

MEETING REPORT

Executive Committee

Date : 3 April 2025
Time : 10:30 – 13:00 hrs CEST
Location : Copa Cogeca, Rue de Treves 61, 1040 Brussels, Belgium
Chair : Esben Sverdrup-Jensen

1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda

The Chair welcomed participants and presented the agenda of the meeting. The agenda was approved and the Chair followed up on the action items.

2. Follow-up on action items

The Chair provided an update to participants on action items from previous meetings:

- The Secretariat and the Chair were to engage with the Commission on specific meetings using feedback from Working Groups and coordinate with Commission participants to use the minutes of the meeting as responses to PelAC advice. The Secretariat has added a dedicated text requesting that responses from the Commission take place through meetings rather than written responses. The Secretariat is waiting for feedback from the Commission on this new approach. The Executive Secretary has a meeting with the Commission to further discuss this point.
- The Secretariat is to engage with PECH and ENVI Secretariat by circulating our advice to them and perhaps invite them to our meetings to engage. The Chair of PECH was invited to attend PelAC meetings but no response was received. The PelAC will be circulating its advice to PECH and ENVI Committee generic email addresses.
- The Secretariat circulated the report of the EP event organised by the AAC, NSAC and MAC to all PelAC members.
- The Secretariat circulated the final report of the Fishers of the future initiative to all PelAC members.
- The Secretariat included in the ExCom minutes the report on the Inter-AC Brexit Forum.
- The Secretariat circulated an invitation for the online Oceans Pact Focus Group meeting planned for the 3rd of March, 11h to 12h30.
- The Secretariat circulated the Science Plan and the Advisory Plans from ICES to PelAC members.
- The Secretariat drafted the Terms of Reference for the Herring FG. They will be presented to participants during this day's meeting.





- The Secretariat drafted a letter regarding access to Norwegian waters of Atlanto Scandian Herring.
- The Secretariat circulated the link to the ASH Benchmark workshop.
- The Secretariat circulated a letter to the Commission supporting their request to ICES on a North Sea horse mackerel monitoring TAC and suggesting a swift implementation once the advice is published.
- The Secretariat drafted the Terms of Reference for the horse mackerel FG.
- The Secretariat included comments from native speakers in the letter on ORE impacts on marine environment and circulated it to the Commission. The Secretariat still needs to circulate it to Member States (Ongoing).
- The Secretariat was to plan a conversation between ACs on the evaluation of the CFP regarding regionalisation and functioning of ACs. This discussion has been started with the other ACs and a draft will be circulated shortly.
- Plan a CFP Focus Group to draft a written response on the CFP evaluation (Ongoing)

3. Presentation of the State of Play of the Oceans Pact by Felix Leinemann & Exchange of views

The Chair welcomed Felix Leinemann, Head of Unit A2 from DG MARE, to present the current state of the European Ocean Pact. Felix Leinemann began by thanking the Chair for the invitation and proceeded to outline the rationale behind the European Ocean Pact. He emphasized the need for coherence within the maritime sector, highlighting the European Commission's efforts through the Integrated Maritime Policy, the new approach to a sustainable blue economy, and the communication on International Ocean Governance. Despite these initiatives, he noted that significant work remains to be done.

Leinemann explained that the European Ocean Pact aims to serve as a unified framework to address the triple planetary crisis, encompassing climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. He underscored the recent shifts in global geopolitics, which have elevated maritime security and defence as critical priorities, while also emphasizing the EU's leadership in global ocean governance through diplomacy.

The pact's priorities include reinforcing the sustainable transition of maritime sectors, ensuring the resilience of coastal communities, and boosting business competitiveness. Leinemann outlined several strategic goals for the European Ocean Pact, including:

1. EU Ocean Governance: A key priority is to streamline the EU's own ocean governance by fostering collaboration among a large number of different Commission services, the European Council, and various European Parliament committees dealing with ocean-related issues (such as PECH, ENVI, TRAN). The goal is to ensure these entities work cohesively to implement the pact effectively.
2. Sustainable Blue Economy: The pact aims to promote a competitive and sustainable European blue economy through investments and innovation in both existing and emerging ocean industries. This includes supporting the transition of current industries towards greater sustainability, such as decarbonization and energy transition within the fishing sector. Beyond traditional food and feed production, the pact seeks to innovate in the blue bioeconomy e.g.





