



Council of the
European Union

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LIMITE

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Draft Council conclusions on:

- a) Communication on the common fisheries policy today and tomorrow: A Fisheries and Oceans Pact towards sustainable, science-based, innovative and inclusive fisheries management
- b) Report on the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products
- c) Communication on an EU Action Plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries
- d) Communication on the Energy Transition of the EU Fisheries and Aquaculture sector

- Comments from Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Germany, Czechia, Estonia and Poland

Delegations will find in the annex written comments from Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Germany, Czechia, Estonia and Poland.

BULGARIAWritten comments provided by Bulgaria

Written comments in relation to the proposed Council conclusions on the COM fisheries package for sustainable development of the sector. We would be extremely thankful if you can reflect them in the final version of the text:

As we said during the last WP we have quite positive views on the proposed draft Conclusions and I wish once again to thank you very much for taking on board most of our comments, at the same time after a detailed second reading of the proposed text we are of the opinion that the following additional changes should be added:

- **in paragraph 20** we propose to add "**including**" before the words "**through the use of new innovative gears designed for this purpose, based on the best scientific information available**", as the current text is too restrictive in terms of the different possibilities that could be applied to protect biodiversity and in particular sensitive species affected by fishing activities;
- **in paragraph 25**, cetaceans should be added to the examples of species that can have an impact on achieving the MSY. The Black Sea porpoise is an example of such a species.

We wish also to join the French proposal where a future amendment of the EMFF is called in order to enable investments aimed at improving the energy efficiency of vessels, including where the segment of the fleet is not in balance. In our view, the modernization of such vessels, regardless of the current state of the specific segment in which they fall, will facilitate the achievement of strategic goals for the European Union related to the implementation of the energy transition in the long term.

As the majority of our vessel's engines are by far outdated and if we fail to provide such investments, thus will undermine the achievement of our energy transition goals in any possible future scenario.

THE NETHERLANDS

NL Written Comments on the draft council conclusions on the fisheries policy package

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING:

- the Council conclusions of 19 October 2020 on the Farm to Fork Strategy¹;
- the Council conclusions of 23 October 2020 on Biodiversity – the need for urgent action²;
- the Council conclusions of 18 July 2022 on the EU’s new aquaculture strategic guidelines³;
- the Council conclusions of 13 December 2022 on International Ocean Governance for safe, secure, clean, healthy and sustainably managed oceans and seas⁴;

HAVING REGARD TO:

- the European Commission Communication of 21 February 2023 entitled ‘The common fisheries policy today and tomorrow: a Fisheries and Oceans Pact towards sustainable, science-based, innovative and inclusive fisheries management’ (COM(2023) 103 final)⁵ and its accompanying Commission staff working document entitled ‘Common Fisheries Policy - State of play’ (SWD(2023) 103 final)⁶;
- the European Commission Communication of 21 February 2023 entitled ‘EU Action Plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries’ (COM(2023) 102 final)⁷;

¹ Doc. ST 12099/20.

² Doc. ST 12210/20.

³ Doc. ST 11496/22.

⁴ Doc. ST 15973/22.

⁵ Docs. ST 6716/23 + COR 1.

⁶ Docs. ST 6716/23 ADD 1 REV 1 + COR 1.

⁷ Docs. ST 6690/23 + COR 1.

- the European Commission Communication of 21 February 2023 entitled ‘On the Energy Transition of the EU Fisheries and Aquaculture sector’ (COM(2023) 100 final)⁸;
- the European Commission Report of 21 February 2023 entitled ‘Implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013 on the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products’ (COM(2023) 101 final)⁹;
- the European Commission Communication entitled ‘Towards a Strong and Sustainable EU Algae Sector’ (COM(2022) 592 final)¹⁰;

1. EMPHASISES the important role of fisheries and aquaculture products as a source of healthy food and their contribution to food security;
2. RECALLS the three pillars of sustainability in the Common Fisheries Policy that contribute to the sustainable use of fish stocks and the sustainable development of EU aquaculture, ensure the competitiveness of the sector and guarantee a fair standard of living for coastal and rural communities;
3. ACKNOWLEDGES the targets set out by the Commission in the European Biodiversity Strategy and the need to protect marine ecosystems as a contribution to a more resilient and sustainable fisheries industry;
4. AGREES with the objective of long-term sustainability and resilience for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, where innovation and joint collaboration between the different parties should play a central role;
5. EMPHASISES that the very high ambition in the communication package require an overall evaluation of the adequacy of the legal framework, policy instruments and financial means within the CFP to deliver on these ambitions and at the same time provide perspective for an economically viable and modern European fisheries sector that guarantees a stable supply of healthy proteins for the European market for years to come;

⁸ Docs. ST 6689/23 + COR 1.

⁹ Docs. ST 6691/23 + COR 1.

¹⁰ Docs. ST 14784/22 + ADD 1.

6. DETERMINES that factors other than fisheries, such as climate change, eutrophication, predators, invasive alien species and other economic activities at sea contribute to fishing mortality and ecosystem deterioration and that all factors need to be addressed in a holistic manner to safeguard fish stocks and enable recovery to healthy and sustainable levels of species in poor status;
7. EMPHASISES the complexity of the sector given the variety of EU fisheries, the number of small-scale fisheries and the particularities of each sea basin; FURTHER EMPHASISES, hence, the need to establish conservation measures that can be adapted to regional specificities and UNDERLINES that these measures should be justified, proportionate to the benefits sought and based on the best available scientific advice and a comprehensive assessment that also considers socio-economic aspects;

I. SHIFTING FISHERIES INTERESTS BEYOND EU WATERS

8. NOTES that the geopolitical context has changed substantially since the last reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2013 and POINTS OUT the challenges this presents to fishers, aquaculture producers, coastal communities and all stakeholders concerned; EMPHASISES also the need for close cooperation on shared stocks on all levels in order to achieve the EU's sustainability objectives and improve global ocean governance;
9. CALLS ON the Commission to develop an integrated strategy on the relation with third countries, that include both fisheries management of shared stocks and access for fisheries products into the common market of the European Union;

10. EMPHASISES the need to work towards a level playing field and responsible and sustainable value chains at international level in both fisheries and trade in fishery and aquaculture products, in order to maintain the competitiveness of the industry and the EU's food sovereignty in line with the new EU policy on an open, sustainable and assertive trade policy as well as with the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy;
11. LOOKS FORWARD to the forthcoming update of the European maritime security strategy and its action plan and the forthcoming Joint Communication on Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and on Security and Defence to address the nexus between climate change, environmental degradation of coastal and maritime areas and maritime security;

II. EMPOWERING PEOPLE IN FISHING AND AQUACULTURE COMMUNITIES

12. DETERMINES that generational renewal is key to ensuring that the EU fishing, aquaculture and seafood processing sectors and coastal communities have a viable future and can continue to ensure food security; UNDERLINES, therefore, the importance of making these activities more attractive by providing economic perspective, improving social and working conditions through innovation, continuing to protect the biodiversity of the marine environment and promoting the role of fishers and marine aquaculture farmers as 'guardians of the sea' and providers of services of public interest; POINTS OUT the opportunities for innovative arrangements that these professions offer, such as linking production to direct sales or tourism, in particular for small-scale coastal fisheries and aquaculture; AGREES to enhance and increase the importance and the presence of women throughout the EU seafood value chain, contributing both to the generation of wealth and employment and to the sustainable use and conservation of aquatic resources;

13. ACKNOWLEDGES that EU fisheries and fishing fleets must reduce their operational energy costs to ensure the sector's long-term profitability and resilience, thus becoming more efficient while maintaining long-term sustainability objectives; ENCOURAGES measures to improve the aquaculture sector's competitiveness by further diversifying its production and ensuring added value for its products as well as reducing its reliance on fossil fuels;
14. SUPPORTS the work of the Commission to ensure high standards for fishers' safety and working conditions, notably on the international stage through the ratification and implementation of the revised international Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F) and of International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) conventions; ENCOURAGES the accelerated ratification of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) conventions;
15. UNDERLINES the roles of producer organisations and inter-branch organisations to better structure the value chain and improve market conditions through the collective management of their members' activities and the mutualisation of resources;
16. DEEMS IT NECESSARY to strengthen socio-economic resilience in the context of fossil fuel dependency, increased and volatile energy prices, the need for greater energy efficiency and sustainability of the sector and the goal of reaching climate neutrality in the EU by 2050; WELCOMES the actions proposed by the Commission regarding stakeholder cooperation, knowledge and innovation, as well as the strengthening of workforce skills;
17. CALLS ON the Commission to provide better guidance on financing options, including for SMEs with vessels larger than 24 meters, feasibility studies and impact assessments as well as an evaluation of the fleet capacity management to support the energy transition in the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector;
18. CALLS ON the Commission to refrain from proposals to remove tax exemptions on the fuel for the fisheries and aquaculture sector, as long as there are no affordable alternatives available;

