

MEMBERS' MEETING REPORT





EAPQ BUREAU

President: Esben Sverdrup-Jensen

Treasurer: Yves Foëzon

Secretary: irene Prieto

Secretary-General: Emiel Brouckaert

Policy Officer: Paul Thomas

Executive Assistant: Zarah Bellefroid

MEMBERS LIST

The European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO) represents 31 POs from 12 EU Member States, with approximately **3,700 vessels, 2 million tonnes of landings and € 2.1 billion first sale value**. EAPO was founded in 1980. Every Fish PO recognized by its EU member state can apply for membership of the association.



FRANCE



- Anop
- Cobrenord
- Cooperative Maritime Étafloise
- Manche Mer du Nord
- Fedopa

- From nord
- From sud ouest
- Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne
- Organisation des Pêcheurs Normands
- Pêcheurs d'Aquitaine

BELGIUM



- Rederscentrale

DENMARK



- Danmarks Pelagiske PO
- Danmarks Fiskeriforening PO

ESTONIA



- Eesti Kalatootjate Keskühistu

IRELAND



- Irish Fish PO
- Irish South & West Fish PO Ltd
- Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation Ltd.

GERMANY



- Erzeugergemeinschaft der Deutschen Krabbenfischer GmbH
- Erzeugergemeinschaft der Nord- und Ostseefischer GmbH
- Seefrostvertrieb GmbH

LATVIA



- National Fisheries Producers Organization

LITHUANIA



- Association of fisherman and fish processors "Baltijos žvejas"

NETHERLANDS



- PO Urk
- Nederlandse Vissersbond
- PO Noordelijke Visserijalliantie
- Redersvereniging

SPAIN



- OPPF-4
- Puerto de Celeiro S.A. OPP - 77

POLAND



- North Atlantic PO
- Organizacja Producentów Ry BAŁTYK.

SWEDEN



- Swedish Pelagic Federation

THE PRESIDENT'S EDITORIAL

By Esben Sverdrup-Jensen



Dear reader,

We are well into 2024, another year of both challenges and promises. The entry into force of the new Control Regulation, upcoming European elections and the review of the TCA starting to emerge, just to mention a few. The world of EU fisheries is ever evolving, and it is key that we engage proactively with policymakers, stakeholders, and our communities to make the best of these challenges and to shape a resilient and striving future for our sector.

Early 2024, we see elements challenging the fundamentals of the TCA between the UK and EU – access to waters and resources. The designation of 13 MPAs in UK waters closed to bottom trawling alongside the unilateral closure of sandeel fishing in UK waters where 96% of quotas are EU, are the most prominent examples. EU must stand firm in guarding the principles of the TCA. We cannot allow for the UK to undermine a deal that has cost our fishing community so dearly and that for many of our colleagues meant the end of their careers and the scrapping of their dreams.

2024 also marks the entry into force of the new Control Regulation. After 5 years of negotiations, the text was finally approved and entered into force on the 10th of January. The final result was a mixed bag, although our efforts in making legislation transparent and in tune with the realities at sea and in the marine environment were not in vain, we ended very far from a control regime that is both comprehensive and effective, while recognizing the will of the fishing community (led by POs) to take responsibility and to comply. The regulation has been reviewed but the lack of trust prevails.

With the regulation in place, the implementation only now starts. With 34 implementing and delegated acts to be published, our watch begins to ensure that they are workable for EU fishers. The first step will be EAPO publishing its position on the implementing act on listed ports.

Finally, 2024 will be the year of the European elections. It is our chance to showcase the sectors contribution to healthy, sustainable and low-carbon food security. To do so, we need full support from the Commission, and we need a Vice-President responsible for EU food sovereignty. Rallying under the Commission's umbrella, food producers will be able to show a united front for sustainability and food sovereignty to all EU citizens.