- by exploring other elements derived from fish waste and algae materials or minerals extractable from seawater.
3. Coastal Resilience: The pact will focus on enhancing the resilience of coastal communities and cities by preparing them for threats such as sea-level rise and other climate-related challenges, and explore their opportunities.
 4. Healthy Oceans: Recognizing the ocean's role as a buffer against climate change, the pact will adopt a source-to-sea approach, addressing issues like prolonged droughts and floods linked to ocean warming. This involves considering the hydrosphere as a whole – in this sense the pact will complement the upcoming Water Resilience Strategy.
 5. Marine Knowledge Framework: The pact will emphasize the importance of ocean research and innovation, supported by a robust marine knowledge framework and ocean literacy initiatives.
 6. Ocean Diplomacy and Governance: The pact builds on existing frameworks such as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), and the EU Maritime Strategy. It is not starting from scratch but rather integrating and enhancing these established mechanisms.

Leinemann mentioned that the European Ocean Pact is currently undergoing an intense stakeholder consultation process, including calls for evidence and high-level dialogues with the Commission. Events like the Fisheries and Oceans Dialogue during European Ocean Days have engaged over 450 in-person and 800 online participants. The Commissioner has been actively meeting with representatives from various sectors to gather input and shape the pact.

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the Committee of the Regions (CoR), and debates in the European Parliament plenary have also contributed opinions on the ocean. All these inputs are being compiled to prepare the European Ocean Pact, which will be outlined in a Commission Communication detailing its objectives, priorities, and a roadmap with concrete initiatives. A Staff Working Document (SWD) will accompany this, summarizing all the information gathered during the consultation process.

Felix Leinemann concluded his presentation by addressing the Pelagic Advisory Council's (PelAC) response to the consultation on the European Ocean Pact (EOP). He acknowledged the council's emphasis on the need for coherence with the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) evaluation, assuring that the CFP evaluation will be central to the EOP. However, he clarified that the EOP cannot preempt the results of the ongoing evaluation. As announced in Commissioner Kadis' mission letter, the Commission will come forward with a Vision for EU fisheries and aquaculture up to 2040 next year.

Leinemann highlighted the importance of using the EOP to develop an integrated community strategy for decarbonizing the maritime industry and fisheries. This strategy will build on existing industrial efforts to decarbonize shipping and integrate energy transition partnerships, such as the Energy Transition Partnership (ETP). The aim is to ensure that shipbuilders, equipment manufacturers, and engine builders remain competitive within the EU while participating in decarbonization efforts. A comprehensive Maritime Industrial Strategy will follow the EOP, focusing on maintaining and enhancing the EU's maritime industrial base.

He also emphasized the strengthening of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) as a central governance tool for managing activities in the ocean. The MSP framework will bring stakeholders and decision-makers together in a manner similar to the advisory councils, fostering collaborative governance.





Regarding the timeline, Leinemann announced that the EOP will be adopted in time for the United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC). While the full text will not be available at the European Maritime Days, the emerging text is being developed through contributions from various services and political levels, reflecting a collaborative and iterative approach to shaping the pact.

The Chair thanked Leinemann for his presentation and opened the floor to participants.

Alexandra Phillipe expressed gratitude and sought clarification on the strategic goals of the European Ocean Pact, particularly regarding the inclusion of ecosystem services. She emphasized the importance of aquatic blue food and the ocean's role as a carbon sink. Phillipe highlighted that the Ocean Pact will contribute to the vision for food and agriculture by emphasizing the modernization of the industry to incorporate blue technology, extending beyond mere biodiversity considerations.

Tim Heddema raised several questions regarding the implementation and qualifications of the European Ocean Pact. He inquired about the communication strategy and how the pact will be implemented in practice. Heddema sought clarification on what it means for the pact to serve as a reference framework, as indicated by the European Commission.

Additionally, Heddema emphasized the need for the pact to address not only the renewal of the fishing fleet but also the renewal of the workforce. He pointed out the lack of training and the importance of mutual recognition of qualifications within the industry. Heddema suggested that the European Ocean Pact should include provisions to address these workforce development issues, ensuring that the maritime sector is equipped with the necessary skills and expertise to support its modernization and sustainability goals.

Leinemann elaborated on the functions of the oceans, emphasizing their role as a carbon sink, climate regulator, and sustainer of life on earth. He highlighted the importance of blue food, a concept that aligns with Europe's request for not only a bioeconomy but also new technologies. This includes exploring how ocean-related technologies can be integrated into the clean industrial deal.