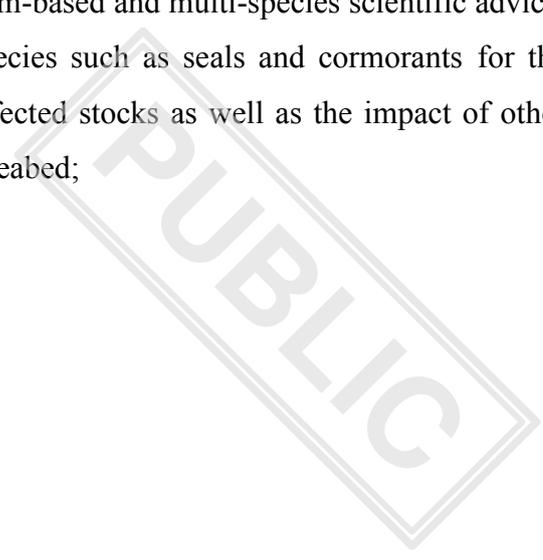
19. WELCOMES the launching of the EU-wide participatory foresight project ‘Fishers of the Future’ aimed at forecasting the crucial role of fishers in society beyond the provision of high-quality seafood with a relatively low carbon footprint; EMPHASISES the need to better identify the trends, opportunities and threats that determine the attractiveness of the fishing sector;
20. RECOGNISES the importance of up-to-date education and vocational training systems to improve employment opportunities for workers and the sector’s attractiveness to newcomers in order to address skills shortages, in particular in relation to the transition to renewable and low-carbon alternative energy sources and low-impact fishing gears and techniques; ENCOURAGES, in this regard, the setting-up of large-scale skills partnerships;
21. SUPPORTS the use of a bottom-up approach, as of 2023, enabling local fishing and aquaculture communities to address socio-economic challenges and needs through community-led local development under the 2021-2027 EMFAF programmes;
22. WELCOMES the ongoing work of the Commission and scientific bodies to further develop social indicators for the analysis of socio-economic reports; ACKNOWLEDGES that scientific advice and management measures already take into account socio-economic impacts, but CALLS ON further development in this regard to reinforce informed management decisions;

III. CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROTECTION OF THE PLANET

23. EMPHASISES the importance of sustainability principles in fisheries management and REITERATES the need to take into account the three pillars of the CFP, i.e. economic, environmental and social sustainability;
24. REMAINS FULLY COMMITTED to safeguarding biodiversity and protecting and restoring the marine ecosystems upon which healthy fish stocks that contribute to food security and a viable fishing sector within the EU depend;
25. EXPRESSES the willingness to protect biodiversity, specifically the sensitive species affected by fishing activity, through the use of new innovative gears designed for this purpose, based on the best scientific information available;
26. NOTES the ongoing work on threshold values for the maximum allowable mortality rate from incidental catches of sensitive species, and for the maximum allowable extent of seabed that can be lost or adversely affected by human pressure, as part of the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
27. RECOGNISES the objectives set out in the proposed action plan on marine ecosystems in contributing to the EU 2030 biodiversity strategy, but CALLS FOR a comprehensive impact assessment based on the best available science as a basis for operational and proportional applicability of the proposed actions, with regard to their benefits for marine ecosystems in relation to the conservation objectives and taking into account regional specificities as well as financial and socio-economic implications;
28. RECALLES that the recently adopted legally binding Agreement for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) recognizes that MPAs may allow sustainable use, provided that this use is consistent with the conservation objectives;

29. IS COMMITTED to contributing to the objective of creating a coherent network of well-managed protected areas and to protecting a minimum of 30% of the EU's sea area, one third of which is strictly protected; EMPHASISES that this is an objective to be reached by Member States collectively based on the Bird and Habitat Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Therefore EMPHASISES the importance of introducing fisheries measures that are necessary for the purpose of complying with the objectives of the Bird and Habitat Directive and the MSFD; UNDERLINES that if those measures concern the use of gears such as mobile bottom-contacting gear in marine protected areas (MPAs) this should be in line with the best available science for the conservation objectives of each MPA; NOTES that the CFP and Technical Measures Regulations empower Member States via regionalisation to propose joint recommendations for necessary conservation measures based on scientific evidence in MPAs and that such work is ongoing;
30. UNDERLINES that a generic ban on mobile bottom-contacting gear in all MPAs, as proposed by the Commission, is an essential element of the CFP and thus would require an amendment of the CFP basic regulation;
31. UNDERLINES that a general ban on mobile bottom-contacting gear in MPAs by 2030 would be in contradiction with the Commission's guidance for MPA designation;
32. CALLS ON the Commission to withdraw proposals related to the general ban of mobile bottom-contacting gear in MPAs in the marine action plan and not to propose any subsequent regulatory provision to implement this general ban, neither in Natura 2000 areas in 2024, nor in all MPAs by 2030;
33. CONSIDERS that the planning of activities is essential to allow all interested stakeholders to contribute to the implementation of the Marine Action Plan and NOTES the proposed concept of individual Member States roadmaps;
34. ACKNOWLEDGES that achieving maximum sustainable yield levels for commercially exploited fish stocks is a key principle of the Common Fisheries Policy and contributes to the good environmental status of commercial fish populations; UNDERLINES that fish stocks are also affected by other human activities as well as environmental factors and predators and

therefore SUPPORTS the improvement of ecosystem-based and multi-species scientific advice, for instance taking into account the impact of species such as seals and cormorants for the achievement of maximum sustainable yield for affected stocks as well as the impact of other economic activities on marine ecosystems and the seabed;



35. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of innovative solutions in fishing techniques to minimise the environmental impact and carbon footprint and to increase selectivity to ensure that fishers only catch targeted species and comply with the landing obligation;
36. WELCOMES the Commission's intention to conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of current EU legislation on the landing obligation pertaining to the conservation of commercial fish stocks; Considering the difficulties in the implementation of the landing obligation, despite extensive work by Member States, CALLS ON/URGES the Commission to start this evaluation as soon as possible making use of the extensive research information and data that is available;
37. EMPHASISES that increased inclusion of the ecosystem approach to scientific assessments is needed in fisheries management to factor in environmental and climate change and other human activity impacts as well as predators that affect fish stocks. Such an approach will provide for a holistic fisheries governance framework that tackles the trade-offs between ecological, social (including cultural and institutional) and economic sustainability criteria;
38. REAFFIRMS that the EU will continue to apply zero tolerance towards illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and promote sustainable fisheries combatting overfishing and reducing by-catch of threatened and unwanted species;
39. REITERATES the importance of encouraging the use of innovative techniques in compliance with CFP objectives; AGREES that innovation should be supported financially and through specific incentives; and RECALLS that this is even more relevant for small-scale coastal fisheries and aquaculture operators with low profit margins;

40. EMPHASISES the need to ensure mutual supportiveness with all initiatives under the European Green Deal and with EU and Member States' objectives related to, inter alia, food security, health, climate change, environment and the sustainable use of terrestrial and marine natural resources, especially sustainable agriculture and food systems, sustainable fisheries and the sustainable management of forests;
41. REITERATES the importance of adopting joint recommendations through regionalisation in order to contribute to the implementation of EU environmental legislation with respect to fisheries measures;
42. IS AWARE of the importance of the sustainable development of the aquaculture sector in the EU and of the current and outstanding challenges to the growth of this sector; LOOKS FORWARD to guidance documents that the Commission intends to issue to support the implementation of its 'Strategic guidelines adopted by the Commission in 2021 for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030'; SUPPORTS the clear vision of the objectives and challenges to be taken into account and of the concrete actions needed for this sector to reach its potential in terms of sustainable food supply, economic development and the creation of employment in coastal and rural areas across the EU;
43. WELCOMES the Commission's document 'Towards a Strong and Sustainable EU Algae Sector' and the Commission's efforts to support EU algae sector developments and, in particular, the adoption on 15 November 2022 of the EU Algae Initiative; RECOGNISES that regenerative algae farming has the potential to become a significant part of the EU blue bioeconomy and can provide opportunities to EU fishers and other actors in coastal and rural areas for diversification of their economic activities; WELCOMES the Commission's initiative to establish a cross-cutting European algae stakeholder platform (EU4Algae);

IV. IMPROVING CFP GOVERNANCE

44. REAFFIRMS the crucial role of producer organisations in implementing CFP objectives for both fisheries and aquaculture, and HIGHLIGHTS their important role in balancing the conservation of marine resources and fleet competitiveness and therefore their contribution to food security; IS CONVINCED that enhancing these structures and fostering the creation of inter-branch organisations and transnational professional organisations will further strengthen the proper functioning of the value chain and contribute to achieving CFP objectives;
45. TAKES NOTE of the Commission's work on marketing standards; AGREES with the need to ensure consistency between the rules of horizontal EU regulation on the provision of food information to consumers and the rules on consumer information in the Common Markets Organisation Regulation and AGREES that information on fishery and aquaculture product labels is useful for consumers to make informed choices;
46. UNDERLINES the importance of the work of regional groups while recognising the workload associated with regionalisation; ENCOURAGES, therefore, all parties concerned to participate actively in this work, taking into account the available capacity of national administrations; REAFFIRMS the important role of advisory councils in this context and within the CFP more generally;
47. AGREES that transparency on the allocation criteria used is important; UNDERLINES that the definition of the criteria for allocation of fishing opportunities at national level is Member States' competence within the framework set by Article 17 of the CFP;

48. CALLS ON the Commission to provide a thorough impact assessment for any future legislative proposal, in line with the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law Making, including an assessment of subsidiarity and proportionality of the proposed measures;
49. HIGHLIGHTS the role of Maritime Spatial Planning, built on an ecosystem-based management approach, in supporting the achievement of conservation and restoration targets and in mitigating and minimising the harmful impact of human activities in coastal areas and offshore, and not only from fisheries, as well as its contribution to a competitive and sustainable blue economy and the need for a more coordinated approach between policy areas and legislation within the Union;

V. THE CFP TAPPING THE POTENTIAL OF SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION AND INVESTMENT

50. WELCOMES the proposed set-up of an Energy Transition Partnership (ETP) for EU Fisheries and Aquaculture; SUGGESTS that the framework and structure of the ETP should better define its mandate in order to fulfil its objectives;
51. AGREES that appropriate investment frameworks and funding opportunities across the value chain are key for enabling the energy transition; DETERMINES in this regard that the EMFAF is too limited to bridge the gap towards sustainable innovation for a sector that is highly diverse and characterised by mostly small-scale businesses; CALLS ON the Commission to provide guidance on financing options and financial assistance for measures targeting specifically zero emissions or low-carbon technology and investment in the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector;

52. SUPPORTS the development and use of digital technology as an opportunity for collecting a broader range of data to inform the scientific and decision-making processes;
53. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of EMFAF in supporting innovation, digitalisation and the energy transition as well as other EU funds such as Horizon, the LIFE programme and the Recovery and Resilience Facility; ACKNOWLEDGES that enhancing Member States' cooperation in research projects is also important;
54. ENDORSES therefore the Commission's initiative to develop a specific guide and comprehensive database on EU financing instruments for the energy transition in the fisheries and aquaculture sector;
55. AGREES that innovation should be rewarded and SUPPORTS the creation of an annual award for sustainable innovation in fisheries, with the support of the advisory councils;
56. NOTES the Commission's initiative to increase the flexibility of their fishing capacity management in cooperation with the sector and with EU and national financial support where eligible; INVITES the Commission to encourage Member States to use this as a 'decarbonisation capacity margin' to support the fleets to transition towards cleaner, renewable or low-carbon energy sources and fishing methods;

VI. A 'FISHERIES AND OCEANS PACT' TO PAVE THE WAY FOR THE FUTURE

57. SUPPORTS the Commission's 'Fisheries and Oceans Pact' to reconfirm the joint commitment to fully implementing current policy and contributing to necessary reflections and assessments of certain elements of the CFP; CALLS FOR the strong involvement of fisheries stakeholders and of the scientific community in the 'Fisheries and Oceans Pact'.

