

Pelagic AC Performance Review

Terms of Reference

July 2025

Background

The Pelagic Advisory Council (Pelagic AC) prepares and provides advice to the European Commission and Member States on matters pertaining to the management of pelagic fisheries. The Pelagic AC represents all relevant stakeholders (namely fishing industry (60%) and Other Interest Groups (OIGs) including NGO's (40%)) and covers pelagic stocks in all EU areas excluding the Baltic and Mediterranean seas.

The Pelagic AC is currently one of the 11 existing stakeholder-led Advisory Councils (ACs) for fisheries in the European Union. Stakeholders' involvement and participation through Advisory Councils in decision-making processes and governance has proven to be a highly effective mechanism in reaching the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and securing compliance with the regulatory framework. Since its inception, the Pelagic AC has improved substantially the dialogue between stakeholders from different backgrounds and has maintained a long track record of developing advice by consensus. The Pelagic AC has also been a useful platform to engage in dialogue and collaboration not only with policy makers both national (Member State administrations) and international (representatives of DG MARE and European Commission) but also with the scientific community.

In line with article 7a of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/242, the Advisory Councils must carry out a performance review every 5 years. This performance review shall aim at identifying best practices and shortcomings, list recommendations aiming at improving the functioning of the Advisory Council and assess its overall contribution to the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy as set out in Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013. The results of these reviews shall be made public and, where shortcomings in the functioning of the Advisory Council are identified, shall be accompanied by an action plan setting out concrete actions and a clear timeframe for their implementation.

Pelagic AC Executive Committee and Working Group meetings take place on a quarterly basis. During the Pelagic AC meeting on 9 July 2025, the Executive Committee agreed to pursue its second external performance review on the functioning of the Pelagic Advisory Council.

Objective

The Pelagic AC celebrated its 20 year anniversary in 2024. Since 2004, the context around pelagic fisheries has been constantly evolving. The functioning of ACs in 2004 and today differ greatly both in terms of methods and content. What stays the same however is the importance of dialogue and science based consensus based advice.





The aim of this external evaluation is to assess the internal functioning of the Pelagic AC, decision making process, advice drafting, Secretariat, Working Group, Executive Committee and General Assembly functioning. Building on the previous performance review, an comparative analysis between the state of the Pelagic AC in 2021 and in 2025 is welcomed.

The expected result is a report identifying strengths and good practices, and provide recommendations for improving the performance of the Council.

Additionally, OIGs active in different Advisory Councils have recently collectively expressed dissatisfaction with the advisory process and collaboration within certain Advisory Councils. The Pelagic AC has a strong track record of producing advice that is consensus-based, and takes pride in its productive working relationship between its OIG and industry members. The performance review is expected to assess the involvement of OIG members in the AC. Recommendations and good practices to further involve non-industry members are key.

As any organisation with a long life-span, the Pelagic AC has seen some of its founding members retire, and changes in Executive Secretaries. In this context, the Pelagic AC would welcome recommendations to ensure continuity in its positive and productive working environment.

Finally, the Pelagic AC prides itself with having a positive, safe and respectful working environment. The performance review should assess whether this is the case and whether the institutional set up for securing this should be strengthened. An additional audit should include whether Pelagic AC members have faced inappropriate behavior and sexual harassment. The final report should include recommendations to set up a dedicated mechanism to address possible future issues.

Goals

To perform an external assessment of:

- The functioning of the General Assembly, the Executive Committee, the Working Groups and Focus Groups with a focus on:
 - Organisation and participation
 - Decision making process
 - Quality of the advice produced (consensus advice, feedback Commission)
- The performance of the Chair, Secretariat and the Management Team
- Internal collaboration between members and the work environment of the Pelagic AC
- The dissemination and communication of Pelagic AC work and advice
- The external perception of the Pelagic AC work and practices and the collaboration between the Pelagic AC and external entities (Commission, EFCA, Inter AC collaboration, regional MS grouping, ICES & scientific institutes)
- The improvements in the Pelagic AC following the 2021 Performance Review.

This assessment should allow to have a state of play of the work environment of the Pelagic AC, and suggest best practices to ensure continuity in this positive working environment.

Additionally, if time and budget allows, the performance review should:

- Assess how diversity and equality are dealt with inside the Pelagic AC (gender diversity and representation within the different Pelagic AC groups)
- Audit if inappropriate behavior and sexual harassment have happened in the Pelagic AC





Finally, the Performance review shall where appropriate, propose recommendations for:

- How the work of the secretariat can be optimized
- How the quality of advice can be improved
- How Pelagic AC advice dissemination and communication can be expanded
- How internal/external collaboration can be strengthened
- How the current setup of Working Groups and Focus Groups can be improved
- How continuity in the Pelagic AC 's working environment can be ensured
- How Pelagic AC membership can be expanded
- How inappropriate behavior and sexual harassment can be addressed
- How diversity and equality inside the Pelagic AC can be improved
- How In-person participation of Pelagic AC stakeholders can be strengthened
- Other issues beyond the ones identified, if considered useful.

Methodology

- Analysis of available literature (advice, meeting documents, relevant legislation...)
- Questionnaire to members and wider
- Interviews with key Pelagic AC stakeholders (members of the Management Team, Executive Committee and GA, representatives of DGMARE, Member States, ICES, External OIGs...)
- Comparative analysis between the results of the 2021 performance review and the 2026 review to identify improvements, trends, and areas needing further attention
- Concluding workshop with Members and Pelagic AC contacts in the Commission

Deadline for Application

30th of September 2025

Deadline for delivery

April 2026 – for presentation at Pelagic AC meeting on 22nd and 23rd of April 2026.

Candidate requirements

- Proven experience with external evaluations of other Advisory Council(s)
- Experience in the field of fisheries, preferably in governance or stakeholder engagement.
- Knowledge of fisheries legislation
- Availability to deliver the (draft) report by the requested deadline.

Budget allocated

15 000 €