He explained that the European Ocean Pact serves as a communication framework, similar to the European Green Deal from the von der Leyen Commission's first mandate. It outlines what the Commission plans to do regarding the ocean during its term. He addressed the implementation mechanism, noting that some stakeholders have advocated for an Ocean Act rather than a pact, seeking a legislative and governance framework. The Commissioner is currently discussing with the legal service how to proceed with this idea.

He acknowledged the challenges posed by the different levels of competencies within the maritime sector, including the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), energy policy, environmental policy, and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP). These challenges involve legal complexities and varying objectives, such as calculating climate neutrality through CO2 emissions versus assessing the multidimensional aspects of ocean health. Leinemann referenced Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) as a comprehensive approach to managing ocean health.

Anton Paulrud raised a question about the implications of the Ocean Pact on relationships with third countries.

Leinemann responded that in the current geopolitical context, partnerships are crucial, though not always straightforward, especially with countries like Norway. He emphasized that the pact will promote ocean governance with like-minded countries, including Norway and Canada. While the





pact will reference a level playing field with third countries, it will not delve into specific implications for these relationships.

Justyna Zajchowska inquired about how fisheries management can contribute to the strategic goal of a healthy ocean and whether this contribution will be addressed in the EOP.

Leinemann confirmed that the EOP will cohere with the Nature Restoration Law and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and it will address fisheries management's role in ocean health through EBFM as required by the CFP. However, due to the communication's limited volume, there will be a need to balance describing existing frameworks and introducing new ideas, with detailed existing information potentially included in the Staff Working Document.

Jérôme Jourdain took the floor to underline that marine knowledge, funding and EBFM were part of the goals of the Pact. He noted that PelAC members were presented with the results of the Mackerel benchmark the previous day and that the presenters highlighted the lack of human and financial resources to carry out the assessments. The issue being that these assessments play a key role in achieving MSY and sustainable management. He suggested that science be supported human wise and financially wise in the Pact.

Dominic Rihan took the floor to come back to Heddema's question on the implementation of the Ocean Pact. He listed existing legislation such as the Nature Restoration Law, Natura 200 areas, Maritime Spatial Planning, and the Common fisheries policy. He noted that these legislative acts had similar targets worded differently, making compliance difficult for fishers. He welcomed the intention of adding coherence and simplification, noting that fishers currently have issues in understanding which target they should comply with.

Annelie Rosell took the floor to ask about the novelties included in the European Ocean Pact.

Leinemann replied that the EOP was bringing in new items around the evaluation of the CFP, the Vision for Food and Agriculture. He noted that the EOP was building on existing policies, bringing them together and adding new elements to them. He agreed with the challenge of consolidating and simplifying legislation as brought forward by Rihan. He informed participants that the Ocean Pact would not come on top of existing legislation as President Von der Leyen has put simplification at the center of her mandate. He concluded by agreeing with Jourdain's point on improving science. He shared internal discussions on the need for advice to evolve alongside the Commission's approach to scientific advice. He highlighted that part of the Marine Knowledge Framework will be dedicated to improving and finding better ways to use scientific advice.

Christine Xu took the floor and presented the work done by the PelAC on fish welfare through the Focus Group on Fish Welfare in pelagic fisheries. She wished to know if animal welfare would be part of the EOP.

Jose Beltran inquired on the extent in which other EU policies other than fisheries were involved in the European Ocean Pact.

Gonçalo Carvalho took the floor to inquire about the inclusion of the Data Collection Framework in the EOP.

Leinemann confirmed that animal welfare will be included in general terms in the EOP. Regarding the inclusion of the Data Collection Framework, he noted that this might be addressed but would come from the evaluation of the CFP and with the Commission's Vision for fisheries and aquaculture for





2040. Finally on the involvement of other DGs, Leinemann noted that DGMOVE, DGGROW, DGEmployment and DGRegio were all part of the interservice dealing with the European Ocean Pact.

The Chair thanked Leinemann for his presentation, the exchange of views and the inclusion of the PelAC contribution in the drafting of the EOP. He underlined that the relationship with third countries were extremely important for EU pelagic fisheries. He stressed that since Brexit the framework and conditions for catching pelagic fish had been unstable and challenging. He insisted on the need for stability to have sufficient foundations to engage in an investment hungry green transition. He insisted on the importance for long term income to have good relationships with third countries and sustainable marine environment management.