GERMANY

Written comments by Germany on

DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE FISHERIES POLICY PACKAGE

(ST 8303/23)

Germany thanks the Swedish presidency for the first draft of Council conclusions on the fisheries package, which is an excellent basis for further discussions. We provide specific comments and suggestions for amendments in the annex.

In general, we would like to highlight the following:

We believe it is necessary to highlight that many fisheries represent much more than just a provider of nutritious food and economic activity. In particular, coastal fisheries quite often contribute to a specific identity of a coastal region and sometimes are a major touristic attraction. In Germany, this applies especially to the brown shrimp fishery in the North Sea. We refer to our proposal in paragraph 22. At the same time, we highlight the need for action on marine protection, to which fisheries also have a contribution to make.

Germany would like to see an addition of better aligning of the objectives of the Natura 2000 directives and the MSFD with the implementation of the CFP, as there is still some room for improvement for better implementation. We refer to our proposals in paragraphs 22 and 23.

The importance of the landing obligation should be highlighted in a dedicated paragraph. We refer to our proposal in paragraph 25bis.

We welcome the paragraphs on the global perspective and suggest to complete them by adding 1) the objective of improving global food and nutrition security in paragraph 6., and 2) a separate paragraph on the WTO agreement on the abolishment of harmful fisheries subsidies under III. In view of the fact that this agreement still needs to be complemented we think that it is important to highlight, on the one hand, the potential benefits from this WTO agreement and the support of EU for this agreement, and, on the other hand the necessity to continuous negotiations to complement it (sunset clause). We refer to our text proposal in paragraph 34bis.

The possible loss of fishing grounds due to the further development of off-shore windfarms is an issue which is not yet addressed in the Council conclusions. As this could have a significant impact on fisheries in many areas and waters, we believe that some language is needed while recognising the need to speed up the development of renewable energies and for marine nature conservation. The Council should therefore express its view that the potential of co-utilisation of fisheries and aquaculture in windfarms should be explored. We refer to our proposal in paragraph 40.

We welcome the statement made by the Commission in the March AGRIFISH Council that its proposals in its communication on the “EU Action Plan: protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries” are to be understood as an invitation for dialogue. We suggest to highlight this in a dedicated paragraph and declare the readiness of the Council to enter into such a dialogue with the Commission, the European Parliament and all relevant stakeholders. We refer to our proposal in paragraph 40bis.

**DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS
ON THE FISHERIES POLICY PACKAGE**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING:

- the Council conclusions of 19 October 2020 on the Farm to Fork Strategy¹¹;
- the Council conclusions of 23 October 2020 on Biodiversity – the need for urgent action¹²;
- the Council conclusions of 18 July 2022 on the EU’s new aquaculture strategic guidelines¹³;
- the Council conclusions of 13 December 2022 on International Ocean Governance for safe, secure, clean, healthy and sustainably managed oceans and seas¹⁴;

HAVING REGARD TO:

- the European Commission Communication of 21 February 2023 entitled ‘The common fisheries policy today and tomorrow: a Fisheries and Oceans Pact towards sustainable, sciencebased, innovative and inclusive fisheries management’ (COM(2023) 103 final)¹⁵ and its accompanying Commission staff working document entitled ‘Common Fisheries Policy - State of play’ (SWD(2023) 103 final)¹⁶;

¹¹Doc. ST 12099/20.

¹²Doc. ST 12210/20.

¹³Doc. ST 11496/22.

¹⁴Doc. ST 15973/22.

¹⁵Docs. ST 6716/23 + COR 1.

¹⁶ Docs. ST 6716/23 ADD 1 REV 1 + COR 1.

- the European Commission Communication of 21 February 2023 entitled ‘EU Action Plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries’ (COM(2023) 102 final)⁷;
- the European Commission Communication of 21 February 2023 entitled ‘On the Energy Transition of the EU Fisheries and Aquaculture sector’ (COM(2023) 100 final)¹⁷;
- the European Commission Report of 21 February 2023 entitled ‘Implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013 on the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products’ (COM(2023) 101 final)¹⁸;
- the European Commission Communication entitled ‘Towards a Strong and Sustainable EU Algae Sector’ (COM(2022) 592 final)¹⁹;

1. EMPHASISES the important role of fisheries and aquaculture products as a source of healthy food and their contribution to food security;
2. RECALLS the three pillars of sustainability in the Common Fisheries Policy that contribute to the sustainable use of fish stocks and the sustainable development of EU aquaculture, ensure the competitiveness of the sector and guarantee a fair standard of living for coastal and rural communities;
3. AGREES with the objective of long-term sustainability and resilience for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, where innovation and joint collaboration between the different parties should play a central role;

⁷ Docs. ST 6690/23 + COR 1.

¹⁷ Docs. ST 6689/23 + COR 1.

¹⁸ Docs. ST 6691/23 + COR 1.

¹⁹ Docs. ST 14784/22 + ADD 1.

4. RECALLS that factors other than fisheries, such as climate change, eutrophication, predators and invasive alien species contribute to fishing mortality and that all factors need to be addressed in a holistic manner to safeguard fish stocks and enable recovery to healthy and sustainable levels of species in poor status;
5. EMPHASISES the complexity of the sector given the variety of EU fisheries, the number and characteristics of small-scale fisheries and the particularities of each sea basin; FURTHER EMPHASISES, hence, the need to establish conservation measures that can be adapted to regional specificities and UNDERLINES that these measures should be justified, proportionate to the benefits sought and based on the best available scientific knowledge and a comprehensive assessment that also considers socio-economic aspects;

I. SHIFTING FISHERIES INTERESTS BEYOND EU WATERS

6. NOTES that the geopolitical context has changed substantially since the last reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2013 and POINTS OUT the challenges this presents to fishers, aquaculture producers, coastal communities and all stakeholders concerned; EMPHASISES also the need for close cooperation within Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) and with third countries on shared stocks on all levels in order to achieve the EU's sustainability objectives, improve global ocean governance, increase food and nutrition security and improve social viability and ecologic sustainability of international fish value chains;

7. HIGHLIGHTS the need to work towards a level playing field and responsible and sustainable value chains at international level in both fisheries and trade in fishery and aquaculture products, in order to maintain the competitiveness of the industry and the EU's food sovereignty in line with the new EU policy on an open, sustainable and assertive trade policy as well as with the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy;
8. LOOKS FORWARD to the forthcoming update of the European maritime security strategy and its action plan and the forthcoming Joint Communication on Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and on Security and Defence to address the nexus between climate change, environmental degradation of coastal and maritime areas and maritime security;

II. EMPOWERING PEOPLE IN FISHING AND AQUACULTURE COMMUNITIES

9. ACKNOWLEDGES that generational renewal is key to ensuring that the EU fishing, aquaculture and seafood processing sectors and coastal communities have a viable future and can continue to ensure food security; UNDERLINES, therefore, the importance of making these activities more attractive by improving social and working conditions through innovation, continuing to protect the biodiversity of the marine environment and promoting the role of fishers and marine aquaculture farmers as 'guardians of the sea' and providers of services of public interest; POINTS OUT the opportunities for innovative arrangements that these professions offer, such as linking production to direct sales or tourism, in particular for small scale coastal fisheries and aquaculture; AGREES to enhance and increase the importance and the presence of women throughout the EU seafood value chain, contributing both to the generation of wealth and employment and to the sustainable use and conservation of aquatic resources;

10. **ACKNOWLEDGES** that EU fisheries and fishing fleets must reduce their operational energy costs to ensure the sector's long-term profitability and resilience, thus becoming more efficient while maintaining long-term sustainability objectives and reducing its environmental impact; **ENCOURAGES** measures to improve the aquaculture sector's competitiveness by further diversifying its production and ensuring added value for its products as well as reducing its reliance on fossil fuels;
11. **SUPPORTS** the work of the Commission to ensure high standards for fishers' safety and working conditions, notably on the international stage through the ratification and implementation of the revised international Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F) and of International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) conventions;
- ENCOURAGES** the accelerated ratification of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) conventions;
12. **UNDERLINES** the roles of producer organisations and inter-branch organisations to better structure the value chain and improve market conditions through the collective management of their members' activities and the mutualisation of resources;
13. **DEEMS IT NECESSARY** to strengthen socio-economic resilience in the context of fossil fuel dependency, increased and volatile energy prices, the need for greater energy efficiency and sustainability of the sector and the goal of reaching climate neutrality in the EU by 2050; **WELCOMES** the actions proposed by the Commission regarding stakeholder cooperation, knowledge and innovation, as well as the strengthening of workforce skills, but **CALLS ON** the Commission to provide better guidance on financing options and impact assessments to support the energy transition in the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector;

