

REPORT

Meeting: **NSAC/NWWAC Social Aspects FG**
 Parties: **NSAC/NWWAC FG members**
 Date and time: **11 March 2024**
 Location: **Zoom**
 Chair: **Peter Breckling, NSAC Vice-Chair**
 Rapporteur: **Tamara Talevska, NSAC Secretariat**

1 Welcome and introduction [Chair]

Peter Breckling, the NSAC Vice-chair, stepping in for Kenn Skau Fischer, FG Chair, in his absence, welcomed the participants.

He indicated that the meeting served as orientation and initial discussion on the agenda topics, during which members were to identify the need to prepare advice either through a subsequent meeting or a written procedure.

Apologies were delivered for Kenn Skau Fischer, the Chair of this FG.

2 Report from the previous meeting [NSAC Secretariat]

Paper 2.1 Report of meeting of 6 November 2023

No comments were received on the report of the previous meeting. The report was therefore considered approved.

2.2 Actions from previous meeting

Talevska read through previously agreed actions and elaborated on their status as follows:

Action	Responsible	Status
Secretariat to share presentations of GLAZ and IMP with FG members.	Secretariat	<i>Complete</i>
Members to deliver feedback on Generational Renewal and Recreational Fisheries draft advice before Friday, 10 November, 14:00 CET. If no feedback will be delivered,	FG members	<i>Complete, advice adopted on 21 December and</i>

the approval procedure in the AC's Executive Committees will be started.		<i>submitted in January</i>
Members to consider working on the development of a joint NSAC/NWWAC advice on substance consumption in the fishing sector.	FG members	<i>Ongoing</i>
Members to inform the Secretariat if interested to join the EFARO webinar on the need and use of socio-data.	FG members	<i>Complete</i>

3 DG MARE stakeholder consultation on social data in fisheries and Article 17

3.1 Development of social indicators

Regarding the development of social indicators, the Chair informed that DG MARE launched a stakeholder consultation on social indicators and Article 17. The papers, particularly the STECF EWG report, were circulated and considered by the members. The Chair noted that many topics on identified priorities¹ were already covered in earlier advice, notably advice on generational renewal, and queried whether there are any comments regarding topics not covered in previous advice.

Ment van der Zwan, member of the Social Dialogue for Sea Fisheries, noted that the concept of 'social indicators' is not clear.

The Chair responded that those are used to better understand fishers' reality and are based on collected data, which are used to calculate the indicators. However, he admitted that this is to some degree open to interpretation. The role of Advisory Councils (ACs) is to help identify the priorities.

Patrick Murphy, IS&WFPO, wondered if priorities for social indicators are meant for operators or ACs, presuming a difference. As a priority area for Irish operators, he underlined the reduction and decline in processing and the ability to deliver the product, noting that some issues are shared by BIM.

Johnny Woodlock, ISS, highlighted the issue of viability of the industry in the future due to the recent habitat restoration laws being passed in the EU. There is a high ambition on MPAs, with a lack of consideration on how this will affect the number of fishers in the future. Some of the eNGOs advocate for the introduction of 30% of MPAs, the majority of them believing no fishing should be allowed in these areas. This will be no "business as usual" in the future fisheries, he noted.

¹ 7 policy priorities identified by the Commission as essential to grasp the social reality of fishers: state of play, assessment of conservation and management measures, dependency, mobility, immaterial value, generational renewal, engagement & compliance. The STECF concluded that the list of potential indicators was too high to allow the Expert Working Group to operationalize them into concrete data calls (5). It, therefore, suggested that the Commission engage in discussions with the wider stakeholder community to prioritise and identify the most relevant policy questions.

The Chair agreed that fishers must find a way to defend their fishing grounds. In the German North Sea, German scientists started mapping out fishing grounds and fishing effort in light of Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) projects proliferation and the future challenges in MSP.

Ment van der Zwan noted that one issue is fishers assuming that the government has the data and knowledge when they do not, hampering the discussion on trade-offs/priorities (food vs. nature conservation). He marked it as an “important and biggest mistake of the fishing industry”.

Johnny Woodlock remarked that there was a lack of consultation with the industry before the ORE maps were drawn, also adding that displacement of effort to areas where fishing has not happened before must be avoided.

The Chair noted that in Germany there is a number of Offshore Windfarms (OWFs) under construction already, every project has a significant amount of project documentation, underlying research, and assessments of environmental impacts, however these are archived in the administration offices and not available to the general public. He also informed that the German minister for environment wishes to bypass all environmental impact assessments in order to advance OWF projects. In the best case scenario, fisheries might get some funding for scrapping activities. He added that the money given to fisheries for the loss of fishing grounds should help improve the social situation in fisheries.

Michael Andersen, DFPO, noted that there is no lack of data, but a lack of appreciation of the role of fishers as food providers. Many fail to understand the positive dimension of food production, and only focus on the negative. “Data is there, but there is a lack of will,” he noted.

The Chair echoed Andersen and noted that some advice was already provided in terms of the attractiveness of the sector (i.e. Advice on generational renewal). It might be necessary to highlight those again, with available income and living conditions on vessels and communities underlined and communicated adequately.