In 2023, the Commission launched a project to define its views of the Fishers for the future Commission proposal, in 2024, we will launch the Fishers' view of the future. Our policy statement for the next Commissioner with concrete recommendations on how to allow our sector to strive by 2030.

Enjoy reading,



WORKING GROUP REPORTS

EAPO has set up working groups around 6 Advisory Councils. The objective being that it allows European POs to prepare and present a common position. On top of these preparatory meetings, EAPO working groups can draft specific letters to be sent to the Commission.

NORTH WESTERN WATERS WORKING GROUP

Since the last General Assembly, the North Western Waters Working Group has been involved in drafting EAPO's position paper for 2024 fishing opportunities. The NWWWG also held a joint meeting with The North Sea Working Group to discuss ICES's advice on Northern Shelf Cod and suggest a new approach to setting the TAC.

The NWWWG has also provided key inputs in its advice on ICES's new rfb approach requesting that a mean of available indicators be used.



NORTHERN PELAGIC WORKING GROUP

The Northern Pelagic Working group held 2 meetings since EAPO's General Assembly. In a similar fashion to the North Sea Working Group, the work in the WG has been affected by the negotiations of the following agreements:

- Coastal States: NEA mackerel, blue whiting, AS herring
- Trilateral EU-UK-NO: NS herring
- Bilateral EU-UK: a.o. Western horse mackerel
- Bilateral EU-NO, incl. current state of play



NPWG Members supplied the Commission with input to prepare these negotiations with third countries.

The NPWG worked to publish its position paper on fishing opportunities before negotiations began. Moreover, The NPWG has also worked on the implementation of the new Control regulation providing key input on the question of listed ports for derogations to the Margins of Tolerance.

BALTIC SEA WORKING GROUP

Since the EAPO's General Assembly, the Baltic Sea Working Group has held 2 meetings. It has worked on the consequences of the Commission's proposal for fishing opportunities for 2024. In its proposal, the Commission had suggested that a bycatch approach be set up for central Baltic herring. EAPO requested to meet Commissioner Sinkevičius to discuss this proposal.

On the 18th of October 2023, the Baltic Sea Working Group met with the Commissioner to highlight the lack of consensus on ICES's new benchmark as well as the issues on the Commission's interpretation of Article 4.6 of the Baltic Sea Multiannual plan. This discussion, alongside Member States' intervention led to the Commission proposal to delete this article from existing multiannual plans.

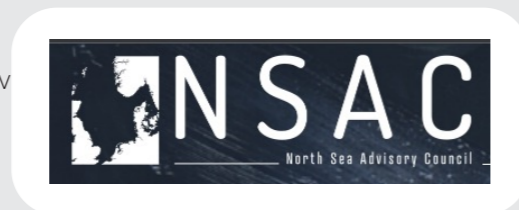
The BSWG also provided comments on the implementing acts relating to the Margin of Tolerance.



NORTH SEA WORKING GROUP

Since EAPO's General Assembly, the North Sea Working Group met twice. Once to discuss the issues faced by the demersal sector in the negotiations with Norway: Beam trawl ban, cross-border fishing ban. This discussion resulted in a letter that was sent to DGMARE.

The second meeting of the NSWG was a joint meeting with the NWWWG to discuss ICES's new approach to Northern shelf cod. A joint advice was issued suggesting the use of an MSY approach to all three substocks.



SOUTH WESTERN WATERS WORKING GROUP

The South Western Waters Working Group worked with its members to publish its position on the South Western Waters to prepare the council negotiations.

On top of this yearly position paper, the SWWWG published a press release and a letter addressing the recent closure of the Bay of Biscay to protect small cetaceans.



MARKETS WORKING GROUP

As a member of the Market Advisory Council, EAPO' has been involved in the drafting and writing of a lot of advice. Since the EAPO General Assembly, the Market Working Group has planned 2 meetings prior to the MAC meetings. EAPO contributed to the following advice:

- Marine Action Plan's Market impacts
- Substantiation of Green Claims
- "Taste the Ocean" campaign and other potential campaigns for awareness about fishery and aquaculture products in the EU
- STECF's Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet (2024)
- Studies to be integrated in European Market Observatory for Fisheries and Aquaculture (EUMOFA) Work Programme (2024)

Moreover, EAPO drafted 2 advice on for the MAC, the first one on market measures from producer organisation and the second on the Marine Action Plan's Market impacts.

