



Mandate

Inter-Advisory Councils Meeting (15 July 2026)

Brussels, 14 July 2026

1. Background

On 15 July 2026, DG MARE will be holding an Inter-Advisory Councils meeting. The meeting will include a roundtable with Director-General Vitcheva on the results of the evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation, an exchange of views with Commissioner Kadis on the new Guidelines on the Functioning of the Advisory Councils, and an update on the EU strategies for islands and for coastal communities.

The MAC will be represented by Yobana Bermúdez (Chair), Christine Absil (Vice-Chair), Julien Lamothe (Vice-Chair and Chair of Working Group 1), Stefan Meyer (Chair of Working Group 2), and Pedro Reis Santos (Secretary General).

2. Roundtable on the results of the evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation - Intervention on behalf of the MAC (six minutes)

Last year, the MAC adopted advice to support the Commission's evaluation. We welcome that the evaluation acknowledges many of our key concerns, particularly that the economic performance of the fisheries and aquaculture value chain fell short of expectations. Economic viability remains under pressure, generational renewal is limited, aquaculture production is stagnated, and uncertainty – further aggravated by geopolitical developments, continues to affect the value chain, providing mixed results for coastal communities.

The MAC also highlighted the decline in local fishery supplies, the limited development of aquaculture, and the sharp increase in costs resulting from crises such as Brexit, COVID-19, and the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, resulting in limited improvements to the market's self-sufficiency rate. We therefore welcome the report's recognition that the CFP has made only a moderate contribution to food security, as EU production has remained static or declined. In our view, greater efforts are needed to optimise the use of fishing quotas and unlock the potential of EU aquaculture.

The MAC recognised the EU's strong sustainability and governance framework of the fisheries and aquaculture value chain, including high standards on production and labour, control and monitoring, the fight against IUU fishing, data collection. These standards benefit operators, consumers, and society. However, operators must adapt to cost implications, which have not always been passed on to retail prices.

The MAC raised concerns about inconsistent implementation across Member States. Uneven implementation and control can undermine both sustainability and fairness. We therefore welcome the evaluation's acknowledgement of shortcomings in enforcement and compliance, particularly due to inefficiencies and implementation gaps. In our view, stronger enforcement is essential to deter IUU fishing and incentivise ecologically and socially responsible fisheries. Greater consistency is also needed in comparison with other food sectors in relation to general food legislation, including rules on hygiene, consumer information, contaminants, packaging, social standards, forced labour, and due diligence. In our view, better harmonisation across Member States would provide greater legal certainty for operators.

As EU production cannot meet market demand, the MAC highlighted that the CFP is complemented by trade policy and international partnerships. We welcome the report's recognition of the EU's active role in cooperating with third countries, facilitating access to non-

EU waters, improving the level playing field and combating IUU fishing. In our view, such partnerships should respect EU sustainability standards, support the competitiveness of EU producers and processors, and ensure equitable cooperation with developing coastal States. Capacity building should remain a core element of the EU's external engagement.

The MAC expressed concern with the recent decline in the consumption of fishery and aquaculture products. Sustainable fisheries management contributes to healthy fish stocks, greater supply and more stable prices. While the Commission and Member States prioritise food at affordable prices, compulsory legal standards progressively raised. Since recent policies have not improved the EU's self-sufficiency, trade plays a positive role in maintaining affordable prices. In our view, further consumer awareness campaigns are needed to promote sustainable consumption, highlighting the benefits of local supply chains, including EU-based processing industry, coastal communities, health, and gastronomic and cultural elements, and improve the social recognition of professions across the fisheries and aquaculture value chain.

The MAC highlighted the improvements in consumer information and labelling, particularly for fresh and frozen products, which make the EU a global leader. Consumer interest and understanding of some mandatory information varies, as the information on the scientific name or the FAO catch area code is more complex to understand, while information on origin/provenance might be easier to understand. Views within our membership differ on whether mandatory information requirements should be extended to processed products. There are members that support revising Article 35 of the CMO Regulation, including additional requirements for processed products and mass caterers, while others consider the current framework fit for purpose and favour encouraging voluntary information instead. Some members favour mandatory requirements on flag State information.

3. Exchange of views on the new Guidelines on the Functioning of the Advisory Councils – Intervention on behalf of the MAC (six minutes)

Across the ten years of operation, the membership of the Market Advisory Council continuously expanded. Presently, we are composed of 77 member organisations representing the entire fisheries and aquaculture value chain (primary producers, auctions, processors, traders, retailers trade unions) and other interest groups (environmental and development NGOs, consumer groups) from across the EU. As our area of competence covers the entire EU market, we expect that our membership will continue to grow.

To ensure a balanced representation of interests, besides the legally foreseen 60/40 allocation of seats in the Executive Committee, our General Assembly agreed on a specific distribution of the seats of the value chain: five seats for the catching sector, two seats for the aquaculture sector, seven seats for processors and retailers, and one seat for trade unions. In practice, the members generally prioritise the appointment of EU-level organisations to the Executive Committee, allowing for the representation of a broader range of stakeholders.

The Secretariat continuously maintains efforts to attract new members in underrepresented geographical areas and interests. In the context of the mentioned efforts, the Secretary General has held meetings with national and regional administrations to encourage awareness raising among their stakeholders. When attending policy events organised by EU stakeholders and EU institutions, the Secretary General makes efforts to raise awareness of the role of the MAC. The same approach is taken when attending international market-related events. In recent years, these efforts resulted in an increased number of representatives of aquaculture production and of other interest groups. In our view, a more proactive approach by the Member States is needed to encourage membership applications. When considering new members, the Member States should aim for a balanced representation of stakeholders, including across the value chain. When

engaging bilaterally with stakeholders, the Commission should also promote the Advisory Councils.

