

## Executive Committee

### Minutes

Friday 12 June (14:00 – 16:00 CEST)

Copa Cogeca - Brussels

Interpretation in EN, ES, FR

Welcome from the Chair, Yobana Bermúdez

#### [Presentation](#)

Adoption of the agenda and of the last meetings' minutes (24.03.26): adopted.

#### Action points:

- **State-of-play of the action points of the last meeting - information**
- AOB:
  - Secretary General to contact the Secretariats of the other Advisory Councils to expand the planned collaboration on the ceilings of de minimis State aid to cover also fisheries production as well as the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.
    - Joint AAC-MEDAC-NSAC-NWWAC-MAC-SWWAC Advice adopted on 24 April 2026.

#### Membership of the General Assembly

- **Endorsement of applications for membership**
  - **Assoittica**

#### [Presentation](#)

The Secretary General informed that the Italian organisation Assoittica Italia applied for membership. The request received the endorsement of the Italian authorities. He proceeded to read a statement sent in advance by the organisation on their profile and activities.

According to the statement, Assoittica Italia is the Italian national association representing companies active in the processing, marketing and distribution of seafood products. Founded in 1986, the association brings together more than 120 member companies, representing a combined turnover exceeding €15 billion and employing over 10,000 people.

The Association supports the entire seafood supply chain, dealing with food safety, traceability, sustainability, regulatory affairs, customs procedures, tariffs, international trade, seafood promotion and innovation. Its



member companies operate across the main segments of the sector, ranging from fresh, frozen and deep-frozen products to preserved and processed seafood products.

Over the years, Assoittica Italia has established collaborations with Ministries, Competent Authorities, Universities, Experimental Zooprophyllactic Institutes, research bodies, official laboratories and national and international organizations, while actively participating in the main technical working groups dedicated to the development of the seafood sector.

The Association is also engaged in training and international cooperation activities and collaborates with several partner countries to strengthen seafood supply chains, improve food safety, traceability and sustainability standards, and create new business opportunities. Cooperation agreements are currently in place with several African, Asian and Mediterranean countries.

Among its most recent international initiatives is the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) aimed at promoting training activities, technical assistance, access to the European market and business relations between Indian and Italian operators.

For several years, Assoittica Italia has promoted the Seafood Industry Academy, one of Italy's leading professional training programmes dedicated to the seafood sector, highly appreciated by companies, industry professionals and Competent Authorities.

The Association is strongly committed to the promotion and enhancement of seafood products and has developed NUTRIENinFISH, the largest nutritional database dedicated to fisheries and aquaculture products, which has become a reference tool for companies, researchers, health professionals and institutions.

Assoittica Italia collaborates on a regular basis with the FAO and numerous international partners on projects focused on seafood supply chain sustainability, food safety, professional capacity building and the empowerment of women in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

Assoittica Italia is also the founder of RE.N.IS.A.IT. – School of Fish Chefs, the Italian national network of hospitality and culinary institutes committed to promoting seafood culture and training future professionals in the restaurant and hospitality sectors.

*The Executive Committee endorsed Assoittica Italia as a member.*

### European Market Observatory for Fisheries and Aquaculture Products

- **Presentation of the study “Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit and the Russian War of Aggression against Ukraine on the EU Fishery and Aquaculture Sector” by EUMOFA expert**

[Presentation](#)



Margrét Alsvik (EUMOFA) presented the findings of an EUMOFA study on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit and the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine on the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector over the period 2019 to 2024. Ms Alsvik explained that the objective of the analysis was not only to document the effects of these crises, but also to understand how different shocks were transmitted across the value chain, how stakeholders adapted, and how resilience emerged within the sector. She stressed that the period should be interpreted as a cumulative stress test, as the shocks did not occur in isolation but overlapped, forcing the sector into continuous adjustment rather than sequential recovery.

Ms Alsvik underlined that, in order to understand why these shocks had such a strong impact, it was essential to consider the structure of the EU aquatic food market. She explained that the market is highly interconnected and strongly dependent on imports, with approximately 65% import dependency and a relatively low level of self-sufficiency, particularly for key products. 44% of EU aquatic food consumption is concentrated in five product groups: tuna, salmon, Alaska pollock, shrimps and cod, making the EU the world's largest import market, and linking domestic consumption patterns to global events far beyond EU borders.