He mentioned Jourdain and Carvalho's comment on research and welcomed the fact that the EOP includes a Marine Research Strategy. Using the example of the mackerel benchmark, he called for a balanced approach between data collection and model development in order to improve the understanding of the marine environment.

4. Adoption PelAC 2025-2026 work programme and budget

The Chair gave the floor to the Executive Secretary to present the PelAC 2025-2026 Work Programme and Budget.

The Executive Secretary started by presenting the draft work programme, informing members that it had been circulated prior to the meeting. The deadline for sending the work programme and the budget to the Commission is the end of May. The work programme lists deliverables, the areas of interest of the 3 PelAC Working Groups as well as the areas of interest of the Focus Groups.

He listed the expected deliverables which amounted to 8 advice:

- 1 PelAC advice on 2026 fishing opportunities
- 2 recommendations on Ecosystem-related topic
- 1 Joint recommendation with Other ACs on a horizontal topic
- 3 stock-specific recommendations
- 1 recommendation on a horizontal topic

He noted that the PelAC usually publishes around 10 advice every year.

The Chair agreed with the approach, underlining the fact that the number of deliverable served as a baseline rather than a limit. He noted that the ExCom would be free to increase the number of deliverables as the year progresses.

Tim Heddema took the floor to agree with the approach, he wished to know how the Commission viewed the number and quality of PelAC advice.

The Chair responded by reminding participants of the previous ExCom discussion around the engagement with the Commission, underlining the importance of improving PelAC communication with them. However, he noted that the change in functioning would not necessarily translate in meeting the objectives set in the Work Programme. He wished to know if there was a position from the Commission on the amount of advice published versus the funding allocated.

The Executive Secretary noted the Chair's question and will revert to the Commission for further information.





The Executive Secretary then presented the number of meetings included in the work programme. He noted that the work programme officiated as a baseline in the same way as the number of advice. 10 meetings are planned in 2025-2026:

- 4 Working Group + Executive Committee sessions
- 1 Mackerel Focus Group
- 1 Focus Group on Fish Welfare in pelagic fisheries
- 1 General Assembly
- 1 Joint NWWAC-PelAC Focus Group on the Spatial Dimension
- 1 Inter-AC Brexit Forum

Gonçalo Carvalho took the floor to inquire about the NWWAC-PelAC Focus Group, wondering if the PelAC would be in charge of organising one meeting and then the NWWAC would organise the next.

The Executive Secretary noted that he had agreed with the NWWAC Executive Secretary that each AC would hold the secretariat for a year. For 2024-2025, the NWWAC held the secretariat, and the PelAC is expected to have the secretariat for 2025-2026.

Dominic Rihan raised a question related to the absence of a Herring Focus Group meeting in the list of meetings for the year to come.

The Executive Secretary noted that the Herring Focus Group meetings were not included in the draft work programme but that he would include one meeting as well as a Horse Mackerel Focus Group.

He presented the last slide on the work program, highlighting key topics for the next year, including the mandatory performance review in 2026, the partnership framework agreement, and the European Ocean Pact.

The Chair supported the idea of conducting a performance review, suggesting it could be done efficiently by building on past terms of reference and involving multiple providers for quotes.

The Executive Secretary agreed to add the performance review as an action item for the next executive committee meeting and proposed discussing the timeline and framework for the review. He agreed to circulate a draft Terms of Reference for the Performance review in advance of the next Executive Committee meeting.

The Chair mentioned the Vision 2040 for Fisheries and Aquaculture, noting its importance and the need to understand how the Commission plans to involve ACs.

Alexandra Philippe highlighted the importance of the roadmap on the Energy Transition Partnership, suggesting it should be on the radar for the upcoming year.

The Executive Secretary continued his presentation by presenting the budget for the year to come. He explained the budgeting approach underlining that the budget is the same as the previous year with a 2% increase as planned by the PelAC's Framework Partnership Agreement with the Commission. The 2% increase is due to inflation. He noted that membership fees increased this year due to the establishment of Working Group III. The EU contribution was increased by 2%, redistributed across different headlines. They are awaiting clarification from the Commission on the impact of overspending in specific headlines.





The Chair emphasized the importance of monitoring spending and exploring cost-saving opportunities, particularly for travel expenses. The Vigo meeting was highlighted as an example of cost-effective collaboration with local organizations. He underlined the financial support that the local Xunta will give to the PelAC to have their meeting in Vigo.

