



Ms Charlina Vitcheva
Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
European Commission
Jozef II-straat 99
1000 Brussels
Belgium

Dun Laoghaire/ Madrid/ Brussels/ Zoetermeer/ Rome/ Lorient, 27 May 2024

Dear Ms Vitcheva,

Subject: "Fishers of the Future" EU-wide participatory foresight project

The NWWAC, LDAC, MAC, PelAC, MEDAC, and SWWAC welcome DG MARE's "Fishers of the Future" initiative which provides a means to collect valuable socio-economic data on the EU fishing industry and to improve the knowledge regarding the make-up of the sector, with the aim of examining the future role of fishers in society up to 2050.

AC members and Secretariats attended the first workshop of this project held on 19 March in Brussels. Some also attended the two follow-up workshops held as part of the event. While the ACs support the initiative, doubts have been raised in relation to the methodology developed by the project consultants as well as the results of a survey of fishers carried out as part of the project as presented at the workshop held on 19 March.

Our members have particularly expressed doubts regarding the theoretical profiles developed during the first phase of this project. These profiles seem rather simplistic and do not fully capture the full and diverse reality of the EU fishing industry. Some sectors across EU Member States seem not to be represented, both in terms of geographical coverage as well as fleet segments. The survey is quite limited in terms of representativeness in sampling coverage (less than 200 responses), which instead should proportionally reflect the geographical distribution and socio-economic contexts of fishing activities and of the various fleet segments.



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The NWWAC, LDAC, MAC, PelAC, MEDAC and SWWAC believe that the lack of consultation with fishers in certain Member States (Spain, France, Belgium, Netherlands or Ireland), fishing ports and communities means that relevant key profiles have been left out leading to a potential bias which is felt will limit the relevancy of the results of the study. We would suggest the survey be extended to cover the major fishing ports and sectors not covered and the profiles revised to better reflect the structure and distribution of the current EU fishing fleet.

The whole process would have benefited from a longer timeframe and deeper engagement with all stakeholders and a more representative participation of all fishers from all EU sea basins. The ACs working with the industry representative groups would be happy to facilitate these additional surveys and assist in the formulation of additional profiles.

The ACs also have some concerns regarding the transparency and clarity of the objectives in relation to the project, including on the outcomes of the qualitative interviews on the grounds, the study and the organisation of the workshops which has hindered engagement. The ACs consider it vital that all further work is carried out with a maximum level of stakeholder engagement, information exchange and meaningful consultation during the next phases of this project. In this context, it is important to highlight that the use of only one working language in the participatory event and in workshops contributed to the exclusion of a significant part of stakeholders.

While the foresight project is focused on the evolution of the profession until 2050, in terms of content, the Advisory Councils feel that it is not realistic to think today about the fishers of the future in 2050, when we are not able to analyse whether, in the current situation, we will be able to reach 2025 or 2030 with a sufficiently solid and sustainable sector. The difficulties identified are current, not future, and it would be reasonable to seek to correct them now, not in 2050.

The project should also carefully look at and analyse at present and past trends that can affect the future of the fishery sector and explore various scenario based on the changing weight of these trends. The outcomes of the project should also clarify how future fishers will contribute to food security and to ensuring the supply of seafood to the EU market, while also addressing the role of fishers in reaching the environmental objectives the union is bound to achieve.

In conclusion, it is essential that the diversity of the entire EU fleet is considered and represented in this important project, ensuring the relevance, and added value of the results. This should be a condition sine qua non for the EU as a basis for any future policy recommendations derived from this project. In this regard, it would be useful to understand how the outcomes of the project will link in with the recently announced full evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy.



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Additionally, it would be important to understand if additional projects or initiatives are being considered in conjunction or as a follow up to the current project.

Thank you for your attention on this matter, we look forward to your feedback.

Yours sincerely,

Emiel Brouckaert
NWWAC Chair

Iván López van der Veen
LDAC Chair

Yobana Bermúdez
MAC Chair

Sean O'Donoghue
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Antonio Marzoa Notlevsen
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