The MWG also highlighted the sector's issues in a letter sent to the Commissioner on Autonomous Tariff Quotas and on the renegotiation of the European Economic Area agreement. Following this letter, our Policy Officer and Secretary General met with Unit B3 to discuss these matters.



2024 - WORK PROGRAMME

BREXIT ADJUSTMENT RESERVE EXTENSION REQUEST

Following a request from our members, EAPO sent a letter to the Commission to discuss the implementation of the Brexit Adjustment Reserve. Our letter highlighted the underutilisation of the funds in certain Member States and the need to ensure mitigation of Brexit for all impacted businesses. We requested that the Commission extend the reference period to allow the full use of BAR funding.

The Commission replied to our letter by highlighting that over 950 million € had been sent to coastal communities and that they saw no need to extend the BAR. Following this disappointing response, EAPO published a press release that was echoed in several fisheries related newspapers

EAPO's letter as well as the Commission's reply are available, please contact info@eapo.com for more information.

NSAC SYMPOSIUM

EAPO has worked jointly with the North Sea Advisory Council to organise a symposium focussing on innovative gear.

Scientists from leading scientific institutes on fishing gear innovation presented lessons learned. This led to engaging discussions between stakeholders from the European Commission, the European Parliament, EAPO and NSAC members. The breakout sessions will allow the NSAC and EAPO to draft a recommendation for the Commission to facilitate the uptake of fishing gear innovations.

ENERGY TRANSITION EVENTS



In June, The Commission launched the Energy Transition Partnership for the Fisheries and Aquaculture sector. EAPO participated in the first workshop on funding the energy transition. The Commission published a guide to existing funds and allowed discussion with new stakeholders such as the European Investment Bank. The report of the workshop is available on the Commission's website. A second workshop on financing the Transition was planned for the 28th of February.

CLOSURE OF THE BAY OF BISCAY TO PROTECT SMALL CETACEANS

On the 3rd of January, the French national authority contacted the Commission and the Advisory Councils to inform them that France was using article 13 of the CFP on emergency measure to close the Bay of Biscay to all fishing vessels using nets or pelagic trawls in order to protect small cetaceans.

This decision, coming 3 weeks before the closure date, came as a surprise for EU fishers, completed by the publication on the 18th of January of an order closing the Bay of Biscay to all EU vessels.

EAPO reacted by drafting and sending a letter to the South Western Waters Member States Expert Group asking for clarifications and highlighting the lack of consultation from France.

Moreover, on the day of the closure, EAPO, jointly with Européche published a press release calling for fair compensation and questioning the legitimacy of the 'emergency measure' and its disproportionate impact on fishers.



FISHERIES, A STRATEGIC ISSUE OF SECURITY, SOVEREIGNTY AND ECONOMIC POWER

On the 6th of December, EAPO was invited to MEP Bellamy's event "Fisheries, a strategic issue of security, sovereignty and economic power."

We highlighted the need to stimulate healthy and climate friendly fish consumption by lowering VAT in order to ensure a price level playing field inside the EU. Regarding regulations, we underlined the need to maintain a regulation level playing field inside and outside of the EU to ensure fair competition. Including sustainability provisions in Free Trade Agreements and promoting the EU's sustainability standards in International Forums would be a step in the right direction.

Finally, we concluded by insisting on the need for all EU consumers to consume EU fish.



CORRECTIONS TO MULTIANNUAL PLANS

As highlighted by the BSWG, EAPO has been working on the use of the 5% rule stating that "fishing opportunities shall in any event be fixed in such a way as to ensure that there is less than a 5 % probability of the spawning stock biomass falling below Blim".

