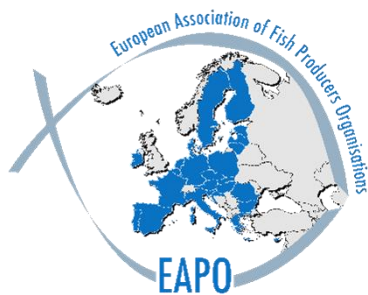


European Association of Fish Producers Organisations

Association Européenne des Organisations de Producteurs dans le secteur de la pêche



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EAPO statement at the Joint special group to support the implementation of the EU Action Plan – 18th of June 2024

No one is questioning the fact that in the long term, marine protected areas provide socio-economic, climate and biodiversity benefits. What we are questioning is the fact that in order to reach these objectives, the fishers are the ones that have to stop their activities and that will be paying the full price. Despite this, we are seeing a fight with the Commission around the fact that socio-economic impact assessments are not mandatory by law, because it is not a regulation nor a directive, or due to the fact that it is only a request for better implementation. Better implementation will come once socio-economic impacts are assessed and compensated. And we welcome the fact that the Commission underlined that more work will be invested towards this topic.

It has been underlined by a few Member States this morning following the presentation from ICES. We have talked about selectivity already – I do not think you have any idea how difficult it is to have new selective gears approved in the EU – how impossible it is to run tests – “red tape” has killed most initiatives in the last 10 years. An EAPO member recently managed to switch from one trawl grid to another much more selective, safe and fuel efficient – it took several tests, three scientific publications, even more meetings in STECF and almost 3 years before it was allowed in the EU... and yet it still cannot be used in UK waters. The evaluation of the CFP is underway, we believe that the Commission should investigate easing and improving the process building on the advice that EAPO and the NSAC have published.

Finally, regarding the Marine Action Plan, MSFD threshold values, Maritime Spatial Planning and the recently approved nature restoration law. We are talking about restoration areas, renewable acceleration areas, marine protected areas, with objectives for all broad habitat types, for habitat types, for European seas. We are talking about good environmental status, good condition, sustainable fishing. How can a Member States, a Producer organisation or a fisher find its way among the increasing environmental regulations?

The Commission has said today that it was developing a guidance document on natura 2000 and fisheries, but we need a guidance document on the coherence between all maritime and marine spatial environmental regulations.

In conclusion, a better inclusion of social economic data to improve implementation, a better and quicker process to allow the use of innovative gears and finally a better coherence between European environmental legislation.