Ms Alsvik explained that the high degree of interconnection brings efficiency, but also increases vulnerability, as disruptions can be transmitted rapidly throughout the system. She provided an overview of the three main shocks analysed in the study, describing how each of them triggered different transmission mechanisms and responses along the value chain. The Covid-19 pandemic primarily acted as a demand shock, leading to the collapse of the foodservice sector and pushing operators to rapidly shift towards retail channels, while also accelerating digitalisation. Brexit represented a trade shock, creating new barriers and administrative burdens, leading to a rerouting of trade flows and resulting in structural and lasting adjustments, including reduced fishing opportunities. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine created a cost shock, with rising energy and input costs and increased market uncertainty affecting the entire value chain.

Ms Alsvik highlighted that the most pronounced response was observed during the period following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, when cost pressures intensified. She pointed out that price became a central adjustment mechanism and that fresh products showed greater volatility compared to frozen products. She explained that this difference reflects the characteristics of the products, particularly in terms of shelf life, storage possibilities and dependence on specific market channels.

Ms Alsvik emphasised that product characteristics play a key role in determining resilience. She explained that fresh, live and time-sensitive products are more exposed to disruptions, especially when they rely on foodservice and rapid logistics, whereas frozen, prepared and retail-ready products are better able to absorb shocks thanks to their storage flexibility and stronger alignment with retail demand.

Ms Alsvik provided the example of salmon, which proved relatively resilient despite higher feed and energy costs, due to its diversified channels, strong retail presence and continued export performance. Alaska pollock also demonstrated resilience, benefiting from stable sourcing and adaptability in processing. Seabass



and seabream were more exposed, as they depend on fresh distribution channels and Mediterranean tourism markets, but that the sector showed adaptability by redirecting volumes towards retail and export markets. Fresh cod was particularly affected, as declining catches combined with rising costs reinforced existing supply constraints across the value chain. Oysters were among the most exposed products due to their dependence on foodservice, while mussels were also affected but proved somewhat more resilient due to a broader range of market channels and less premium positioning.

Ms Alsvik explained that the response of the sector was shaped by four key factors, namely shelf life, dependence on market channels, storage flexibility and the adaptability of supply chains, which together explain the uneven impact observed across products and segments. She emphasised that energy emerged as the common denominator across all crises. The energy shock extended well beyond production, affecting fisheries through fuel costs, aquaculture through increased feed and energy expenses, processing and distribution through higher costs, and ultimately consumers through increased prices. She mentioned that this led to changes in consumption patterns, with a shift towards lower-cost and more shelf-stable products, and that prices remain above pre-crisis levels, continuing to influence competitiveness and demand.

Ms Alsvik underscored that the three crises affected the sector in different ways, that their impacts were uneven across products and value chain segments, and that adaptation and flexibility were essential to maintaining resilience. She stressed that energy had become the dominant driver across the system and that understanding how shocks are transmitted through this highly interconnected market is key to interpreting current developments and anticipating future risks for the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector.

- **Exchange of views**

Dominic Rihan (KFO) welcomed the presentation and requested information on where the study was available for consultation.

Katarina Šipic (Seafood Europe) commented that the presentation accurately reflected the succession of shocks experienced by the sector in the recent years. Ms Šipic wondered about how the findings of the report related to the disruptions observed in the market, particularly with the introduction of new rules and legislation. She further wondered whether such studies were read and taken into account by the policymakers.

Margrét Alsvik (EUMOFA) informed that the study was available on the official website of EUMOFA. Ms Alsvik responded that her fellow experts in EUMOFA read the published studies.

Gerd Heinen (DG MARE) emphasised that the data and analyses provided by EUMOFA were read and taken into considering within the European Commission.



Laurène Jolly (DG MARE) highlighted that the data of EUMOFA was used in the development of the recent evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation. The data of EUMOFA was generally used to support the policy work of the European Commission.