Patrick Murphy remarked that Brexit led to huge decommissioning, to which the Chair reacted that the upcoming negotiations on future quota allocation post-2026 will have to look into this.

Johnny Woodlock believed that fishers should be portrayed as monitors and guardians of the biodiversity of our seas rather than exploiters only.

3.2 Vademecum on the allocation of fishing opportunities

The Chair informed that Seas at Risk published a report on the sustainable allocation of fishing rights. He suggested that there are different allocation schemes in different Member States, and that a potential exercise could be to collect some statements on these practices. He noted that some MS tend to believe that best allocation happens on the market and that ITQs are the solution for everything. He mentioned the first woman ever to receive a Nobel prize for

economy Elinor Ostrom² and said that her work echoed the belief that the best solutions for managing the commons can be found in internal deals by POs. The Chair invited insights and information relevant to this context.

Ment van der Zwan noted he was satisfied with the way rights allocation was conducted in the Netherlands, nothing that governments and the Commission should not interfere in the way allocations are done in MSs.

Michale Andersen echoed van der Zwan.

Patrick Murphy shared that in Ireland 5-55 feet vessels get one share and over 55 feet vessels get two shares, with quotas given and adjusted on a monthly basis. He offered to send a copy of most recent monthly allocations to the Secretariat for distribution to members (**Action**). The same authorisations are provided for smaller vessels, with all having access to both types of shares. He believed that that was a fair system, however, it does not prevent disagreements between fishers on how it is shared.

The Chair queried how much effort in labour time is put into negotiations in such a system and Murphy responded that weeks are sometimes dedicated to this and quota swaps are happening nonstop, 7 days a week, noting that fishers are drowning in red tape.

Mo Mathies, NWWAC Secretariat, informed that on the particular matter of quota allocations, the NWWAC Management Team discussed the questionnaire and concluded that NWWAC would not respond to the Article 17 survey and that in the same vein, they will not contribute to potential response in this joint group either.

The Chair agreed that abstention was one of the possible outcomes. Nevertheless, he believed in the value of exchanging information on the different systems in MS.

He continued by saying that in Germany according to the law, the quotas are owned by the government and allocated annually based on four criteria: 1) former participation (relative stability), 2) best economic use of the quota, 3) fitness/capability of the vessels and 4) market supply. It is difficult to comply with all of these criteria, but the key one being the relative stability. Several intensive exchanges on the need to change the system were held in the past in Germany. There are continuous discussions with the sector on whether a change in the parameters of the allocation is required, and related advice is provided to the government by the sector. When consensus is reached, the government follows. The decisions on quota swaps are communicated to the government and quotas are then allocated to those POs by the government. He believed that it was beneficial in terms of social security if the value of the vessel was increased by specific access to fishing rights. In Germany, it was decided not to switch to ITQ systems for now.

² It was long unanimously held among economists that natural resources that were collectively used by their users would be over-exploited and destroyed in the long-term. Elinor Ostrom disproved this idea by conducting field studies on how people in small, local communities manage shared natural resources, such as pastures, fishing waters, and forests. She showed that when natural resources are jointly used by their users, in time, rules are established for how these are to be cared for and used in a way that is both economically and ecologically sustainable.

The final conclusion of this session was that specific quota allocation systems in individual MS work and there was no need for interventions of the Commission. The Chair noted that some Small Scale Fisheries (SSF) groups that are not organised in POs tend to request more quota. However, he believed that this fact should not be guiding the process of quota allocation.

The Chair concluded that members are free to communicate to EC individually as national organizations, but he did not see the need for ACs to comment on quota allocation.

He added that recreational fisheries should also be considered with their monthly bag limits in terms of quota allocations, to which Jan Kappel, a representative of European Anglers, responded that monthly bag limits are still on the agenda, however more and better data are needed and expected to be provided by the revised Control regulation.

The proposed **Action** was that members relay any challenges or difficulties in quota allocation in writing *as informal communication*.

Patrick Murphy reflected that since CFP isn't being reviewed, some important factors will not be addressed, such as the movement of fish stocks due to climate change.

Tamara Talevska responded that the NSAC has dealt with this before in a webinar and provided policy recommendation³ followed by EC response.⁴

Jan Kappel, EAA, noted that in the framework of National Fisheries Profiles, recreational fisheries must be included when data arrive following a revised Control Regulation, including the data on social value data.

4 Fishers of the Future survey on uncertainties and challenges fishers face presently and in the future

The Chair explained that national POs have received a questionnaire from the Fishers of the Future project and have possibly responded to it. He felt the questions on drivers were irrelevant, explaining that in the past, fisheries were driven by crises: Covid-19, war, fuel prices, market disturbances, and that he would not be surprised if these factors remained relevant in the future. And yet, they are not mentioned in the survey. One major problem has been adverse legal and political decisions, driving the currently predicted election results. These are not mentioned in the questionnaire either. He believed that it did not seem sensible to participate in this as ACs.