14. WELCOMES the launching of the EU-wide participatory foresight project ‘Fishers of the Future’ aimed at forecasting the crucial role of fishers in society beyond the provision of high quality seafood with a relatively low carbon footprint; EMPHASISES the need to better identify the trends, opportunities and threats that determine the attractiveness of the fishing sector;
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16. SUPPORTS the use of a bottom-up approach, as of 2023, enabling local fishing and aquaculture communities to address socio-economic challenges and needs through community led local development under the 2021-2027 EMFAF programmes;
17. WELCOMES the ongoing work of the Commission and scientific bodies to further develop social indicators for the analysis of socio-economic reports; ACKNOWLEDGES that scientific advice and management measures already take into account socio-economic impacts, but ENCOURAGES further development in this regard to reinforce informed management decisions;

III. CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROTECTION OF THE PLANET

18. EMPHASISES the importance of sustainability principles in fisheries management and REITERATES the need to take into account all three pillars of the CFP, i.e. economic, environmental and social sustainability;

19. REMAINS FULLY COMMITTED to safeguarding biodiversity and protecting and restoring the marine ecosystems upon which healthy fish stocks that can contribute to food security and a viable fishing sector within the EU depend;
20. EXPRESSES the willingness to protect biodiversity, specifically the sensitive species affected by fishing activity, through the implementation of new innovative gears designed for this purpose, based on the best scientific information available;
21. NOTES the ongoing work on threshold values for the maximum allowable mortality rate from incidental catches of sensitive species, and for the maximum allowable extent of seabed that can be lost or adversely affected by human pressure, as part of the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive; HIGHLIGHTS the important function of seabed as natural carbon sink;
22. RECOGNISES the objectives set out in the proposed action plan on marine ecosystems in contributing to the EU 2030 biodiversity strategy; HIGHLIGHTS the need to boost an effective implementation of European Nature Legislation and to better align the CFP with the objectives of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Natura 2000 directives, but CALLS FOR a comprehensive impact assessment based on the best available science as a basis for operational and proportional applicability of the proposed actions, with regard to their benefits for healthy marine ecosystems and taking into account regional specificities as well as financial, socio-economic and socio-cultural implications;

Comment: In coastal regions, fisheries often strengthen cultural identities, which also attracts tourists. Therefore, the impact assessment should not only include socio-economic implications. In Germany, the socio-cultural impact of the traditional brown shrimp fishery in the North Sea goes beyond the mere economic benefit.

23. IS COMMITTED to contributing to the objective of creating a coherent network of well managed marine protected areas (MPAs) and to protecting a minimum of 30% of the EU's sea area, one third of which is strictly protected; EMPHASISES that this is an objective to be reached by Member States collectively based on the Natura 2000 network and therefore EMPHASISES the importance of introducing fisheries measures that are necessary for the purpose of complying with these objectives; UNDERLINES that the use of gears such as bottom-contacting fishing in MPAs should be in line with the best available science for the conservation objectives of each MPA and taking into account the actual environmental impact of the different fishing gears and methods on the various benthic habitats and species depending on the particular conservation objectives of each MPA; NOTES that the CFP and Technical Measures Regulations empower Member States via regionalisation to propose joint recommendations for necessary conservation measures based on scientific evidence in MPAs and that such work is ongoing;
24. CONSIDERS that the planning of activities is essential to allow all interested stakeholders to contribute to the implementation of the Marine Action Plan;

Comment: To take note of these roadmaps implies a degree of acceptance of the concept. The idea of individual roadmaps per MS is problematic, as it would create a patchwork of different rules. Moreover, the preparation of such roadmaps as well as their implementation would create a considerable additional administrative burden.

25. ACKNOWLEDGES that achieving maximum sustainable yield levels for commercially exploited fish stocks is a key principle of the Common Fisheries Policy and contributes to the good environmental status of commercial fish populations; UNDERLINES that fish stocks are also affected by other human activity as well as environmental factors such as climate change and predators and therefore SUPPORTS the improvement of ecosystem-based and multi-species scientific advice, for instance taking into account the impact of species such as seals and cormorants for the achievement of maximum sustainable yield for affected stocks;

25bis. EMPHASISES the importance of the landing obligation for not fishing above levels of maximum sustainable yield, and the need of an effective and proportionate control of its implementation;

26. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of innovative solutions in fishing techniques to minimise the environmental impact and carbon footprint, to increase selectivity to minimise unwanted catches and to ensure that fishers comply with the landing obligation;

27. WELCOMES the Commission's intention to conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of current EU legislation on the landing obligation pertaining to the conservation of commercial fish stocks;

28. EMPHASISES that increased inclusion of the ecosystem approach to scientific assessments is needed in fisheries management to factor in environmental and climate change and other human activity impacts as well as predators that affect fish stocks. Such an approach will add to a holistic and integrated fisheries governance framework that tackles the trade-offs between ecological, social (including cultural and institutional) and economic sustainability criteria;

Comment: The wording proposed here would imply that marine and/or biological scientists do also the assessment of the socio-economic and socio-cultural elements that area needed to have a “holistic approach”. That would not be appropriate. The wording should therefore be “softened”.

29. REAFFIRMS that the EU will continue to apply zero tolerance towards illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and promote sustainable fisheries combatting overfishing and reducing bycatch of threatened and unwanted species;
30. REITERATES the importance of encouraging the use of innovative techniques in compliance with CFP objectives; AGREES that innovation should be supported financially and through specific incentives; and RECALLS that this is even more relevant for small-scale coastal fisheries and aquaculture operators with low profit margins;
31. EMPHASISES the need to ensure coherence and mutual supportiveness with all initiatives under the European Green Deal and with EU and Member States’ objectives related to, inter alia, food security, health, climate change, environment and the sustainable use of terrestrial and marine natural resources;
- 31bis. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of EMFAF in contributing to the implementation of the Natura 2000 directives, the Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive to reaching their objectives.
32. REITERATES the importance of regionalisation through the adoption of Joint Recommendations in order to contribute to the implementation of EU environmental legislation;

33. IS AWARE of the importance of the sustainable development of the aquaculture sector in the EU and of the current and outstanding challenges to the growth of this sector; LOOKS FORWARD to guidance documents that the Commission intends to issue to support the implementation of its ‘Strategic guidelines adopted by the Commission in 2021 for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030’; SUPPORTS the clear vision of the objectives and challenges to be taken into account and of the concrete actions needed for this sector to reach its potential in terms of sustainable food supply, economic development and the creation of employment in rural and coastal areas across the EU;

Comment: Aquaculture is economically more important in rural areas than in coastal areas. So rural areas should be mentioned first.

34. WELCOMES the Commission’s document ‘Towards a Strong and Sustainable EU Algae Sector’ and the Commission’s efforts to support EU algae sector developments and, in particular, the adoption on 15 November 2022 of the EU Algae Initiative; RECOGNISES that regenerative algae farming has the potential to become a significant part of the EU blue bioeconomy and can provide opportunities to EU fishers and other actors in coastal and rural areas for diversification of their economic activities; WELCOMES the Commission’s initiative to establish a cross-cutting European algae stakeholder platform (EU4Algae);

34bis. NOTES with great satisfaction the recent conclusion of the WTO agreement on the abolishment of harmful fisheries subsidies which it fully supports, and ENCOURAGES in this context the Commission to undertake all necessary efforts to bring about the continuation of negotiations within the WTO to complement this agreement;

IV. IMPROVING CFP GOVERNANCE

35. REAFFIRMS the crucial role of producer organisations in implementing CFP objectives for both fisheries and aquaculture, and HIGHLIGHTS their important role in balancing the conservation of marine resources and fleet competitiveness and therefore their contribution to food security; IS CONVINCED that enhancing these structures and fostering the creation of inter-branch organisations and transnational professional organisations will further strengthen the proper functioning of the value chain and contribute to achieving CFP objectives;
36. WELCOMES the Commission's work on marketing standards; EMPHASISES the need to ensure consistency between the rules of the horizontal EU regulation on the provision of food information to consumers and the rules on consumer information in the Common Markets Organisation Regulation and AGREES that information on fishery and aquaculture product labels is essential for consumers to make informed choices;
37. UNDERLINES the importance of the work of regional groups of Member States while recognising the workload associated with regionalisation; ENCOURAGES, therefore, all parties concerned to participate actively in this work; REAFFIRMS the important role of advisory councils in this context and within the CFP more generally;
38. AGREES that transparency on the allocation criteria used is important; UNDERLINES that the definition of the criteria for allocation of fishing opportunities at national level is a Member States' competence within the framework set by Article 17 of the CFP;
39. CALLS ON the Commission to provide a thorough impact assessment for any future legislative proposals, in line with the Interinstitutional Agreement

on Better Law Making, including an assessment of subsidiarity and proportionality of the proposed measures; CALLS ON the Commission to provide better guidance on financing options;

40. HIGHLIGHTS the role of Maritime Spatial Planning, built on an ecosystem-based management approach, in supporting the achievement of conservation and restoration targets and in mitigating and minimising the harmful impact of human activities in coastal areas and offshore, and not only from fisheries, as well as its contribution to a competitive and sustainable blue economy and the need for a more coordinated approach between policy areas and legislation within the Union; NOTES in this context the agreed long-term goals for the deployment of offshore renewable energy in EU waters to reach climate goals and the constraints this entails for the operation of fishing fleets and EMPHASISES the need in this regard to explore the potential of co-use of windfarms, fisheries and aquaculture as a common European issue that are in line with offshore wind energy development plans, while taking into account its consequences for the protection of marine habitats;

Comment: The loss of fishing grounds is a major issue in fisheries that will substantially affect the future of the fishing industry. This should be specifically mentioned and the prospect of co-utilisation as a mitigation measure specifically highlighted.