### Working Groups

- **Reporting by Julien Lamothe (Chair of Working Group 1)**

Julien Lamothe (EAPO) informed that, at the meeting of 11 June 2026 of Working Group 1:

- Members held an exchange of views on the evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation – the Working Group agreed to continue following the developments related to the evaluation.
- The Head of Unit of MARE A4 delivered a presentation of the evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy, focusing on the Market Organisation aspects.
- DG MARE representatives delivered a presentation on an initial simplification assessment for simplification and reduction of administrative burden in the context of the Common Market Organisation – the Working Group agreed to proceed with the circulation of a questionnaire to collect feedback.
- The Deputy Head of Unit of MARE D3 delivered a presentation on the proposed expenditure tracking and performance framework under the next Multiannual Financial Framework – the Working Group agreed to proceed with the circulation of a questionnaire, so that draft advice can be considered at the next meeting.
- The Deputy Head of Unit of MARE D3 also delivered a presentation on the emergency measures to face the ongoing crisis due to the conflict in the Middle East.

- **Reporting by Stefan Meyer (Chair of Working Group 2)**

The Secretary General, on behalf of the Chair of Working Group 2, informed that, at the meeting of 11 June 2026 of Working Group 2:

- DG MARE representatives provided an update on trade agreements and trade policy instruments, focusing specifically on the market access offers under the Free Trade Agreement with Australia, the market access offers under the Free Trade Agreement with India, the adoption of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with Indonesia, and the relationship with the USA – the Working Group agreed to proceed with the development of advice on the EU-Mexico Free Trade Agreement.



- DG MARE representatives provided an update on the preparation of the next legislative proposal for fishery and aquaculture products, including the planned improvement to the sustainability of imported products.
- DG MARE representatives provided an overview of the existing procedures and dialogues and third countries concerning Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing.
- A Dutch operator shared her practical experience with the use of CATCH – DG MARE representatives also provided an update on the implementation of the system.
- The planned agenda point on traceability was postponed, as the expected draft delegated act has not yet been made available by the European Commission.

- **Reporting by Benoît Thomassen (Chair of Working Group 3)**

Benoît Thomassen (FEAP) informed that, at the meeting of 12 June 2026 of Working Group 3:

- A DG SANTE representative delivered a presentation on measures to address chlordecone contamination in fishery and aquaculture products – the Working Group agreed to, at the initiative of the Outermost Regions Advisory Council, proceed with the development of joint advice on the mentioned matter.
- An FAO representative presented a recent report on “Food Fraud in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector”.
- A DG SANTE representative presented TraceMAP, a new traceability tool of the European Commission to address food fraud.
- An EFSA representative presented a scientific report on the frequency of consumption of different fish, crustacean and mollusc species contributing to methylmercury exposure and consumer awareness of national advice on their consumption.
- A DG ENV representative provided an update on the limit values for PFAS in food-contact packaging foreseen in the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation.

### External Representation

- **European Ocean Board (Brussels, 31 March 2026) by Pedro Reis Santos (Secretary General)**



The Secretary General recalled that the first meeting of the European Ocean Board took place, in Brussels, on 31 March 2026. He further recalled that the Ocean Board was established in the context of the European Ocean Pact. The MAC, like several other Advisory Councils, was participating as an observer.

The Secretary General reported that, at the meeting, Commissioner Kadis emphasised the various pillars of the European Ocean Pact. The main aims of the European Ocean Pact were to advise on the implementation of the Pact, provide strategic counsel on potential threats and opportunities, and to foster dialogue among stakeholders. At the meeting, the Commissioner explicitly acknowledged the role of the Advisory Councils as the main consultative bodies, at regional level, on fisheries, as foreseen under the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation. Therefore, the aim of the Ocean Board was to complement existing structures, facilitating high-level cross-sectoral exchanges.

The Secretary General also reported that, at the meeting, Director-General Vitcheva drew attention to the importance of the evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy, the 2040 Vision for Fisheries and Aquaculture, and the upcoming Energy Transition Partnership Roadmap. The Ocean Board would be complemented with the European Ocean Pact Dashboard, a platform to monitor the implementation of the Pact, and with a periodical report called “State of the Ocean Pact Report”.