Michael Andersen, DFPO, shared the Chair's concerns. On the one that was included, namely the conflict between urban and rural communities, he mentioned the lack of appreciation of the role of food providers as one crucial driver. He also observed an increased level of

³ <https://www.nsrac.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/17-2223-NSAC-Advice-on-Climate-change-and-North-Sea-Fisheries.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.nsrac.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/03-2324-Reply-to-NSAC-Advice-on-climate-change-and-North-Sea-fisheries.pdf>

animosity between stakeholders and other groups in recent years. Even ministries have turned against the industry, he noted. He felt that this was a serious crisis, with people not understanding that food doesn't come from supermarkets but from agriculture and fisheries.

Johnny Woodlock echoed Andersen. He said that today's children are growing up in a time where there is a disconnect between food providers and people living in urban areas, with some children believing that meat and milk are made in supermarkets.

Ment van der Zwan shared that the Social Dialogue for Sea Fisheries recently had a meeting with the Commissioner to talk about accommodation in relation to rules on fishing capacity, apparently showing a lack of knowledge on the specific topic. He agreed that children not knowing about food production is tragical and constitutes a huge task for schools to start educating children in food production.

The Chair responded that this also reflects the wrong political decisions in the past and underlined that while everyone is on the same level of understanding, he was not convinced it would be wise to make a statement on the need to change educational system. In future crises, children will unfortunately learn that food does not come from supermarkets. People in the cities are so far from reality that they do not understand the urgency of this predicament. Of all the crises we can combat, fish will remain the sole source of available food even when all else perishes. He believed it is important to influence wrong political decisions and base all deliberations on reality with robust data, proper assumptions, methodologies, and so on.

Llibori Martinez, IFSUA, echoed all previous comments on food production. There was a perception that a society is being created where it is not understood that for protein food animals need to be killed. Martinez noted that recreational fishing is supporting commercial fisheries in their effort to provide a better perspective on sustainable fishing.

Jan Kappel, EAA, supported previous statements and understood that more sympathy towards commercial fisheries is sought, but he also reminded that the fisheries get food from the environment. Seas can sustain much more fish than there are at the moment. Some researchers claim that currently there is 10% biomass left compared to the past. Improving the biomass should be our priority.

The Chair suggested that urban dwellers could get in touch with anglers who can provide the knowledge about fishing and seafood production to society.

Michael Andersen disagreed that there are 10 times fewer fish in the sea. He also added that some people living in cities do not understand that food production inevitably comes with an impact.

The Chair noted that pollution also affects the productivity of the ecosystems, and that in some cases the fact about 10x less biomass holds. However, this should not be ascribed to overfishing.

Johnny Woodlock noted that despite a huge increase in fishing effort over the last 30 years, catches likely declined, meaning that the biomass has indeed reduced. He also underlined the mental health benefits of angling, and agreed with the danger of the disconnect between the

urban and rural societies, including civil society not being aware of the context of fisheries and leading campaigns to ban fisheries. More needs to be done to counteract these narratives, where utopia is presented where no animal is killed.

The Chair agreed that good fisheries management is needed leading to productive ecosystems, including the management of predatory species as part of the good management. In the North Sea a lot of progress has been made on these issues in recent years. Ecosystem conditions and productivity of stocks will remain important drivers for fisheries in the future.

In conclusion, the Chair reminded of the half-day event on the Fishers of the Future on 19 March and invited participants to attend.

5 AOB & date and time of next meeting

Ment van der Zwan raised the issue of STCW-F and its implementation in EU, there being only a few ratifications by the MS to date. He noted that a harmonised and standardized system is needed to be able to have fishers from an EU MS work on foreign fishing vessels and have their certificates recognized. He urged DG MARE to start working on the implementation of STCW-F. All fisheries in the EU are struggling with getting educated fishers on board due to failure to recognize training certificates.

The Chair agreed to consider drafting a statement on this and proposed Ment van der Zwan send the first draft. **(Action)**

The Chair concluded the meeting by inviting members to submit any input for the agenda for the meeting potentially held in the summer.

6 Actions

Action	Responsible
Patrick Murphy to send a copy of most recent monthly allocations to the Secretariat for distribution to members.	Patrick Murphy
Members relay any challenges, difficulties in quota allocation in their respective MS in writing <i>as informal communication</i> .	FG Members
The FG to consider drafting a statement on standardised training on safety and implementation of STCW-F based on the first draft by Ment van der Zwan.	Ment van der Zwan



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7 Participants

First Name	Last Name	Organisation
Alexandra	Philippe	EBCD
Bruno	Dachicourt	Syndicat National des Marins Pêcheurs CFTC
Falke	Falke de Sager	Rederscentrale
Heidi & Idoya		J Collier Language Services
Jan	Kappel	EAA
Johnny	Woodlock	ISS
Kateryna	Urbanovych	NSAC Secretariat
Kenn Skau	Fischer	DFPO
Llibori	Martínez	IFSUA
Ment	Van der Zwan	Social Partners for Sea Fisheries
Michael	Andersen	DFPO
Mo	Mathies	NWWAC Secretariat
Patrick	Murphy	IS&WFPO
Peter	Breckling	German Fisheries Association
Tamara	Talevska	NSAC Secretariat