- 40bis. HIGHLIGHTS the need that political initiatives with potentially a major impact on the fishing sector and on coastal communities as well as concrete restrictions for fishermen can only be taken on the basis of a proper legislative proposal; NOTES in this context the view of the Commission that the suggested restrictions of the bottom trawl fishing in MPAs in the “Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions EU Action Plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries” are to be understood as an invitation

for a dialogue on how to minimise the impact of fishing activities on the seabed;
DECLARES its readiness to enter into such a dialogue with the Commission, the European Parliament and all relevant stakeholders;

V. THE CFP TAPPING THE POTENTIAL OF SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION AND INVESTMENT

41. WELCOMES the proposed set-up of an Energy Transition Partnership (ETP) for EU Fisheries and Aquaculture; SUGGESTS that the framework and structure of the ETP should better define its mandate in order to fulfil its objectives;
42. AGREES that appropriate investment frameworks and funding opportunities across the value chain are key for enabling the energy transition; NOTES in this regard that the EMFAF is too limited to bridge the gap towards sustainable innovation for a sector that is highly diverse, largely dependent on fossil energies and characterised by mostly small-scale businesses; CALLS ON the Commission to provide guidance on and further develop financing options and financial assistance for measures targeting specifically zero emissions or low-carbon technology and investment in the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector;

Comment: In view of the huge challenges of transition to zero emissions, in particular for the small scale coastal fishery, reflections are needed to allow an enlarged framework for financial assistance to the sector.

43. SUPPORTS the development and use of digital technology as an opportunity for improving the operation of the fleet and monitoring and collecting a broader range of data to inform the scientific and decision-making processes;

44. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of EMFAF in supporting innovation, digitalisation and the energy transition as well as other EU funds such as Horizon, the LIFE programme and the Recovery and Resilience Facility; ACKNOWLEDGES that enhancing Member States' cooperation in research projects is also important;
45. ENDORSES therefore the Commission's initiative to develop a specific guide and comprehensive database on EU financing instruments for the energy transition in the fisheries and aquaculture sector;
46. AGREES that innovation should be rewarded and SUPPORTS the creation of an annual award for sustainable innovation in fisheries, with the support of the advisory councils;
47. NOTES the Commission's initiative to increase the flexibility of their fishing capacity management in cooperation with the sector and with EU and national financial support where eligible; INVITES the Commission to encourage Member States to use this as a 'decarbonisation capacity margin' to support the fleets to transition towards cleaner, renewable or low-carbon energy sources and fishing methods;

VI. A 'FISHERIES AND OCEANS PACT' TO PAVE THE WAY FOR THE FUTURE

48. SUPPORTS the Commission's 'Fisheries and Oceans Pact' to reconfirm the joint commitment to fully implementing current policy and contributing to necessary reflections and assessments of certain elements of the CFP; CALLS FOR the strong involvement of fisheries stakeholders and of the scientific community in the 'Fisheries and Oceans Pact'.

CZECHIA

DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

ON THE FISHERIES POLICY PACKAGE

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING:

- the Council conclusions of 19 October 2020 on the Farm to Fork Strategy¹;
- the Council conclusions of 23 October 2020 on Biodiversity – the need for urgent action²;
- the Council conclusions of 18 July 2022 on the EU’s new aquaculture strategic guidelines³;
- the Council conclusions of 13 December 2022 on International Ocean Governance for safe, secure, clean, healthy and sustainably managed oceans and seas⁴;

1 Doc. ST 12099/20.

2 Doc. ST 12210/20.

3 Doc. ST 11496/22.

4 Doc. ST 15973/22.

5 Docs. ST 6716/23 + COR 1.

6 Docs. ST 6716/23 ADD 1 REV 1 + COR 1.

7 Docs. ST 6690/23 + COR 1.

HAVING REGARD TO:

- the European Commission Communication of 21 February 2023 entitled ‘The common fisheries policy today and tomorrow: a Fisheries and Oceans Pact towards sustainable, science-based, innovative and inclusive fisheries management’ (COM(2023) 103 final)⁵ and its accompanying Commission staff working document entitled ‘Common Fisheries Policy – State of play’ (SWD(2023) 103 final)⁶;
- the European Commission Communication of 21 February 2023 entitled ‘EU Action Plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries’ (COM(2023) 102 final)⁷;
- the European Commission Communication of 21 February 2023 entitled ‘On the Energy Transition of the EU Fisheries and Aquaculture sector’ (COM(2023) 100 final)⁸;
- the European Commission Report of 21 February 2023 entitled ‘Implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013 on the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products’ (COM(2023) 101 final)⁹;
- the European Commission Communication entitled ‘Towards a Strong and Sustainable EU Algae Sector’ (COM(2022) 592 final)¹⁰;

8 Docs. ST 6689/23 + COR 1.

9 Docs. ST 6691/23 + COR 1.

10 Docs. ST 14784/22 + ADD 1.

1. EMPHASISES the important role of fisheries and aquaculture products as a source of healthy food and their contribution to food security;
2. RECALLS the three pillars of sustainability in the Common Fisheries Policy that contribute to the sustainable use of fish stocks and the sustainable development of EU aquaculture, ensure the competitiveness of the sector and guarantee a fair standard of living for coastal and rural communities;
3. AGREES with the objective of long-term sustainability, resilience and competitiveness for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, where innovation and an intensive cooperation between all relevant stakeholders should play a central role;
4. RECALLS that factors other than fisheries, such as climate change, eutrophication, predators and invasive alien species contribute to fishing mortality. All these anthropogenic and natural factors need to be addressed in a holistic manner to safeguard fish stocks and enable recovery to healthy and sustainable levels of species in poor status;
5. EMPHASISES the complexity of the sector given the variety of EU fisheries, the number of small-scale fisheries, the particularities of each sea basin and as well as the specificities of fish farming in each Member State; FURTHER EMPHASISES the need to establish conservation measures that can be adapted to regional specificities and UNDERLINES that these measures should be justified, proportionate to the benefits sought and based on the best available scientific advice and a comprehensive assessment that also considers socio-economic aspects;

I. SHIFTING FISHERIES INTERESTS BEYOND EU WATERS

6. NOTES that the geopolitical context has changed substantially since the last reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2013 and POINTS OUT the challenges this presents to fishers, aquaculture producers, coastal communities and all stakeholders concerned; EMPHASISES also the need for close cooperation on shared stocks on all levels in order to achieve the EU's sustainability objectives and improve global ocean governance;

7. HIGHLIGHTS the need to work towards a level playing field and responsible and sustainable value chains at international level in both fisheries and trade in fishery and aquaculture products, in order to maintain the competitiveness of the industry and the EU's food sovereignty in line with the new EU policy on an open, sustainable and assertive trade policy as well as with the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy;

8. LOOKS FORWARD to the forthcoming update of the European maritime security strategy and its action plan and the forthcoming Joint Communication on Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and on Security and Defence to address the nexus between climate change, environmental degradation of coastal and maritime areas and maritime security;

II. EMPOWERING PEOPLE IN FISHING AND AQUACULTURE COMMUNITIES

9. ACKNOWLEDGES that generational renewal is key to ensuring that the EU fishing, aquaculture and seafood processing sectors have a viable future and can continue to ensure food security; UNDERLINES, therefore, the importance of making these activities more attractive by improving social and working conditions through innovation, continuing to protect the biodiversity of the marine environment and promoting the role of fishers and marine aquaculture farmers as 'guardians of the sea' and providers of services of public interest; POINTS OUT the opportunities for innovative arrangements that these professions offer, such as linking production to direct sales or tourism, in particular for small-scale coastal fisheries and aquaculture; AGREES to enhance and increase the importance and the presence of women throughout the EU fishery, aquaculture and processing sector, contributing both to the generation of wealth and employment and to the sustainable use and conservation of aquatic resources;

10. ACKNOWLEDGES that EU fisheries and fishing fleets must reduce their operational energy costs to ensure the sector's long-term profitability and resilience, thus becoming more efficient while maintaining long-term sustainability objectives; ENCOURAGES measures to improve the aquaculture sector's competitiveness by further diversifying its production and ensuring added value for its products as well as reducing its reliance on fossil fuels and energy consumption;

11. SUPPORTS the work of the Commission to ensure high standards for fishers' safety and working conditions, notably on the international stage through the ratification and implementation of the revised international Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F) and of International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) conventions; ENCOURAGES the accelerated ratification of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and

International Maritime Organization (IMO) conventions;

12. UNDERLINES the roles of producer organisations and inter-branch organisations to better structure the value chain and improve market conditions through the collective management of their members' activities and the mutualisation of resources;

13. DEEMS IT NECESSARY to strengthen socio-economic resilience in the context of fossil fuel dependency, increased and volatile energy prices, the need for greater energy efficiency and sustainability of the sector and the goal of reaching climate neutrality in the EU by 2050; WELCOMES the actions proposed by the Commission regarding stakeholder cooperation, knowledge and innovation, as well as the strengthening of workforce skills, but CALLS ON the Commission to provide better guidance on financing options and impact assessments to support the energy transition in the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector;

14. WELCOMES the launching of the EU-wide participatory foresight project 'Fishers of the Future' aimed at forecasting the crucial role of fishers in society beyond the provision of high-quality seafood with a relatively low carbon footprint; EMPHASISES the need to better identify the trends, opportunities and threats that determine the attractiveness of the fishing sector;

15. RECOGNISES the importance of up-to-date education and vocational training systems to improve employment opportunities for workers and the sector's attractiveness to newcomers in order to address skills shortages, in particular in relation to the transition to renewable and low-carbon alternative energy sources and low-impact fishing gears and techniques; ENCOURAGES, in this regard, the setting-up of large-scale skills partnerships;