The Secretary General further reported that, in his final remarks, Commissioner Kadis emphasised the urgency for action to address existing policy gaps, the importance of moving to revert the degradation of the marine environment, the efforts for simplification and reduction of administrative burden, and the importance of supporting the blue economy sectors, in line with the three pillars of sustainability. Furthermore, the Commissioner emphasised the need for resources, for which the proposal on the Multiannual Financial Frameworks served as good basis. According to the Commissioner, the proposal referenced the priorities of the Ocean Pact, while the co-legislators were expected to further increase the visibility of the mentioned priorities.

The Secretary General informed that, at the meeting, under two rounds of interventions, the members of the Board were invited to share their views on the expected added value of the new structure, on the strategic priorities of the Ocean Pact, and on the expected success and impact. The responses were generally positive. As an observer, he had the opportunity to present the MAC and to call for the recognition of the fisheries and aquaculture value chain as strategic to ensure food security in the EU and globally.

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) commented that the new structures put in place by the European Commission, such as the European Ocean Board and the Implementation Dialogues, seemed to provide limited added value and impact. Mr Ojeda argued that the new structures should not divert away from addressing the real needs of the sector. He called for the development of a business-friendly environment for EU aquaculture production and for increased competitiveness across the value chain. In his view, there had been positive developments in other Directorates of the Commission, but limited progress in DG MARE.



The Chair acknowledged the limitations of the new structures, but emphasised the relevance of maintaining a constructive and positive approach, in order for the Commission's initiatives to provide positive results.

The Secretary General expressed understanding for the points raised by Mr Ojeda, but added that the new structures provided an additional opportunity to share key messages to the Commissioner and his Cabinet.

Katarina Šipic (Seafood Europe) expressed full agreement with Mr Ojeda. In her view, the challenges faced by the industry were not being reflected into policy, as the approach of DG MARE seemed increasingly similar to that of DG ENV. The new structures seemed to provide limited added value, instead translating into a duplication of discussions. Ms Šipic mentioned that her organisation, despite representing 70% of the fishery and aquaculture products consumed in the EU, had not been accepted as a member of the European Ocean Board. In the case of previous high-level exchanges organised by the European Commission, her organisation had also not been invited.

- **Third EU-China Blue Partnership Forum for the Ocean (Brussels, 20 April 2026) by Christine Absil (Vice-Chair)**

Christine Absil (Good Fish) recalled that the Third EU-China Blue Partnership Forum for the Ocean took place, in Brussels, on 20 April 2026. The partnership had been in place for several years, with meetings alternating between the EU and China. The MAC was invited to participate as a stakeholder.

Ms Absil explained that the meeting was structured around two main sessions. The first session focused on strengthening ocean observation, to enable a sustainable blue economy. The EU and China presented their efforts for global ocean data collection and their observation systems. In her view, these initiatives were quite relevant, as the recent reduction of the USA's budget for ocean observation was expected to impact global data connectivity and knowledge sharing.

Ms Absil further explained that the second session focused on the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. At the meeting, Chinese representatives presented their programmes and procedures on this matter, emphasising their commitment to the mentioned fight, including through legal references to the Port State Measures Agreement. She added that, during the meeting, there had been limited opportunity for the participants to engage in discussion or pose questions.

- **Advisory Board of the European Fisheries Control Agency (Vigo, 21 April 2026) by Violaine De Neef (Administrative Officer)**

The Administrative Officer informed that the 21 April 2026 meeting of the Advisory Board of the European Fisheries Control Agency, she drew attention to several pieces of advice adopted by the MAC, namely on the upcoming EU Strategy for Fisheries External Action, on the Terms of Reference of the 2026 edition of the STECF Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet, on competitiveness, and on the ongoing negotiations for an EU-UK SPS Agreement. At the meeting, she also shared information on ongoing work, including the



development of advice on the operational stabilisation and strategic alignment of CATCH, the upcoming studies on the administrative burden linked to the Fisheries Control Regulation, and on addressing risks in global squid fisheries through strengthened import controls and enhanced transparency.