The Chair also suggested looking for opportunities to host meetings in members' home countries or with partner organizations to reduce costs and increase engagement with the fishing community. With no additional comments, the chair closed the agenda item.

5. Recommendations from Working Group I (decision)

The Chair initiated the discussion on recommendations from the Working Groups. It was noted that the slide for Working Group I was empty, but there were points to discuss from the previous day's meeting.

Dominic Rihan, the Chair of Working Group I mentioned that the final terms of reference for the Focus Group were the primary item that needed to be brought forward to the Executive Committee (ExCom). It was acknowledged that the text had been approved, but additional comments were received during the two-day comment period. The Executive Secretary suggested that these comments could be added and the document circulated, making it feasible to finalize by the following week.

The Executive Secretary also highlighted the Boarfish Focus Group, which was planned to be organized before July. The objective was to discuss the long-term management strategy and prepare a wish list for the stock assessors regarding what should be studied in terms of Management Strategy Evaluations (MSEs). Additionally, there was a suggestion from Claus Reedtz-Sparrevohn to explore how PelAC participants could be involved in the survey data overview for HAWG (Herring Assessment Working Group) in a pre-HAWG meeting. The idea was to have PelAC participants attend this data overview session to engage more effectively with the scientific community.

The Chair expressed appreciation for the summary provided by the Executive Secretary and agreed that involving stakeholders more effectively in the Working Group meetings was a positive step. It was noted that previous attempts to engage the scientific community had been challenging due to time constraints. The Chair suggested that integrating stakeholder engagement into the existing workflow of the Working Groups could be more effective. This approach would allow stakeholders to understand the data being used and ask relevant questions without requiring additional time from the Working Group.

The Chair proposed holding an exploratory meeting for the Boarfish Focus Group instead of developing formal terms of reference. This meeting would invite all interested parties to discuss long-term management plans and objectives. Dominic Rihan agreed to work with the Executive Secretary to organize this meeting and involve key scientific experts such as Edward Farrell, Niels Hintzen, and Claus Reedtz-Sparrevohn.

The Chair concluded by expressing satisfaction with the plan and moved the discussion forward to Working Group II.





6. Recommendations from Working Group II (decision)

The Chair gave the floor to the Working Group II Chair. Attention was drawn to Working Group II, where three items were submitted for consideration. The first item concerned a Focus Group on the three stocks of horse mackerel. The terms of reference were discussed to align the work with the scientific action plan derived from last year's benchmark. The objective was to explore management strategies for each of these stocks. The document had been circulated and discussed the previous day, and approval by the Executive Committee was sought.

The second item pertained to the Mackerel Focus Group, as outlined in the work program. More precise information regarding the mackerel benchmark report, which was drafted following the benchmark workshop the previous week, was provided. It was noted that the report would be published around the beginning of May. The Mackerel Focus Group is scheduled to meet towards the end of May to receive a comprehensive presentation on the benchmark and to discuss long-term management strategies for the mackerel stock.

The third item involved the sprat stock. It was reported that the ICES advice on sprat in the Channel would be published towards the end of April. Given the gentleman's agreement with the North Western Waters AC, it was planned to produce advice during May. This advice would then proceed through a written consultation process to be sent to the NWWAC and subsequently brought to the attention of the European Commission. This step is crucial as the quota related to sprat will be managed starting in July.

The Chair inquired whether any decisions were needed regarding these points. For the horse mackerel, it was suggested that additional time might be required to redraft the areas of interest in a more operational manner. A proposal was made to follow a similar procedure as for the Herring Focus Group, involving a two-day approval period for both documents via a single email to simplify the process for members. It was emphasized that all relevant members of the two Working Groups should receive the email.

With no opposition voiced, it was agreed to proceed with the written procedure for these two items. The discussion then moved forward to Working Group III, led by Gonalo Carvalho.

7. Recommendations from Working Group III (decision)

Gonalo Carvalho highlighted the preparation of a letter or email to ICES. This communication would propose potential case studies to apply the FEISA (Framework on Ecosystem Informed Science and Advice) approach. It was agreed that an email would be sent to the members, following a procedure similar to that proposed for the focus groups. This approach was deemed effective for gathering input and ensuring a structured process.

Additionally, Carvalho noted that an Animal Welfare Focus Group meeting would be scheduled at a later date. It was suggested that the Chairs and Vice-Chair should engage in a conversation to determine the best course of action for this meeting. It was also observed that some of the work presented by Lawrence Kell would naturally integrate into the Mackerel Focus Group, indicating a potential overlap in discussions and efforts.