16. SUPPORTS the use of a bottom-up approach, as of 2023, enabling local fishing and aquaculture communities to address socio-economic challenges and needs through community-led local development under the 2021-2027 EMFAF programmes;

17. WELCOMES the ongoing work of the Commission and scientific bodies to further develop social indicators for the analysis of socio-economic reports; ACKNOWLEDGES that scientific advice and management measures already take into account socio-economic impacts, but ENCOURAGES further development in this regard to reinforce informed management decisions;

III. CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROTECTION OF THE PLANET

18. EMPHASISES the importance of sustainability principles in fisheries management and REITERATES the need to take into account the three pillars of the CFP, i.e. economic, environmental and social sustainability;

19. REMAINS FULLY COMMITTED to safeguarding biodiversity and protecting and restoring the marine ecosystems upon which healthy fish stocks that can contribute to food security and a viable fishing sector within the EU depend;

20. EXPRESSES the willingness to protect biodiversity, specifically the sensitive species affected by fishing activity, through the use of new innovative gears designed for this purpose, based on the best scientific information available;

21. NOTES the ongoing work on threshold values for the maximum allowable mortality rate from incidental catches of sensitive species, and for the maximum allowable extent of seabed that can be lost or adversely affected by human pressure, as part of the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive;

22. RECOGNISES the objectives set out in the proposed action plan on marine ecosystems in contributing to the EU 2030 biodiversity strategy, but CALLS FOR a comprehensive impact assessment based on the best available science as a basis for operational and proportional applicability of the proposed actions, with regard to their benefits for marine ecosystems and taking into account regional specificities as well as financial and socio-economic implications;

23. IS COMMITTED to contributing to the objective of creating a coherent network of well-managed protected areas and to protecting a minimum of 30% of the EU's sea area, one third of which is strictly protected; EMPHASISES that this is an objective to be reached by Member States collectively based on the Natura 2000 network and therefore EMPHASISES the importance of introducing fisheries measures that are necessary for the purpose of complying with these objectives; UNDERLINES that the use of gears such as contact bottom fishing in marine protected areas (MPAs) should be in line with the best available science for the conservation objectives of each MPA; NOTES that the CFP and Technical Measures Regulations empower Member States via regionalisation to propose joint recommendations for necessary conservation measures based on scientific evidence in MPAs and that such work is ongoing;

XX. SHARES the urgent need to improve the status of the critically endangered eel population. ENCOURAGES the sharing of best practices with other Member States and discussion at expert level to help find the most appropriate measures. CALLS on the Commission to take immediate and effective action at EU level.

24. CONSIDERS that the planning of activities is essential to allow all interested stakeholders to contribute to the implementation of the Marine Action Plan and NOTES the proposed concept of individual Member States roadmaps;

25. ACKNOWLEDGES that achieving maximum sustainable yield levels for commercially exploited fish stocks is a key principle of the Common Fisheries Policy and contributes to the good environmental status of commercial fish populations; UNDERLINES that fish stocks are also affected by other human activity as well as environmental factors and predators and therefore SUPPORTS the improvement of ecosystem-based and multi-species scientific advice, for instance taking into account the impact of species such as seals and cormorants for the achievement of maximum sustainable yield for affected stocks;

26. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of innovative solutions in fishing techniques to minimise the environmental impact and carbon footprint and to increase selectivity to ensure that fishers only catch targeted species and comply with the landing obligation;

27. WELCOMES the Commission's intention to conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of current EU legislation on the landing obligation pertaining to the conservation of commercial fish stocks;

28. EMPHASISES that increased inclusion of the ecosystem approach to scientific assessments is needed in fisheries management to factor in environmental and climate change and other human activity impacts as well as predators that affect fish stocks. Such an approach will provide for a holistic fisheries governance framework that tackles the trade-offs between ecological, social (including cultural and institutional) and economic sustainability criteria;

29. REAFFIRMS that the EU will continue to apply zero tolerance towards illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and promote sustainable fisheries combatting overfishing and reducing by-catch of threatened and unwanted species;

30. REITERATES the importance of encouraging the use of innovative techniques in compliance with CFP objectives; AGREES that innovation should be supported financially and through specific incentives; and RECALLS that this is even more relevant for small-scale coastal fisheries and aquaculture operators with low profit margins;

31. EMPHASISES the need to ensure mutual supportiveness with all initiatives under the European Green Deal and with EU and Member States' objectives related to, inter alia, food security, health, climate change, environment and the sustainable use of terrestrial and marine natural resources, especially sustainable agriculture and food systems, sustainable fisheries and the sustainable management of forests;

32. REITERATES the importance of adopting joint recommendations through regionalisation in order to contribute to the implementation of EU environmental legislation;

33. IS AWARE of the importance of the sustainable development of the aquaculture sector in the EU and of the current and outstanding challenges to the growth of this sector; LOOKS FORWARD to guidance documents that the Commission intends to issue to support the implementation of its 'Strategic guidelines adopted by the Commission in 2021 for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030'; SUPPORTS the clear vision of the objectives and challenges to be taken into account and of the concrete actions needed for this sector to reach its potential in terms of sustainable food supply, economic development and the creation of employment in coastal and rural areas across the EU;

34. WELCOMES the Commission's document 'Towards a Strong and Sustainable EU Algae Sector' and the Commission's efforts to support EU algae sector developments and, in particular, the adoption on 15 November 2022 of the EU Algae Initiative; RECOGNISES that regenerative algae farming has the potential to become a significant part of the EU blue bioeconomy and can provide opportunities to EU fishers and other actors in coastal and rural areas for diversification of their economic activities; WELCOMES the Commission's initiative to establish a cross-cutting European algae stakeholder platform (EU4Algae);

XX. STRESSES that piscivorous predators have a negative impact on the competitiveness and long-term sustainability of European aquaculture. CALLS on the Commission to adopt an EU-wide solution for the management of stocks of certain species, such as the great cormorant and river otter in particular;

IV. IMPROVING CFP GOVERNANCE

35. REAFFIRMS the crucial role of producer organisations in implementing CFP objectives or both fisheries and aquaculture, and HIGHLIGHTS their important role in balancing the conservation of marine resources and fleet competitiveness and therefore their contribution to food security; IS CONVINCED that enhancing these structures and fostering the creation of inter-branch organisations and transnational professional organisations will further strengthen the proper functioning of the value chain and contribute to achieving CFP objectives;

36. WELCOMES the Commission's work on marketing standards; EMPHASISES the need to ensure consistency between the rules of horizontal EU regulation on the provision of food information to consumers and the rules on consumer information in the Common Markets Organisation Regulation and AGREES that information on fishery and aquaculture product labels is essential to inform consumers about sustainable European fishery and aquaculture products. RECOMMENDS increasing consumer awareness of all the benefits that fishery and aquaculture ensures;

37. UNDERLINES the importance of the work of regional groups while recognising the workload associated with regionalisation; ENCOURAGES, therefore, all parties concerned to participate actively in this work; REAFFIRMS the important role of advisory councils in this context and within the CFP more generally;

38. AGREES that transparency on the allocation criteria used is important; UNDERLINES that the definition of the criteria for allocation of fishing opportunities at national level is Member

States' competence within the framework set by Article 17 of the CFP;

39. CALLS ON the Commission to provide a thorough impact assessment for any future legislative proposal, in line with the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law Making, including an assessment of subsidiarity and proportionality of the proposed measures; CALLS ON the Commission to provide better guidance on financing options;

40. HIGHLIGHTS the role of Maritime Spatial Planning, built on an ecosystem-based management approach, in supporting the achievement of conservation and restoration targets and in mitigating and minimising the harmful impact of human activities in coastal areas and offshore, and not only from fisheries, as well as its contribution to a competitive and sustainable blue economy and the need for a more coordinated approach between policy areas and legislation within the Union;

V. THE CFP TAPPING THE POTENTIAL OF SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION AND INVESTMENT

41. WELCOMES the proposed set-up of an Energy Transition Partnership (ETP) for EU Fisheries and Aquaculture; SUGGESTS that the framework and structure of the ETP should better define its mandate in order to fulfil its objectives;

42. AGREES that appropriate investment frameworks and funding opportunities across the value chain are key for enabling the energy transition; NOTES in this regard that the EMFAF is too limited to bridge the gap towards sustainable innovation for a sector that is highly diverse and characterised by mostly small-scale businesses; CALLS ON the Commission to provide guidance on financing options and financial assistance for measures targeting specifically zero emissions or low-carbon technology and investment in the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector;

43. SUPPORTS the development, harmonisation at the EU level and use of digital technology as an opportunity for collecting a broader range of data to inform the scientific and decision-making processes, on the other hand, it is ESSENTIAL to avoid an excessive increase in the administrative burden of data collection.

44. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of EMFAF in supporting innovation, digitalisation and the energy transition as well as other EU funds such as Horizon, the LIFE programme and the Recovery and Resilience Facility; ACKNOWLEDGES that enhancing Member States' cooperation in research projects is also important;

45. ENDORSES therefore the Commission's initiative to develop a specific guide and comprehensive database on EU financing instruments for the energy transition in the fisheries and aquaculture sector;

46. AGREES that innovation should be rewarded and SUPPORTS the creation of an annual award for sustainable innovation in fisheries, with the support of the advisory councils;

47. NOTES the Commission's initiative to increase the flexibility of their fishing capacity management in cooperation with the sector and with EU and national financial support where eligible; INVITES the Commission to encourage Member States to use this as a 'decarbonisation capacity margin' to support the fleets to transition towards cleaner, renewable or low-carbon energy sources and fishing methods;

XX. PROPOSES the establishment of a transparent EU system for recognising and rewarding producers for sustainable aquaculture management that is environmentally friendly and/or enables additional ecosystem services to motivate producers to achieve a higher environmental and socio-economic performance of aquaculture.