- **EU Agri-Food Chain Observatory (Online, 5 May 2026) by Yobana Bermúdez (Chair)**

The Chair informed that the EU Agri-Food Chain Observatory met online on 5 May 2026. At the meeting, retail representatives delivered presentations emphasising the role of their sector in maintaining food supply, including affordability, during the recent crises. The presentations highlighted changes in consumer behaviour, particularly in purchasing patterns. Issues like organic production or sustainability became less of a priority for consumers. Additionally, the market also showed an increased concentration of retail brands.

The Chair commented that, although the Observatory mainly focused on agricultural products, the discussions were also relevant for the sector of fishery and aquaculture products. The discussions showed how rising prices were expected to continue affecting demand negatively due to high uncertainty, reducing the consumers' willingness to spend. According to the information shared by the retail sector, the market had not fully recovered and was unlikely to return to the pre-crises patterns, resulting in lasting impacts on profitability.

The Secretary General added that, at the meeting, representatives of the Austrian and Belgian administrations presented their mediation offices, which allowed primary producers, primarily farmers, to anonymously draw attention to difficulties related to their position in the value chain. Furthermore, DG AGRI representatives delivered a presentation on the impact of inflation on food prices. He informed that, in the context of that presentation, he asked whether the data covered fishery and aquaculture products. According to the reply provided, the general data came from Eurostat, covering fishery and aquaculture products, even though the specific examples in the presentation related to agricultural products.

- **European Maritime Day (Limassol, 21-22 May 2026) by Pedro Reis Santos (Secretary General)**

The Secretary General recalled that the 2026 edition of the European Maritime Day, which included a wide range of panels and workshops, took place on 21 and 22 May in Limassol, Cyprus.

The Secretary General informed that Commissioner Kadis, in his opening speech, underscored several structural challenges faced by the fisheries and aquaculture sector, including insufficient aquaculture production, vulnerabilities in the processing sector, dependency on imported raw materials, and concerns about the level playing field and the different environmental, social, and control standards of imported products. The Commissioner called for an increase in resilience, including socio-economic considerations. The Commissioner anticipated that the 2040 Vision for Fisheries and Aquaculture would cover the entire value chain, covering various issues, including labour dynamics, spatial planning, access to financing, and megatrends (e.g., climate change, geopolitical shifts, ageing population, and work-life balance).



The Secretary General drew attention to a panel on the next Multiannual Financial Framework, which included a Greek Minister and two MEPs, that demonstrated the different views of the co-legislations concerning the Commission's proposal. While the representatives of the European Parliament expressed deep concerns, the Greek representative seemed more supportive of the legislative proposal.

The Secretary General informed that the Advisory Councils organised a workshop dedicated to small-scale coastal fisheries, marina spatial planning, and co-management, which was coordinated by the Mediterranean Advisory Council, the Baltic Sea Advisory Council, the North Western Water Advisory Council, and the North Sea Advisory Council. The workshop was positively received by the participants. Commissioner Kadis volunteered to deliver an opening speech at the workshop. In his speech, the Commissioner underscored the important role of the Advisory Councils and informed that a proposal of a code of conduct for the Advisory Councils would be presented at the Inter-Advisory Councils meeting of 15 July 2026.

## AOB

- **Implementation Dialogue on EU Aquaculture Policy**

The Secretary General recalled that the Implementation Dialogues were an initiative of the European Commission, as part of the broader simplification targets. Each Commissioner was expected to hold two Implementation Dialogues per year. He informed that the MAC was invited to participate in the Implementation Dialogue on EU Aquaculture Policy, which would take place on 30 June 2026 in Brussels. Yobana Bermúdez, as Chair, would attend on behalf of the MAC.

The Secretary General informed that the Implementation Dialogue was going to be structured into two parts. The first part was on the overall EU legislative framework applicable to aquaculture, while the second part was dedicated to the use of alien and locally absent species in aquaculture and to organic aquaculture. Each representative would be allowed two interventions of three minutes each.

