



Europêche underscores fisheries priorities at Ocean Board kick-off

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The inaugural meeting of the European Ocean Board convened a broad range of stakeholders from across sectors to support the implementation of the EU Ocean Pact. As a full member of the Board, Europêche played a key role in conveying the perspectives of the fisheries sector into this cross-sectoral platform. Discussions highlighted the urgent need to improve coherence across policies and stakeholders, while ensuring that efforts deliver concrete and measurable outcomes.

Tim Heddema, Vice-President of Europêche, representing the organisation at the meeting, reiterated that fisheries are central to a sustainable ocean economy, contributing to food security, low-carbon protein supply and the vitality of coastal communities. At the same time, the sector continues to face mounting pressure from global crises, geopolitical instability and increasing regulatory burdens. Addressing these structural challenges requires immediate, targeted action, including the development of a Fisheries Omnibus to streamline multiple policy frameworks simultaneously.

Europêche also highlighted the growing challenge of spatial squeeze, as increasing demands on maritime space put pressure on traditional fishing grounds. The organisation stressed the need to recognise fisheries as a strategic activity of overriding public interest, ensuring fair access and positive coexistence between sectors. At the same time, it underlined the need to continue building fisheries, environmental and ocean policies on a strong science and evidence-based framework, with the fisheries sector playing a key role in marine data collection. In this context, initiatives such as OceanEye should reinforce and build upon existing systems.

In the context of ocean governance and diplomacy, Mr Heddema called for a more assertive EU approach to safeguarding fisheries interests, ensuring a level playing field and reinforcing seafood sovereignty. He also highlighted the importance of investing in the future of the sector, notably through a Blue Generational Renewal Strategy to attract young professionals, and through continued efforts under the Energy Transition Partnership.

The organisation also stressed the need to tackle more effectively the main drivers of environmental degradation—such as pollution, eutrophication and climate change. In this context, Europêche highlighted the importance of a balanced policy approach that considers the cumulative impact of all pressures on marine ecosystems, ensuring that measures affecting fisheries remain proportionate and integrated within a broader policy framework.

Europêche welcomed Commissioner Kadis' call to accelerate action, reduce fragmentation, boost the blue economy and deliver tangible results, noting that these priorities point in the right direction. In this context, according to Europepeche, success is not just about adopting policies — it is about delivering real outcomes. Progress must therefore be assessed through

concrete indicators such as fleet performance, production levels and socio-economic cost-benefit analysis. Ultimately, the Ocean Pact will be judged on its capacity to deliver balanced results: meeting the growing demand for seafood, supporting coastal communities and reducing EU import dependency, while ensuring the preservation of marine ecosystems.

European Economic and Social Committee perspective

Javier Garat, representing the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), stressed that the new strategy must go beyond symbolic language. The strategy must deliver real solutions, rebuild trust and ensure inclusive governance supported by adequate investment. This includes stronger support for research, maritime skills, an action plan on 'blue foods', and attracting new generations into the fishing sector.

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