



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/D1/ACD

Dear Mr Marzao Notlevsen,

Thank you for sharing with us the concerns of the MEDAC regarding the Commission's proposal for the 2025 fishing opportunities. Since your letter, you had numerous opportunities to hear directly from Commissioner Kadis about this proposal. I too would like to elaborate on the Commission's role and logic in making the proposal, as well as on the outcome of the December Council.

I would first, however, express once again my great concern over social media posts (for example Federacion Nacional de Confradias post of 09 December - https://x.com/fncp_pescadores/status/1866074550040989913?s=12) with you and other MEDAC members, holding unacceptable collages, calling Commission staff "guilty". You have certainly heard Commissioner Kadis condemning personal attacks on Commission staff at his meeting with the Advisory Councils on 3 December, given that we function collectively – as an institution – and responsibly to defend the interest of the EU citizens; guarding and implementing the EU Treaties and legislation; and under common rules of ethics and impartiality.

As a Chair and members of an Advisory Council established under the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation, I expect that you also interact in a professional and ethical manner; and to ensure this, I will be pursuing ethical codes to bind Advisory Councils and their members, in the spirit of collective responsibility and good faith cooperation.

As already mentioned, the Commission, as Guardian of the Treaties, is bound to legally implement the Western Mediterranean Multi Annual Plan (MAP) (as co-decided by the European Parliament and the Member States) and thus establish the maximum allowable fishing effort based on best available scientific advice, which is a basic principle established also by the co-legislators in the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation (CFP). To this end, the Commission works with the advice provided by the Scientific

Mr Marzao Notlevsen
Mediterranean Advisory Council
Via XX Settembre, 20
c/o MASAF
00187 Rome
Italy

Technical Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF). On 30 October 2024, STECF published its latest assessment on the status of fish stocks in Western Mediterranean. On 22 November 2024, STECF published its latest assessment on the management scenarios for the Western Mediterranean MAP, including socio-economic indicators.

The assessment of STECF shows that several of the Western Mediterranean stocks are outside of safe biological limits and STECF advises drastic catch reductions for the stocks to recover. STECF analyses also show that the reverse trend of the state of the stocks will benefit all the local communities, including the local auctions which the Commission knows are an important part of the local economy.

The trawling industry is the backbone of the Mediterranean fisheries, which is why the Commission has worked with all stakeholders to implement gradually the Western Mediterranean MAP since its adoption. The objective of the Western Mediterranean MAP is to secure a sustainable and profitable future to the sector relying on healthy and thriving fish stocks based on the best available scientific advice.

The Commission is convinced that based on all socio-economic evaluations the ambitious management measures will rapidly pay off with better stocks health and increased sector profitability.

With the entry into force of the permanent phase of the Western Mediterranean MAP and the entirety of its provisions, we have been facing difficult decisions, in the same way we have been facing them in the Atlantic, as we have to apply for the first-time fishing opportunities at Fmsy levels.

We believe it is important for stakeholders to understand the modalities of the Commission proposal which, apart from the proposed reduction of fishing days, designed an elaborated compensation mechanism to complement the fishing effort regime for trawlers and support the vessels committing to more sustainable practices, such as improvement of fishing selectivity and adoption of efficient spatio-temporal closures. The vessels fulfilling one or more of the compensation criteria will benefit from recovered fishing days and can also fully explore funding opportunities through EMFAF support to accompany the sector's transition to more sustainable fisheries.

There is now an important opportunity to advance fast and effectively on innovation and energy transition for our industry and reflect strategically on a structural reform for achieving balance between fishing opportunities and fishing capacity. This is the underlying factor for the fleet profitability, alongside the healthy status of the fish stocks, on which the sector depends.

During the December fisheries Council, Member States agreed to continue with the necessary reduction of fishing effort for trawlers to address the still challenging problem of fishing mortality. At the same time, the agreement, facilitated by the Commission, expands the compensation mechanism, already included in the Commission proposal to accelerate fish stock recovery, while ensuring that the sector can benefit from recovery of fishing days if they put in place the necessary conservation measures. The final agreement includes twelve sustainability measures that will provide considerable opportunities to recover fishing days, if applied.

The Commission considers very important that the agreement reached is both balanced and responsible, preserving fishers' livelihoods in the long term, offering ample

opportunities for financing the transition of our sectors and improving the chances for stock recovery.

Yours sincerely,

Charlina VITCHEVA