The Chair acknowledged the updates provided by Carvalho and expressed appreciation for the progress made. The meeting then moved forward to address any remaining action points for future discussions.





8. EU 2040 vision for fisheries and aquaculture

The Chair initiated the discussion on the vision for EU fisheries and agriculture for the period 2020-2040, noting that there was limited information available about the process thus far. Reference was made to a similar initiative for agriculture, and participants were invited to share any additional insights they might have. The vision is scheduled to be discussed at the upcoming Inter Advisory Council meeting, where the Pelagic Advisory Council (PelAC) will have an opportunity to provide input.

The Chair mentioned that the Executive Secretary had been tasked with drafting a few headlines for the intervention, although a detailed statement had not yet been prepared due to time constraints. The vision was described as an opportunity to be ambitious about the future of pelagic fisheries and their management over the next 15 years. Elements such as the transition to zero-carbon fleets were highlighted as ambitious goals, even if current technology does not fully support this transition. The emphasis was on setting a direction and being part of the broader conversation.

Alexandra Phillipe contributed by suggesting a link between the vision for fisheries and sustainable food systems, aligning it with food security initiatives. This connection was seen as a way to integrate fisheries more comprehensively into broader EU policies.

Gonçalo Carvalho proposed adding a social element to the vision, emphasizing the importance of promoting tactical and sustainable fishing practices. The suggestion was to highlight the need for socially fair practices within the fishing industry.

The Chair agreed with the inclusion of social elements and encouraged further elaboration on this aspect.

Dominic Rihan added that while the transition to zero-carbon fleets and generational renewal are important, the aging fleet in Europe poses a significant challenge. He stressed the need to address fleet renewal to ensure the sustainability and competitiveness of the fishing industry by 2040.

Tim Heddema offered a strategic perspective, suggesting that the message should be concise and focused on a few key points to be easily communicated to policymakers. He encouraged looking beyond the vision to identify actionable steps that could be implemented in the next phase, making it easier for stakeholders to align with PelAC's objectives.

The Chair appreciated the strategic approach suggested by Heddema and agreed that creating compelling images and messages in people's minds was crucial. The discussion was opened for any further comments, with the Chair expressing a commitment to keeping the members informed as more details about the commission's process become available. The hope was expressed that PelAC would have further opportunities to engage in shaping this vision.

9. Any Other Business and close of the meeting

The meeting progressed to the Any Other Business (AOB) segment. A date for the CFP Focus Group was confirmed for April 23rd at 2 PM, conducted online. Participants were encouraged to join if possible.

The issue of the Control Focus Group terms of reference was raised. It was noted that several meetings of the Control Focus Group had been held since the start of the year, but formal terms of reference





had not been approved by the Executive Committee (ExCom). These terms had been approved by the Focus Group and Working Group III but required ExCom approval. The terms emphasized addressing the implementation of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) by third countries, which would impact EU fleets, and improving inter-operationalization. The suggestion was to address both the implementation of the control regulation within the EU and how PelAC could influence third countries' control measures affecting EU vessels, particularly pelagic fleets.

The Chair emphasized the necessity of having these terms of reference approved by ExCom to effectively produce advice. A written procedure was suggested, allowing a week for members to review and comment on the terms before approval.

Jose Beltran inquired about the scheduling of the EFCA advisory board meeting. The Executive Secretary clarified that the Control Focus Group meeting was planned for the afternoon of April 23rd, following the EFCA advisory board meeting in the morning. This scheduling was intended to maximize attendance and efficiency.

The discussion briefly returned to the Control Focus Group terms of reference. It was confirmed that these terms had been circulated on March 25th, and members were given the option to review them for an additional week before approval.

The Chair then invited the Executive Secretary to present his attendance in WGENGAGE to share their experience from a recent meeting in Copenhagen. He provided context on the WGENGAGE meeting, which focused on stakeholder engagement in the ICES advisory process. Key points included differentiating between stakeholder feedback and stakeholder knowledge, and exploring how to integrate a plurality of knowledge into ICES processes without compromising data assurance. The suggestion was made for PelAC to join WGENGAGE as a member to contribute to and benefit from the discussions and best practices.

The Chair endorsed the idea of joining WGENGAGE, emphasizing the importance of stakeholder engagement and the opportunity for all members to participate. It was noted that other Advisory Councils, such as the Long-Distance Advisory Council and the North Sea Advisory Council, were also part of the Working Group.