As demonstrated by an external performance review, the MAC benefits from transparent Rules of Procedure and working methods. Over the past years, we have developed guidelines for the functioning of our Focus Groups, the attendance of observers, and for reimbursements and allowances. We have also developed good working practices on the adoption of advice and for external representation. Our members and external partners have expressed general satisfaction with the functioning of our Advisory Council and the added value of our advice. Therefore, in our view, any potential new mechanisms for the Advisory Councils, such as 360-degree performance appraisals, training sessions for Chairs and Secretariats, or whistleblower mechanisms, should remain voluntary, allowing for alignment with the needs of individual Advisory Councils and avoiding unnecessary administrative burden and budgetary costs.

In our view, clarity on the areas of competence of the Advisory Councils, as defined in point 1 of Annex III of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation, would be welcomed. In our interpretation, the areas of competence are generally exclusive. While most Advisory Councils have a specific geographical scope for the management of the activities of the EU fleet, others have thematic competences. A different interpretation would lead to the dedication of public and private financial and human resources on duplicated activities, culminating in conflicting and non-representative advice. Therefore, Advisory Councils should refrain from holding exchanges and from advice on topics outside their individual area of competence.

We take the opportunity to encourage the provision of the financial operating grants by DG MARE in accordance with the aims and potential of each Advisory Council. The MAC faces increasing financial challenges due to a growing membership, holding of more meetings to address the priorities of the European Commission, and the provision of interpretation and translation. To

facilitate attendance by Commission representatives, we prioritise the organisation of meetings in Brussels. In the past years, that meant facing increasing costs with reimbursements and the rental of meeting venues and audiovisual equipment due to significant inflation. Additionally, in line with Article 7 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/242, the Commission should encourage Member States to provide voluntary financial contributions.

4. Update on the EU Strategy for Islands and the EU Strategy for Coastal Communities – intervention on behalf of the MAC

We welcome the adoption of strategies that acknowledge the specificities of island and coastal communities, their strong environmental, social and cultural assets and their potential to advance the sustainable blue economy, while also acknowledging the challenges due to climate change, pollution, unbalanced tourism, affordable housing shortage, and seasonality of economic activities.

Prior to the publication of the strategies, in April, the MAC submitted advice to the European Commission. The MAC called for the recognition of the fisheries and aquaculture value chain as a key pillar of coastal and island economies that contribute significantly to food sovereignty, employment, economic development, and environmental sustainability. In our view, the strategies must promote a full value chain approach, which includes fishers, aquaculture farmers, auctions, processors, traders, retailers and other stakeholders.

In our view, the strategies should aim to strengthen sustainable domestic production and processing capacity of fishery and aquaculture products within the EU, while also acknowledging the role of diversified raw materials to ensure supply security, industrial continuity, and value creation in coastal and island communities. The environmental and nutritional benefits of fishery and aquaculture products should be emphasised.

The strategies should also aim to support generational renewal, vocational training and upskilling linked to the fisheries and aquaculture value chain as well as cultural heritage initiatives. It is important to highlight and preserve the role of the value chain in the traditions, cultural heritage, and identity of people living in coastal and island communities.

Therefore, we welcome the recognition by the EU Strategy for Coastal Communities that the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, including the wide value chain, are the backbone of many coastal communities. We also welcome the recognition that these professions are deeply rooted in the EU's cultural heritage and vital for the EU's food supply, while aiming for sustainable management and long-term viability of the sector, local jobs, fair incomes, food security and generational renewal. The strategy mentions that limited job opportunities and seasonality undermine prosperity in some coastal areas. In the view of the MAC, future budget lines for the blue economy must support generational renewal, vocational training and upskilling.

The MAC welcomes the announcement of a proposal for a Blue Generational Renewal Strategy to attract young professional to blue careers and support long-term sustainability and innovation. In 2023, in relation to the European Year of Skills, the MAC called on the Commission to set up a Roadmap to address the significant recruitment difficulties faced by the fisheries and aquaculture value chain, such as inheritance and passing on of production tools, geographical distribution of production units, competition from other economic activities, gaps in skills, competitive disadvantages in salary levels, difficult working and living conditions on board, high training costs, lack of public vocational training, lack of attractiveness of the sector to the younger generation, and dependency on workers from third countries.

In terms of the funding for the implementation of the strategy, the MAC emphasises that, under the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework, the European Commission should ensure an adequate and dedicated fund for the fisheries and aquaculture value chain, at least maintaining



the allocation under the existing framework. We welcome the acknowledgment, under the EU Strategy for Coastal Communities, that effective governance requires meaningful involvement of stakeholders. In our view, that must include fisheries and aquaculture stakeholders.

We take the opportunity to thank you for inviting the Advisory Councils to attend the High-Level Conference on Islands and Coastal Communities held by the Cypriot Presidency of the Council and the European Commission.



Annex

Potential references of interest

- [Advice on “European Year of Skills” \(30 March 2023\)](#)
- [Letter on the future of the Multiannual Financial Framework \(15 April 2025\)](#)
- [Advice on “Evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy \(2014-2024\)” \(8 July 2025\)](#)
- [Advice on “Vision for Fisheries, Aquaculture and their Market in 2040” \(15 July 2025\)](#)
- [Advice on “EU Strategy for Fisheries External Action” \(17 November 2025\)](#)
- [Advice on "Upcoming EU Strategies for Coastal Communities and for Islands" \(24 April 2026\)](#)