works and listen to the Advisory Councils' opinions. The Members of the European Parliament are here to serve the citizens, the people, the producers and the communities and MEP Miranda Paz is working for the defence of this



idea.