VI. A 'FISHERIES AND OCEANS PACT' TO PAVE THE WAY FOR THE FUTURE

48. SUPPORTS the Commission's 'Fisheries and Oceans Pact' to reconfirm the joint commitment to fully implementing current policy and contributing to necessary reflections and assessments of certain elements of the CFP; CALLS FOR the strong involvement of fisheries stakeholders and of the scientific community in the 'Fisheries and Oceans Pact'.



**Brussels, 19 April 2023
(OR. en)**

8303/23

LIMITE

**PECHE 131
ENV 375
POLMAR 21
ENER 188**

NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Council Conclusions on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the Energy Transition of the EU Fisheries and Aquaculture sector• Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council Implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013 on the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products• Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions EU Action Plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries• Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council The common fisheries policy today and tomorrow: a Fisheries and Oceans Pact towards sustainable, science-based, innovative and inclusive fisheries management

- *Draft Council conclusions*

Delegations will find attached draft Council conclusions on the above-mentioned subject.

**DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS
ON THE FISHERIES POLICY PACKAGE**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING:

- the Council conclusions of 19 October 2020 on the Farm to Fork Strategy²⁰;
- the Council conclusions of 23 October 2020 on Biodiversity – the need for urgent action²¹;
- the Council conclusions of 18 July 2022 on the EU’s new aquaculture strategic guidelines²²;
- the Council conclusions of 13 December 2022 on International Ocean Governance for safe, secure, clean, healthy and sustainably managed oceans and seas²³;

HAVING REGARD TO:

- the European Commission Communication of 21 February 2023 entitled ‘The common fisheries policy today and tomorrow: a Fisheries and Oceans Pact towards sustainable, science-based, innovative and inclusive fisheries management’ (COM(2023) 103 final)²⁴ and its accompanying Commission staff working document entitled ‘Common Fisheries Policy - State of play’ (SWD(2023) 103 final)²⁵;
- the European Commission Communication of 21 February 2023 entitled ‘EU Action Plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries’ (COM(2023) 102 final)²⁶;

²⁰ Doc. ST 12099/20.

²¹ Doc. ST 12210/20.

²² Doc. ST 11496/22.

²³ Doc. ST 15973/22.

²⁴ Docs. ST 6716/23 + COR 1.

²⁵ Docs. ST 6716/23 ADD 1 REV 1 + COR 1.

²⁶ Docs. ST 6690/23 + COR 1.

- the European Commission Communication of 21 February 2023 entitled ‘On the Energy Transition of the EU Fisheries and Aquaculture sector’ (COM(2023) 100 final)²⁷;
 - the European Commission Report of 21 February 2023 entitled ‘Implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013 on the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products’ (COM(2023) 101 final)²⁸;
 - the European Commission Communication entitled ‘Towards a Strong and Sustainable EU Algae Sector’ (COM(2022) 592 final)²⁹;
1. EMPHASISES the important role of fisheries and aquaculture products as a source of healthy food and their contribution to food security;
 2. RECALLS the three pillars of sustainability in the Common Fisheries Policy that contribute to the sustainable use of fish stocks and the sustainable development of EU aquaculture, ensure the competitiveness of the sector and guarantee a fair standard of living for coastal and rural communities;
 3. AGREES with the objective of long-term sustainability and resilience for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, where innovation and joint collaboration between the different parties should play a central role;

²⁷ Docs. ST 6689/23 + COR 1.

²⁸ Docs. ST 6691/23 + COR 1.

²⁹ Docs. ST 14784/22 + ADD 1.

4. RECALLS that factors other than fisheries, such as climate change, eutrophication, predators and invasive alien species contribute to fish mortality and that all factors need to be addressed in a holistic manner to safeguard fish stocks and enable recovery to healthy and sustainable levels of species in poor status;
5. EMPHASISES the complexity of the sector given the variety of EU fisheries, the number of small-scale fisheries and the particularities of each sea basin; FURTHER EMPHASISES, hence, the need to establish conservation measures that can be adapted to regional specificities and UNDERLINES that these measures should be justified, proportionate to the benefits sought and based on the best available scientific advice and a comprehensive assessment that also considers socio-economic aspects;

I. SHIFTING FISHERIES INTERESTS BEYOND EU WATERS

6. NOTES that the geopolitical context has changed substantially since the last reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2013 and POINTS OUT the challenges this presents to fishers, aquaculture producers, coastal communities and all stakeholders concerned; EMPHASISES also the need for close cooperation on shared stocks on all levels in order to achieve the EU's sustainability objectives and improve global ocean governance;

7. HIGHLIGHTS the need to work towards a level playing field and responsible and sustainable value chains at international level in both fisheries and trade in fishery and aquaculture products, in order to maintain the competitiveness of the industry and the EU's food sovereignty in line with the new EU policy on an open, sustainable and assertive trade policy as well as with the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy;
8. LOOKS FORWARD to the forthcoming update of the European maritime security strategy and its action plan and the forthcoming Joint Communication on Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and on Security and Defence to address the nexus between climate change, environmental degradation of coastal and maritime areas and maritime security;

II. EMPOWERING PEOPLE IN FISHING AND AQUACULTURE COMMUNITIES

9. ACKNOWLEDGES that generational renewal is key to ensuring that the EU fishing, aquaculture and seafood processing sectors and coastal communities have a viable future and can continue to ensure food security; UNDERLINES, therefore, the importance of making these activities more attractive by improving social and working conditions through innovation, continuing to protect the biodiversity of the marine environment and promoting the role of fishers and marine aquaculture farmers as 'guardians of the sea' and providers of services of public interest; POINTS OUT the opportunities for innovative arrangements that these professions offer, such as linking production to direct sales or tourism, in particular for small-scale coastal fisheries and aquaculture; RECOGNISES that excessive administrative burden and overregulation in Community level reduces the attractiveness of fisheries sector and therefore simplification of the management of fisheries is needed in order to give fishers incentives to make economically sustainable decisions themselves in the framework where sustainable utilization of fish stocks is ensured; AGREES to enhance and increase the importance and the presence of women throughout the EU seafood value chain, contributing both to the generation of wealth and employment and to the sustainable use and conservation of aquatic resources;

10. ACKNOWLEDGES that EU fisheries and fishing fleets must reduce their operational energy costs to ensure the sector's long-term profitability and resilience, thus becoming more efficient while maintaining long-term sustainability objectives; POINTS OUT that fishing capacity ceilings are an obstacle for structural change towards decarbonisation of the fishing fleet; ENCOURAGES measures to improve the aquaculture sector's competitiveness by further diversifying its production and ensuring added value for its products as well as reducing its reliance on fossil fuels;
11. SUPPORTS the work of the Commission to ensure high standards for fishers' safety and working conditions, notably on the international stage through the ratification and implementation of the revised international Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F) and of International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) conventions; ENCOURAGES the accelerated ratification of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) conventions;
12. UNDERLINES the roles of producer organisations and inter-branch organisations to better structure the value chain and improve market conditions through the collective management of their members' activities and the mutualisation of resources;
13. DEEMS IT NECESSARY to strengthen socio-economic resilience in the context of fossil fuel dependency, increased and volatile energy prices, the need for greater energy efficiency and sustainability of the sector and the goal of reaching climate neutrality in the EU by 2050; WELCOMES the actions proposed by the Commission regarding stakeholder cooperation, knowledge and innovation, as well as the strengthening of workforce skills, but CALLS ON the Commission to provide better guidance on financing options and impact assessments to support the energy transition in the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector;

14. WELCOMES the launching of the EU-wide participatory foresight project ‘Fishers of the Future’ aimed at forecasting the crucial role of fishers in society beyond the provision of high-quality seafood with a relatively low carbon footprint; EMPHASISES the need to better identify the trends, opportunities and threats that determine the attractiveness of the fishing sector;
15. RECOGNISES the importance of up-to-date education and vocational training systems to improve employment opportunities for workers and the sector’s attractiveness to newcomers in order to address skills shortages, in particular in relation to the transition to renewable and low-carbon alternative energy sources and low-impact fishing gears and techniques; ENCOURAGES, in this regard, the setting-up of large-scale skills partnerships;
16. SUPPORTS the use of a bottom-up approach, as of 2023, enabling local fishing and aquaculture communities to address socio-economic challenges and needs through community-led local development under the 2021-2027 EMFAF programmes;
17. WELCOMES the ongoing work of the Commission and scientific bodies to further develop social indicators for the analysis of socio-economic reports; ACKNOWLEDGES that scientific advice and management measures already take into account socio-economic impacts, but ENCOURAGES further development in this regard to reinforce informed management decisions;

III. CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROTECTION OF THE PLANET

18. EMPHASISES the importance of sustainability principles in fisheries management and REITERATES the need to take into account the three pillars of the CFP, i.e. economic, environmental and social sustainability;
19. REMAINS FULLY COMMITTED to safeguarding biodiversity and protecting and restoring the marine ecosystems upon which healthy fish stocks that can contribute to food security and a viable fishing sector within the EU depend;
20. EXPRESSES the willingness to protect biodiversity, specifically the sensitive species affected by fishing activity, through the use of new innovative gears designed for this purpose, based on the best scientific information available;
21. NOTES the ongoing work on threshold values for the maximum allowable mortality rate from incidental catches of sensitive species, and for the maximum allowable extent of seabed that can be lost or adversely affected by human pressure, as part of the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
22. RECOGNISES the objectives set out in the proposed action plan on marine ecosystems in contributing to the EU 2030 biodiversity strategy, but CALLS FOR a comprehensive impact assessment based on the best available science as a basis for operational and proportional applicability of the proposed actions, with regard to their benefits for marine ecosystems and taking into account regional specificities as well as financial and socio-economic implications;