The first use of this article was done on central Baltique herring, and ensuring coherence between this article and other safeguards included in the multi annual plans was proven impossible. The Commission suggested that it be deleted in a proposal published on the 6th of December.

EAPO members agreed with the Commission proposal and have responded to its feedback request on the 31st of January. Prior to this, the Council had requested that this file undergo an urgent procedure. EAPO had informed the European Parliament by letter that we supported the procedure, that was unfortunately dismissed.



IMPORT REGULATIONS 2023

2023 was the year where a series of EU regulations on import quotas were re-negotiated at the EU level. The Autonomous Tariff Quotas, the General Scheme of Preferences and the financial mechanism of the European Economic Area agreement. EAPO drafted a letter jointly with Europêche. This letter requested that fishers be allowed to earn a livelihood without having to compete against less sustainable, lower cost imported products. Moreover, We believe that setting ATQs must be done by finding a balance between maintaining the operational capacity of EU processing facilities and ensuring EU fish products can be marketed at their fair value. Ultimately, we requested a meeting with the Commissioner that was unfortunately denied.

Furthermore, EAPO met with DGMARE's Unit B3 to discuss the recently agreed ATQ Council decision as well as the EEA agreement with Norway and Iceland on the financial mechanism regarding import quotas for fish products. The report of this meeting is available by contacting the secretariat.

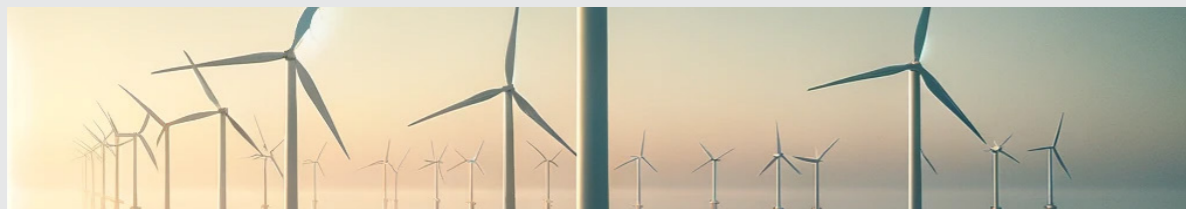


MARITIME SPATIAL PLANNING

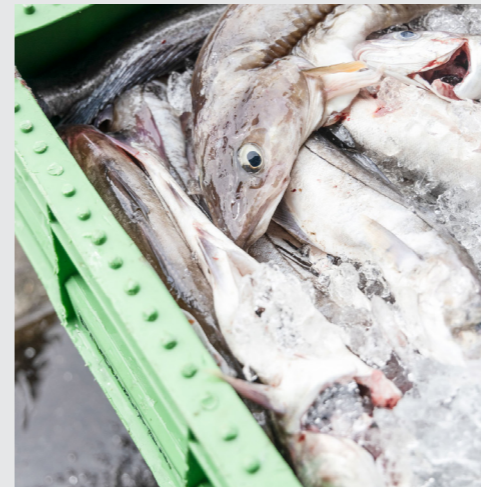
Following our General Assembly's recommendations, EAPO has been monitoring new developments in terms of Maritime Spatial Planning. To do so, EAPO published its' first MSP newsletter early November.

On top of this newsletter, EAPO is an observer in the Commission's Member States's Expert Group on MSP where an overview on all 22 coastal states is given. EAPO also joined WWF's seminar on developing nature friendly offshore plants.

Moreover, EAPO liaised with the Irish Seafood/ORE working group, in order to share good practices from EAPO members to other Member States.



EUROPEAN FOOD SECURITY CRISIS MECHANISM



EAPO was invited by DGMARE to present Producer Organisations' good practices to map and address risk and vulnerabilities in the fishing sector. EAPO presented 3 initiatives where EAPO members have been involved: Rederscentrale's work with ILVO, Irish PO's work in the Seafood/ORE working group and French PO's work on the SCOPE tool. Moreover, Annelie Rosell from SPFPO also presented an initiative to increase food sovereignty in Sweden.