The Secretary General explained that he was preparing the draft mandate for the Chair's intervention. For the first part, there would be references to the stagnation of EU aquaculture production, the decrease in the consumption of fishery and aquaculture products, the importance of EU funding, the role of Producer Organisations, traceability rules, and level playing field and trade with fair conditions, in line with previously adopted advice. He encouraged the members to share their views, particularly on the topics under the second part, as the MAC did not have approved positions on alien species or on organic production.

Bertrand Charron (ASC) concerning alien species and the mitigation of risks associated with escapes of farmed fish species, emphasised that his organisation engaged internationally with academia, the global aquaculture industry, and other environmental NGOs for close to two decades on the mentioned topic. In his view, the introduction of non-native or alien species, often driven by human activities, including in aquaculture, posed significant concerns for natural ecosystems, which can in turn have many societal impacts.



Mr Charron underscored that farmed fish escapes are a major topic of concern, which gets much traction in the media at local, national and international level, and plays a significant role in potentially shaping negatively consumers' perception of the sustainability of aquaculture in the EU and in many other world regions. Escapes are also linked to detrimental economic sustainability impacts. Addressing effectively this topic can thus directly and favourably impact the EU industry's social license to operate, which in turn also supports increases in EU production, while also supporting the sustainability-linked investments of companies demonstrating low biodiversity impacts.

Mr Charron explained that assessments regarding the prevention and mitigation of negative genetic diversity due to alien species, and thus biodiversity, impacts linked to escapes should be based on having a good, science-based, verifiable data and impact-driven knowledge. This starts with mapping/defining and assessing what those impacts can be, measuring, and monitoring them, in order to better prevent these impacts from occurring. It also entails the setting of regular and measurable Key Performance Indicators. Furthermore, there is a need for transparency of that data and of impactful events related to escapes, at local, regional, industry, and EU Member States's levels.

Mr Charron argued that those considerations concerning the use of alien and locally absent species in aquaculture in this regulation (EC) N° 708/2007 should also provide unambiguous clarity to consumers as regards transgenic aquatic animals; which can also fall under the definition of alien species. He added that, while no such transgenic animals have been authorised to-date for commercial farming, cultivation, or food use within the European Union; it would be important to future-proof the Regulation by including transgenic / genetically modified animals in the definition of "alien species".

Mr Charron highlighted that, since the movement of alien and locally absent species held in closed aquaculture facilities falls outside the scope of the current Regulation, and considering that even such closed-contained facilities have not been immune to suffering from escape incidents, the Commission should consider banning transgenic species in such closed-contained facilities as well as in any aquaculture facilities. This would future proof the Regulation and remain consistent with the current horizontal framework on Genetically Modified Organisms in the EU, and with the strict application of the precautionary principle, also currently in effect, regards to the non-authorisation of any genetically modified animal for human consumption in the EU.

Mr Charron recommended that, in order to facilitate the implementation and opportunities for simplification of the Regulation, the Commission should update Annex II regarding procedures and minimum elements to be addressed in an Environmental Risk Assessment by using more recent and scientifically internationally recognised methodology based on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Environmental Impact Classification for Alien Taxa for categorising, assessing, and informing practical regional and species-specific impact-mitigation mechanisms in EU aquaculture.



Javier Ojeda (FEAP) expressed some frustration with the continued requests from the European Commission to identify the challenges faced by the EU aquaculture sector, even though these were widely known. Nevertheless, his organisation would be participating in the Implementation Dialogue. Mr Ojeda recalled that, in line with the areas of competence foreseen in the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation, the MAC's intervention should be focused on market aspects, not on primary production ones.

Mr Ojeda informed that, at the Implementation Dialogue, his organisation would be raising attention to the challenges posed by the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation. FEAP would also be sharing views on the labelling of caviar products. In their view, the consumer information rules foreseen in the Food Information to Consumers Regulation provided limited information on the country of origin, potentially misleading consumers. Therefore, the issue should be addressed at the EU-level.

