



Advice

STECF's Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet (2025)

Brussels, 27 March 2025

1. Background

The Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) publishes, every year, the Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet¹, which provides a comprehensive overview of the latest information available on the structure and economic performance of EU Member State fishing fleets, for example on fishing capacity, effort, employment, landings, income and costs. The 2025 report is expected to cover the period 2008 to 2025 with 2023 as the reference year and nowcast performance estimates for 2024 and 2025.

As highlighted in previous advice², the report has particular relevance for the work of the Market Advisory Council (MAC) and is highly valued by the EU fishing fleet and by the other relevant stakeholders. Ahead of the 2024 edition of the report, the MAC adopted advice with several recommendations to DG MARE³, including on timeline and potential time gaps, data collection, social variables, national and special chapters, and the coverage of vessels below 12 meters not included in the small-scale fleet segment.

¹ The reports are made publicly available on the [website](#) of STECF.

² On 23 September 2020, the MAC adopted [advice](#) on “Data Collection by the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF)”, which included a section dedicated to this economic report.

³ The mentioned [advice](#) was adopted on 31 January 2024.



At the 29 January 2025 meeting of the Working Group 1 of the MAC⁴, the Chair of the STECF Expert Working Group (EWG) delivered a presentation of the 2024 edition of the report, while also providing feedback on several prior recommendations of the MAC.

Under the Work Programme of Year 9 (2024-2025), the MAC committed to deliver advice on the Terms of Reference of the 2025 edition of the Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet.

2. Data collection

Following a call for economic data on the EU fishing fleet, the EWG will analyse and comment on the economic performance of the EU and national fishing fleets between 2008 and 2022, and where possible, 2023 and beyond. Economic data series will be available up to 2023.

In the view of the MAC, the retrospective data trends until 2022 are relevant. Nevertheless, as the report published in 2025 will be referring to data from more than two years ago, there should be further efforts to collect the most recent data possible, while also making use of the current trends to predict future trends.

While the production from small-scale fisheries is quite significant in the EU, there are risks of underestimation due to the difficulties in collecting data from this segment. Therefore, it is important to improve the data collection, including by directly approaching fishers and their associations, facilitating the improvement of the best and most realistic scenarios.

Additionally, the MAC notes that differences in methodologies between Member States can lead to inconsistencies in cost structures, profitability indicators, and revenue distribution across fleet segments. To ensure comparability and improve the accuracy of economic performance assessments, a standardised reporting template should be developed.

⁴ <https://marketac.eu/events/working-group-1-11/>

3. Social variables

The European Commission is preparing the establishment of a separate annual EWG dedicated to the social dimension, with a separate data call, which will publish a report on the social component of EU fisheries. Nevertheless, the Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet will continue to cover employment and Full Time Employment data to support the analysis of the economic drivers.

In the view of the MAC, since there are currently multiple sources of employment data from different sources, data collection needs to be standardised across Member States. One set of baseline data should be agreed upon rather than having multiple datasets.

When collecting and considering data on employment, it is important to consider the significant role that the families of fishers play in the production, as it could be underestimated or hidden.

Furthermore, the MAC stresses that certain economic indicators are crucial for assessing the fleet's ability to respond to market fluctuations, operational costs, and price-setting mechanisms. Therefore, the MAC suggests:

- A breakdown of cost structures (e.g., fuel, maintenance, labour costs, gear investments) by fleet segment to provide a clearer picture of operational viability.
- More detailed revenue assessments, including value-chain dynamics and price trends to evaluate fleet competitiveness within the market.
- The inclusion of forward-looking economic scenarios to estimate the potential impact of regulatory changes, energy price volatility, and market shifts on fleet profitability.

4. National chapters

The report includes specific chapters for each EU Member State. The MAC did not note any significant issues or errors concerning the content of the chapters of the 2024 edition.

5. Special chapters

The report can include special chapters on specific topics. The MAC believes that it would be relevant to include an update of the assessment on the impacts of Brexit, especially about quota transfers and access to waters under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, including decommissioning schemes as a consequence in some Member States.

The MAC also suggested including an economic impact assessment of increasing energy costs and inflation on fleet profitability and market stability, as these external factors are key to the long-term viability of EU fisheries.

6. Cooperation with International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

The Expert Working Groups of STECF and the Working Groups of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) analyse similar economic datasets. Therefore, in the view of the MAC, there should be more coordination between these groups to avoid duplication and/or differing conclusions. The MAC also highlights the need to have a more parallel approach between the ICES's advice on the state of the stocks and the socio-economic indicators produced by STECF.

7. Recommendations

For the 2025 edition of the Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet, particularly the development the Terms of Reference for the corresponding STECF EWG, the MAC believes that DG MARE, with the appropriate involvement of STECF, should:

- a) In the context of data collection, undertake further efforts to collect the most recent data possible, as the report will refer to data from more than two years prior – particular attention should be given to ensuring that nowcast projections account for tactical adaptations of the fleet and methodological limitations, as highlighted in previous reports;
- b) In the context of data collection and analysis, undertake efforts to address potential underestimation of production from small-scale fishers and of the contributions of their families, including through direct contacts with operators and their associations – given the economic significance of small-scale fisheries, improving data collection in this segment will enhance the accuracy of the report, particularly in relation to employment and income distribution;
- c) Standardise the data collection on employment through an agreement on one set of baseline data, instead of relying on multiple datasets – this should include improved reporting on unpaid labour, which remains a significant component of employment in the sector and varies widely across Member States;
- d) As a special chapter, include an update of the assessment on the impacts of Brexit, which should particularly focus on quota transfers, access to waters under the TCA, and the economic consequences of decommissioning schemes implemented in some Member States;
- e) Coordinate with ICES to avoid duplication and/or differing conclusions when analysing similar economic datasets, and in the advice provided, including on biological, social and economic indicators – additionally, a more integrated approach should be considered, ensuring that socio-economic indicators are aligned with stock assessments to provide a more holistic understanding of the sustainability of the fleet.