CONTROL REGULATION IMPLEMENTING ACTS

On the 9th of January 2024, the revision of the Control regulation entered into force, on top of including provisions to implement Remote Electronic Monitoring, it introduces the digitization of fishing activity monitoring, improved traceability of catches, and the application of harmonized sanctions for rule violations. The full entry into force will take place in 2028, with intermediate steps coming into force through the 34 implementing and delegated acts planned by the text.

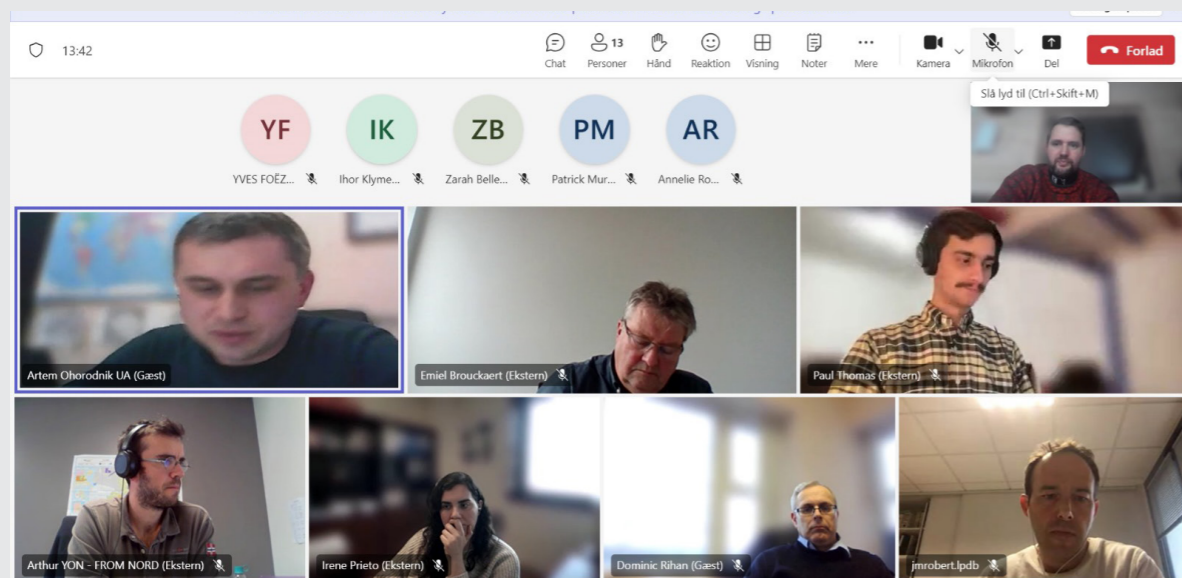
The first implementing act to be published will set the conditions for a listed port where derogations to the Margin of Tolerance can apply. The NPWG and the BSWG worked jointly to provide EAPO's position on the implementing act to ensure that the conditions are workable and that the derogations can be used.



UKRAINIAN FISHERIES PRESENTATION

In its February Executive Committee, EAPO welcomed the Ukrainian Deputy minister of Agrarian policy and food: Vitaliy Golovny. They informed us that a reform on their fisheries policy was approved in 2022. This reform aims to align Ukrainian legislation with the CFP. Moreover, Russia's annexion of Crimea in 2014 led to the loss of 90% of Ukrainian marine catches and vessels. The 2022 invasion has also closed fishing in the Black sea. The presentation given by the Ukrainian administration is available through the secretariat.

Finally, EAPO President, Esben Sverdrup-Jensen underlined EAPO's availability to support Ukraine in their accession to EU membership and in setting up fishery Producer Organisations once this is the case.





EAPO MEMBERS' MEETING REPORT 2024