



Europêche meets Member States to discuss fisheries priorities

Brussels, 9 April 2025

Yesterday, Europêche convened a strategic meeting with EU Member States, marking the first 120 days of the new Commission’s mandate. The meeting offered a timely opportunity to take stock of the progress made and review ongoing challenges and priorities. Reaffirming its commitment to a sustainable and competitive industry, Europêche called for urgent political action to move from words to action, revise unworkable legislation, eliminate excessive bureaucracy, and strike a better balance in fisheries policies.

Positive mandate, persistent challenges

Opening the meeting, Europêche Vice-President Tim Heddema welcomed the renewed political momentum for the fisheries sector. *‘The sector is encouraged by the direction set by the new Commission. We must now remain actively engaged in advancing key dossiers, as we need swift, decisive action to enhance competitiveness and cut through red tape’.*

Ocean Pact & UNOC: Supportive but cautious

Europêche expressed broad support for the Council’s approach to the proposed EU Ocean Pact, respecting the division of competences between the EU and its Member States. While the Pact is listed under the Commission work programme as a non-legislative initiative aimed at boosting competitiveness, concerns were voiced over its potential transformation into an ‘Ocean Act’ without proper public consultation—particularly if it risks sidelining fisheries. Europêche strongly advocated for fisheries to remain a standalone, robust pillar within any future maritime framework.

Control Regulation: Risk of overregulation

The implementation of the revised Fisheries Control Regulation was identified as a key concern. Europêche warned that recent drafts of the implementing acts may exceed the original legal mandate, creating disproportionate burdens for the industry. *‘We call for streamlined rules that truly support fishers at sea—not unnecessary red tape. It’s imperative to ensure the urgent application of existing derogations provided in the law, such as the margin of tolerance and flexibility in the stowage of demersal catches’*, said Heddema.

Norway: time for a new balanced partnership

Following the high-level dialogues and the recent visit of Commissioner Kadis to Norway, Europêche called for clarification on the commitments made by both parties on quota acknowledgements and access rights. Europêche expressed strong support for the Commission’s efforts, backed by key Member States, to address unsustainable practices in the Northeast Atlantic by Norway. The organisation urged a reset in EU-Norway relations, stressing the need for a fairer, more balanced partnership that fully respects the fishing rights of the EU fleet.

Financial framework and competitiveness

In discussions on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), Europêche strongly advocated for increased funding, fairer access criteria and a fleet renewal plan. The call was clear: fisheries is an exclusive EU competence and must be supported accordingly.

The sector welcomed the Commission's *Competitiveness Compass* and its ambition to cut administrative burdens by at least 25%—and 35% for SMEs. However, Europêche emphasized that achieving tangible results requires more than internal reflections within the Commission. It called for a structured and inclusive consultation process that actively involves co-legislators and fisheries stakeholders. Crucially, this process must go beyond the narrow remit of the current evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) Regulation to address the broader structural and operational challenges facing the sector.

Revision of fisheries policies

Europêche acknowledge ongoing policy consultations such as the Ocean Pact and the evaluation of the CFP. However certain issues require urgent action such as the revision of multiannual plans, particularly the Western Mediterranean, the unjustified closure of 87 areas in the Atlantic, the landing obligation or the implementation of control derogations such as the margin of tolerance. Heddemá concluded, *'A legislative standstill is costing jobs and threatening the viability of our industry. It's time for Brussels to deliver fresh air—and real change—for European fishers'*.

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