23. IS COMMITTED to contributing to the objective of creating a coherent network of well-managed protected areas and to protecting a minimum of 30% of the EU's sea area, one third of which is strictly protected; EMPHASISES that this is an objective to be reached by Member States collectively based on the Natura 2000 network and therefore EMPHASISES the importance of introducing fisheries measures that are necessary for the purpose of complying with these objectives; UNDERLINES that the use of gears such as contact bottom fishing in marine protected areas (MPAs) should depend on the conservation objectives of each MPA and be in line with the best available science and thus AGREES that mobile bottom fishing gears should be phased out in MPAs that are designated to protect bottom habitats; NOTES that the CFP and Technical Measures Regulations empower Member States via regionalisation to propose joint recommendations for necessary conservation measures based on scientific evidence in MPAs and that such work is ongoing;
24. CONSIDERS that the planning of activities is essential to allow all interested stakeholders to contribute to the implementation of the Marine Action Plan and NOTES the proposed concept of individual Member States roadmaps;
25. ACKNOWLEDGES that achieving maximum sustainable yield levels for commercially exploited fish stocks is a key principle of the Common Fisheries Policy and contributes to the good environmental status of commercial fish populations; UNDERLINES that fish stocks are also affected by other human activity as well as environmental factors and predators and therefore SUPPORTS the improvement of ecosystem-based and multi-species scientific advice, for instance taking into account the impact of species such as seals and cormorants for the achievement of maximum sustainable yield for affected stocks;

26. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of innovative solutions in fishing techniques as well as fishing methods already in practice that aim to minimise the environmental impact and carbon footprint and to increase selectivity to ensure that fishers only catch targeted species and comply with the landing obligation;
27. WELCOMES the Commission's intention to conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of current EU legislation on the landing obligation pertaining to the conservation of commercial fish stocks;
28. EMPHASISES that increased inclusion of the ecosystem approach to scientific assessments is needed in fisheries management to factor in environmental and climate change and other human activity impacts as well as predators that affect fish stocks. Such an approach will provide for a holistic fisheries governance framework that tackles the trade-offs between ecological, social (including cultural and institutional) and economic sustainability criteria;
29. REAFFIRMS that the EU will continue to apply zero tolerance towards illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and promote sustainable fisheries combatting overfishing and reducing by-catch of threatened and unwanted species;
30. REITERATES the importance of encouraging the use of innovative techniques in compliance with CFP objectives; AGREES that innovation should be supported financially and through specific incentives; and RECALLS that this is even more relevant for small-scale coastal fisheries and aquaculture operators with low profit margins;

31. EMPHASISES the need to ensure mutual supportiveness with all initiatives under the European Green Deal and with EU and Member States' objectives related to, inter alia, food security, health, climate change, environment and the sustainable use of terrestrial and marine natural resources, especially sustainable agriculture and food systems, sustainable fisheries and the sustainable management of forests;
32. REITERATES the importance of adopting joint recommendations through regionalisation in order to contribute to the implementation of EU fisheries and environmental legislation;
33. IS AWARE of the importance of the sustainable development of the aquaculture sector in the EU and of the current and outstanding challenges to the growth of this sector; LOOKS FORWARD to guidance documents that the Commission intends to issue to support the implementation of its 'Strategic guidelines adopted by the Commission in 2021 for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030'; SUPPORTS the clear vision of the objectives and challenges to be taken into account and of the concrete actions needed for this sector to reach its potential in terms of sustainable food supply, economic development and the creation of employment in coastal and rural areas across the EU;
34. WELCOMES the Commission's document 'Towards a Strong and Sustainable EU Algae Sector' and the Commission's efforts to support EU algae sector developments and, in particular, the adoption on 15 November 2022 of the EU Algae Initiative; RECOGNISES that regenerative algae farming has the potential to become a significant part of the EU blue bioeconomy and can provide opportunities to EU fishers and other actors in coastal and rural areas for diversification of their economic activities; WELCOMES the Commission's initiative to establish a cross-cutting European algae stakeholder platform (EU4Algae);

IV. IMPROVING CFP GOVERNANCE

35. REAFFIRMS the crucial role of producer organisations in implementing CFP objectives for both fisheries and aquaculture, and HIGHLIGHTS their important role in balancing the conservation of marine resources and fleet competitiveness and therefore their contribution to food security; IS CONVINCED that enhancing these structures and fostering the creation of inter-branch organisations and transnational professional organisations will further strengthen the proper functioning of the value chain and contribute to achieving CFP objectives;
36. WELCOMES the Commission's work on marketing standards; EMPHASISES the need to ensure consistency between the rules of horizontal EU regulation on the provision of food information to consumers and the rules on consumer information in the Common Markets Organisation Regulation and AGREES that information on fishery and aquaculture product labels is essential for consumers to make informed choices;
37. UNDERLINES the importance of the work of regional groups while recognising the workload associated with regionalisation; ENCOURAGES, therefore, all parties concerned to participate actively in this work; REAFFIRMS the important role of advisory councils in this context and within the CFP more generally;
38. AGREES that transparency on the allocation criteria used is important; UNDERLINES that the definition of the criteria for allocation of fishing opportunities at national level is Member States' competence within the framework set by Article 17 of the CFP;

39. CALLS ON the Commission to provide a thorough impact assessment for any future legislative proposal, in line with the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law Making, including an assessment of subsidiarity and proportionality of the proposed measures; CALLS ON the Commission to provide better guidance on financing options;
40. HIGHLIGHTS the role of Maritime Spatial Planning, built on an ecosystem-based management approach, in supporting the achievement of conservation and restoration targets and in mitigating and minimising the harmful impact of human activities in coastal areas and offshore, and not only from fisheries, as well as its contribution to a competitive and sustainable blue economy and the need for a more coordinated approach between policy areas and legislation within the Union;

V. THE CFP TAPPING THE POTENTIAL OF SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION AND INVESTMENT

41. WELCOMES the proposed set-up of an Energy Transition Partnership (ETP) for EU Fisheries and Aquaculture; SUGGESTS that the framework and structure of the ETP should better define its mandate in order to fulfil its objectives;
42. AGREES that appropriate investment frameworks and funding opportunities across the value chain are key for enabling the energy transition; NOTES in this regard that the EMFAF is too limited to bridge the gap towards sustainable innovation for a sector that is highly diverse and characterised by mostly small-scale businesses; CALLS ON the Commission to provide guidance on financing options and financial assistance for measures targeting specifically zero emissions or low-carbon technology and investment in the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector;

43. SUPPORTS the development and use of digital technology as an opportunity for collecting a broader range of data to inform the scientific and decision-making processes;
44. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of EMFAF in supporting innovation, digitalisation and the energy transition as well as other EU funds such as Horizon, the LIFE programme and the Recovery and Resilience Facility; ACKNOWLEDGES that enhancing Member States' cooperation in research projects is also important;
45. ENDORSES therefore the Commission's initiative to develop a specific guide and comprehensive database on EU financing instruments for the energy transition in the fisheries and aquaculture sector; CALLS ON the Commission to review financing options for the energy transition of fishing fleet and providing that financing based on financial instruments would be flexible and not be limited by specific EMFAF eligibility rules;
46. AGREES that innovation should be rewarded and SUPPORTS the creation of an annual award for sustainable innovation in fisheries, with the support of the advisory councils;
47. NOTES the Commission's initiative to increase the flexibility of their fishing capacity management in cooperation with the sector and with EU and national financial support where eligible; INVITES the Commission to encourage Member States to use this as a 'decarbonisation capacity margin' to support the fleets to transition towards cleaner, renewable or low-carbon energy sources and fishing methods; UNDERLINES that current fishing capacity management prevents efficient implementation of the European Green Deal and is redundant in the fish stocks management systems where sustainable management of fish stocks is ensured by setting annual TAC's and quotas as well as in the case of small scale coastal fisheries where passive fishing gear is used and where restrictions on permitted number of passive fishing gear are imposed; and therefore CALLS ON the Commission to review and propose to change the fishing capacity management as appropriate.

VI. A 'FISHERIES AND OCEANS PACT' TO PAVE THE WAY FOR THE FUTURE

48. SUPPORTS the Commission's 'Fisheries and Oceans Pact' to reconfirm the joint commitment to fully implementing current policy and contributing to necessary reflections and assessments of certain elements of the CFP; CALLS FOR the strong involvement of fisheries stakeholders and of the scientific community in the 'Fisheries and Oceans Pact'.

POLAND

Written comments provided by Poland

Poland generally supports the prepared Council conclusions of the fisheries package.

The conclusions should additionally cover the issues raised in the written comments of Member States and during the meeting of the Council.

Poland believes that the conclusions should include a reference to the fishing capacity available in the states, which can be allocated to the energy transformation. The size of the available fishing capacity, in case of Poland, will not allow for the modernization of vessels in a way that will meet the requirements of the energy transition. Thus, in order to properly perform an effective energy transition, it seems necessary to consider the possibility of increasing the fishing capacity of individual Member States, provided that this capacity is allocated exclusively to this transition. It is also necessary to strongly facilitate access to financing that will be used for the transition.

It should also be noted that the energy transition in the case of the Baltic fishing fleet, whose average age is very high, should be related to the renewal of this fleet. The installation of new equipment for the purpose of energy transformation on 40-year-old ships may not bring the expected results and is economically unprofitable. Therefore, the energy transition should be linked to the renewal of the fleet, which entails the need to increase the size of the fishing capacity of the Member States.

As the proposed package is very ambitious and its implementation cannot be immediate and thus requires a gradual process, it is important for Poland that the proposed timeframe for its implementation is appropriate. Poland therefore proposes to call on the Commission to adapt the timeframe to the possibility of implementing individual measures by states and fishermen.

Poland also strongly believes that the package should take much greater account of the regional specificity and some of the proposed solutions should be adapted to this specificity.