



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/D1

Dear Mr Marzoa Notlevsen,

I am writing in relation to the advice from MedAC on the socio-economic data available for the evaluation of the multiannual management plans (MAPs)¹ of which the Commission services have taken a good note.

The Commission works with the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) on improving the knowledge of the social dimension of fisheries, including links to coastal communities, through the development of National Fisheries Profiles, Community Profiles and specific social indicators. The National Fisheries Profiles were most lately updated in the autumn of 2025.

STECF will discuss, at its plenary meeting in the Spring of 2026, the report produced by the EWG 25-13 on social data in EU fisheries. This will be the first Annual Social Report (ASOR) under a newly established configuration that will look at the demographic characteristics of EU fisheries, social demographics in fisheries, generational renewal, material well-being and social welfare, EU aggregate vessel-size structure in fisheries employment, and EU fisheries trends.

Training and certification of fishers and the recognition of qualifications are the responsibility of Member States. The Commission encourage Member States to ratify the standards set out in the International Maritime Organization (IMO) International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F).

So far, however, a limited number of Member States have ratified this convention. As a result, the Commission has launched an [initiative](#) ⁽²⁾ to harmonise minimum standards for training and certification of fishers in the EU. The lack of harmonised standards poses problems for: (i) safety (fishing is considered as one of the most dangerous occupations in Europe); (ii) understanding of existing legal obligations; (iii) adaptability to changing circumstances; and (iv) mobility across Member States. This initiative will assess the

⁽¹⁾ Reference: 30/2026; Ares(2026)1246605.

⁽²⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/16352-EU-fishers-training-and-certification-standards_en

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best way to implement into EU law existing international standards for the training and certification of fishers.

With regard to the Western Mediterranean MAP, I take note of MedAC opinion that *“restrictions such as the fishing area reductions, change in fishing gears and management of the number of days at sea can have a negative impact on safety, professional satisfaction, and social and family life.”* The MAP’s objective is to achieve maximum sustainable yield in order to secure healthy stocks on which rely the socio-economics and livelihood of fishers. Examples of Mediterranean regions where stocks have recovered demonstrate the gain in professional satisfaction, increased resources for safety training and improved social and family life for fisheries communities. It would be helpful if MedAC can further explain and substantiate this opinion, and work together to develop solutions that support sustainable practices, without compromising the safety and quality of life for fishers and their communities.

I take the opportunity of this letter to highlight that the compensation mechanism introduced in the Fishing Opportunities Regulation for the West Mediterranean is a tool to achieve simultaneously conservation and socio-economic aims. By balancing the conservation measures with a sufficient level of fishing, the mechanism aims at securing better state of stocks and incomes for fishers, their communities, and the ancillary sector. This mechanism plays thus a critical role in ensuring the socio-economic sustainability and resilience of western Mediterranean fisheries industry.

Another important aspect of the compensation mechanism is that all conservation measures listed in Article 8 of the Fishing Opportunities Regulation are eligible under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund to help with adopting more sustainable practices and to compensate temporary cessation, where relevant.

As we proceed with the implementation of fisheries management in 2026 and the preparation of the subsequent steps of the MAP, I would like to reiterate the importance for MedAC to use its expertise and wide range of stakeholders to reflect on comprehensive strategies that are key to address the business model of the Mediterranean fleets, as outlined in our correspondence from December 2025 ⁽³⁾.

I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation, starting with your meeting in Naples end of February. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

[e-Signed]
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⁽³⁾ Ares(2025)11441700 (19 December 2025).