



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels
MARE.B.4

Dear Ms Bermudez, dear Mr Lopez,

Thank you for the joint Long Distance Advisory Council (LDAC) and Market Advisory Council (MAC) advice of 27 June 2025 regarding the urgent need for effective implementation of EU import control rules across Member States.

We received a similar advice from you in April 2023 (our reply in Ares(2023)4332312) of which we took note and have subsequently taken into account a number of the 14 recommendations in our ongoing work.

The Commission can only agree with you on the importance of more harmonised and robust import controls in Member States to avoid “control shopping” and will continue to focus on improving the level-playing field for EU operators, including by effective import controls.

We note that you refer to the **European Court of Auditors (ECA) report** from 2022 which recommended that the Commission, “*monitor that the scope and quality of checks by Member States are sufficient to address the risks and take necessary actions to remedy any shortcomings*” by 2026. The Commission accepted this ECA recommendation and has been and will continue working with Member States and report back to the ECA as required by the end of 2026. It would be premature today to assess the results, also considering that the use of CATCH becomes mandatory on 10 January 2026. All efforts are now focused on CATCH going live, making sure that all stakeholders, inside and outside the EU, are informed and prepared to prevent any impact on trade flows.

We do however take good note of the recommendations pointing to the work of the Commission, such as **making full use of digitalisation** of the catch certification scheme through CATCH to enable advanced analysis, to better target and coordinate controls, and identify Member States who are not complying with the rules.

The Commission agrees with your recommendation but would like to draw your attention to the time-lag. While CATCH will be instrumental in ensuring a more harmonised and uniform control across Member States, we must keep in mind that data will start accumulating only from January 2026. It will take some time for a comprehensive data set in the system to perform more advanced levels of cross-checks and analysis.

I can also assure you that DG MARE continues to work closely with DG TAXUD to ensure comprehensive cross-checks and consistency among import controls by providing the possibility to interconnect the CATCH environment with the customs single window

digital environment (CSW-CERTEX) fully in line with the legislation. This is foreseen for January 2028.

In relation to the **biennial reports**, as mentioned in my reply in 2023, the template was thoroughly revised by the Commission. The Commission continues to follow-up with individual Member States in relation to the context of the reports or to any missing information, with the ambition towards more consistent and uniform implementation of controls, and addressing shortcomings.

When the Commission identifies shortcomings, several enforcement tools are available to support Member States in complying with the EU legislation. One option is to initiate an **infringement procedure**, as was recently the case, when a Member State was found to not properly enforce an obligation under the EU legislation. As mentioned in the annex to your advice, some Member States have reported a low number of port inspections. The Commission is closely monitoring the implementation of the obligation on minimum legal inspection standards by Member States and is working with them to identify the reasons for the low number of inspections reported.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that the Commission takes note of your letter and appreciates the continued support and fruitful cooperation with the LDAC and the MAC.

Should you have further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

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