Mr Ojeda, concerning the market for organic aquaculture products, commented that there were limited developments. While some consumers expressed preference for “natural” products, these consumers tended not to understand organic aquaculture products and favour wild caught products. Concerning the use of alien and locally absent species, he expressed doubts about the relevance of the topic.

The Secretary General recalled that, in the past, the MAC adopted advice on the impacts of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation and also on the labelling of caviar products. Therefore, these issues could be taken into consideration in the draft mandate. The Secretary General acknowledged that, in line with the foreseen areas of competence, the MAC's intervention would have to be focused on market-related aspects. As such, some of the points raised by Mr Charron might not be included.

The Chair encouraged the members to actively contribute to the development of the mandate. The Chair informed that a written consultation would be launched to formally approve the mandate.

- **Letter from the Association of Polish Fish Producers (ZPPR)**

The Secretary General informed that, on 9 June, the Chair received a letter from the Association of Polish Fish Producers (ZPPR) requesting an urgent review of the travel reimbursement ceilings as well as participation support measures for small-scale fishers, producers, processors, and local traders.

The Secretary General outlined that, according to the letter, the current reimbursement framework was established several years ago and no longer appeared to reflect the actual costs of participation in meetings. Since its adoption, travel and accommodation costs across the European Union increased significantly. In this regard, it was noteworthy that, in 2025, the European Commission revised its own mission expenditure framework through Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2025/693, recognising the substantial increase in accommodation and subsistence costs throughout the European Union. In their view, the mentioned development justified a reassessment of the reimbursement ceilings applied in the MAC.



In the letter, ZPPR highlighted that, in several Advisory Councils, the Executive Committees determined ceilings above the reference rates in the Commission's guidance when justified by actual costs. Such arrangements could be accepted by the European Commission provided that the overall budget remained justified and compliant with the grant agreement.

In the letter, ZPPR recalled that the European Commission and the European Parliament repeatedly emphasised the importance of supporting the participation of small-scale coastal fishers in fisheries governance and in the consultations of the Advisory Councils. Effective participation is an important objective of the Common Fisheries Policy and of the Advisory Councils system. In their view, the MAC should ensure effective participation by the smaller operators. As Baltic operators face quota reductions, fishery closures and a continuing crisis in Baltic fish supply, participation costs may constitute a significant barrier. Therefore, the MAC should consider introducing targeted participation support measures for small-scale coastal supply chain representatives. They provided the example of support measures in the Baltic Sea Advisory Council.

In the letter, ZPPR argued that the MAC benefits from regular adjustments of its annual grant, including the standard annual increases applied by the European Commission in recent years, but that these did not seem to be reflected in the reimbursement ceilings available to the members.

The Secretary General recalled that, in 2023, the Executive Committee reviewed the guidelines for reimbursement and allowances due to travel, accommodation, and subsistence expenses, which included a significant increase in the ceilings. Under the revised ceilings, members could receive a maximum reimbursement for travel costs of EUR 350, an accommodation allowance of EUR 168 per night, and a daily subsistence allowance of EUR 113. The subsistence allowance was received in full regardless of the provision of lunch at the corresponding meeting.

The Secretary General highlighted the continued increase in the number of members, reaching almost 80 member organisations, which placed additional pressure on the budget. The increasing membership meant additional costs with reimbursements, rental of meeting venues, catering services, and rental of audiovisual equipment. He recalled that, in the previous operational year, the MAC faced a budgetary deficit. In the preceding year, the execution rate of the budget was around 98%. Under the current operational year, considering the organisation of the February 2026 meetings in Ostend and the organisation of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary event, a small deficit was likely to occur. In the next operational year, as foreseen in Article 7a of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/242, the MAC was legally obliged to undertake an external performance review. The cost of the mentioned review would likely be around EUR 15,000, further limiting the available budgetary flexibility.

The Secretary General argued that, in his view, there was insufficient budgetary availability to review the existing ceilings. While the European Commission usually provided an annual increase of 2% of the operating grant, which was meant to reflect inflation, the increase would be insufficient to cover higher ceilings, particularly in the context of an increasing membership. Therefore, in his view, a review of the ceilings would



only be possible if, under the next periodical review of the operating grant by DG MARE, there was a significant increase in the amount attributed to the MAC. He encouraged the members to share their views.