The Chair raised a question about the difference between stakeholders and rightsholders. The Executive Secretary explained that rights holders typically refer to indigenous peoples, a concept more applicable in countries like Norway, Sweden, Russia, Finland, the United States, and Canada. Stakeholders, on the other hand, refer to business interactions, such as between the fishing industry and developers.

Patrick Murphy commented on the importance of fishermen's rights and the need for legal authorizations to pursue their industry at sea. He emphasized the significance of being considered in the same framework as other rights holders.

The Chair acknowledged the complexity of the rights holder concept and suggested deferring a deeper discussion to another time. The meeting then moved to summarize action items and conclude.

The upcoming meeting in Vigo, scheduled for July 8th and 9th, was highlighted. The program included sessions with various working groups and a visit to the fish auction market in Vigo, noted as one of the largest in Europe. The Chair requested that efforts be made to spot pelagic vessels in port during the visit.





The Executive Secretary summarised the action items, including the approval of the performance review terms of reference by July, incorporating suggestions for the EU fisheries vision, and joining WGENGAGE as a member. The social dimension in fishing and the aging fleet were also noted as important topics.

The Chair concluded the meeting by thanking all participants and expressing appreciation for the interpreters. The importance of social interactions and difficult discussions, such as those on animal welfare and ecosystem approaches, was emphasized. The meeting ended with anticipation for future engagements and discussions.

10. Action items

Action No.	Action	Responsible party
1	Contact the Commission to better understand their position regarding the number of advice published versus the allocated funding.	Secretariat
2	Include a reference to the Herring Focus Group and the Horse Mackerel Focus Group in the list of PelAC meetings for 2025-2026. Include a reference to the Energy Transition partnership as well as the 2040 Vision for Fisheries and Aquaculture in the list of important topics to follow in the PelAC Work programme.	Secretariat
2	Draft terms of Reference for the PelAC performance review and circulate them to members prior to the July meeting	Secretariat
3	Join WGENGAGE as a member to attend the meeting and report back to the Executive Committee.	Secretariat
4	Circulate the Terms of Reference for the Herring Focus Group for final approval after rephrasing them to include operational outcomes.	Secretariat
5	Circulate the Terms of Reference for the Horse Mackerel Focus Group for final approval after rephrasing them to include operational outcomes.	Secretariat
6	Circulate the Terms of Reference for the Control Focus Group for final approval	Secretariat
7	Draft a letter to ICES to suggest case studies for the implementation of Framework on Ecosystem Informed Science and Advices. Circulate the letter for written approval to WGIII and ExCom.	WGIII Chair and Secretariat
8	Emphasize the importance of promoting socially sustainable fishing practices, the importance of generational renewal, fleet renewal in the PelAC position on the 2040 Vision for EU fisheries and aquaculture.	Chair and Secretariat
9	Prepare a statement for the EU vision that includes an image for the Commissioner.	Chair and Secretariat
10	Plan a dedicated Mackerel Focus Group to discuss the conclusions of the benchmark	WGII Chair and Secretariat





11	Circulate the ICES advice on Sprat once they are out and prepare a PelAC advice	WGII Chair and Secretariat
12	Hold a dedicated Boarfish Focus Group to discuss a potential MSE	WGI Chair and Secretariat
13	Engage PelAC members with the HAWG data meeting	WGI Chair and Secretariat

12. Meeting participants

First name	Last name	Organisation
Alexandra	Philippe	EBCD
Annelie	Rosell	Swedish Pelagic Federation PO
Anton	Paulrud	Swedish Pelagic Federation PO
Christine	Xu	Aquatic Life Institute
Dominic	Rihan	Killybegs Fishermens Organisation
Felix	Leinemann	Commission
Esben	Sverdrup-Jensen	DPPO
Gonçalo	Carvalho	Sciaena
Jérôme	Jourdain	UAPF
Jose	Beltran	OPP-7 BURELA
Jules	Danto	EAPO
Justyna	Zajchowska	Consultant to The Pew Charitable Trusts
Merel	den Held	North Sea Foundation
Merel	Barbosa	PelAC
Patrick	Murphy	IS&WFPO
Paul	Thomas	PelAC
Semi	Kilic	European Fishmeal and Fish Oil Producers
Solène	Prévalet	FROM Nord
Tim	Heddema	Pelagic Freezer trawler Association