The Chair suggested to maintain the request from ZPPR in mind during the preparations of the next annual budget, even though a review of the reimbursement and allowance ceilings would likely only be possible following a review of the operating grant by DG MARE. The Chair suggested to send a response to ZPPR, encouraging them to wait for the outcome of the mentioned developments.

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) expressed agreement with the proposed approach.

- **High-Level Conference on Islands & Coastal Communities**

The Secretary General recalled that, earlier that week, the European Commission published the Strategy for Coastal Communities and the Strategy for Islands. The Secretary General informed that, on 26 June 2026, the Cypriot Presidency of the Council and the Commission would be holding a high-level conference in Paphos, Cyprus, to present the new strategies. The Chairs of the Advisory Councils were invited to attend. A “save the date” had been received, but further details, including the programme, were still pending.

The Secretary General informed that the Chair and the Vice-Chairs were not available to attend the high-level conference. While he could potentially attend, the travel costs from Brussels were significantly high. He encouraged the members to express their availability to participate on behalf of the MAC, in case travel arrangements would be easier for specific members of the Executive Committee.



### Summary of action points

- AOB
  - Secretariat to launch a written procedure for the approval of the mandate for the Implementation Dialogue on EU Aquaculture Policy.
  - Reply to be sent to the Association of Polish Fish Producers informing that any potential review of the ceilings of the travel reimbursements and allowances would depend on budgetary developments.
  - Interested members to express their availability to attend the High-Level Conference on Islands & Coastal Communities on behalf of the MAC.



## Attendance list

| Representative                | Organisation                                           | Role     |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Alessandro Manghisi           | AQUACULTURE STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL (ASC)                  | Member   |
| Anna Rokicka                  | POLISH ASSOCIATION OF FISH PROCESSORS                  | Member   |
| Aodh O'Donnell                | IRISH FISH PRODUCERS ORGANISATION (IFPO)               | Observer |
| Bertrand Charron              | AQUACULTURE STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL (ASC)                  | Member   |
| Christine Absil               | GOOD FISH                                              | Member   |
| Dominic Rihan                 | KILLYBEGS FISHERMEN'S ORGANISATION                     | Member   |
| Emiel Brouckaert              | EAPO                                                   | Member   |
| Gerd Heinen                   | EUROPEAN COMMISSION                                    | Expert   |
| India Kennedy                 | IRISH FISH PRODUCERS ORGANISATION (IFPO)               | Observer |
| Javier Ojeda                  | FEAP                                                   | Member   |
| Jean Marie Robert             | PÊCHEURS DE BRETAGNE PO                                | Member   |
| John Lynch                    | ISEFPO (IRISH SOUTH & EAST FISH PRODUCER ORGANISATION) | Observer |
| Juan Manuel Trujillo Castillo | ETF                                                    | Member   |
| Jules Danto                   | EAPO                                                   | Member   |
| Julien Daudu                  | ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOUNDATION (EJF)                 | Member   |
| Julien Lamothe                | EAPO                                                   | Member   |
| Linne Verhoeven               | SEAFOOD EUROPE                                         | Member   |
| Luís Sousa                    | ALIF                                                   | Member   |
| Margrét Alsvik                | EUMOFA                                                 | Expert   |
| Matthew Gréant                | ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOUNDATION (EJF)                 | Member   |
| Monika Kołodziejczyk          | POLAND                                                 | Observer |



| Representative            | Organisation            | Role        |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Pablo Cadarso Rebolledo   | CONXEMAR                | Member      |
| Patrick Murphy            | IS&WFPO                 | Observer    |
| Pedro Reis Santos         | MARKET ADVISORY COUNCIL | Secretariat |
| Sarah Hautier             | EUROCOMMERCE            | Member      |
| Tamas Eisenberger         | SEAFOOD EUROPE          | Member      |
| Violaine De Neef          | MARKET ADVISORY COUNCIL | Secretariat |
| Yobana Bermúdez Rodríguez | SEAFOOD EUROPE          | Chair       |

