



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/C/PS

Dear Mr Sverdrup-Jensen,

Thank you for your letter dated 13 February 2026 in which you share the PelAC's views and concerns regarding the ongoing negotiations with the coastal States on the management of the Northeast Atlantic mackerel stock, particularly in light of the arrangement concluded on 15 December 2025 between the United Kingdom, Norway, the Faroe Islands and Iceland.

Sustainable fisheries management is essential to ensuring the long-term viability of marine resources, as well as the prosperity of the EU seafood sector and the coastal communities that depend upon them. While the four-party arrangement represents a modest reduction in fishing pressure, it does not address the issue of overfishing in its entirety. Moreover, it is an example of a missed occasion to efficiently cooperate in the interest of the stock. In its current form, as the EU has not been associated to it, it does not reflect the legitimate interests of the European fishing sector.

Since December, the Commission has been fully engaged at technical, diplomatic and political levels with all relevant parties, with a view to securing a comprehensive and sustainable management solution within the framework of the coastal States consultations.

Regrettably, despite the Commission's sustained efforts, in close coordination with the Member States, it has not been possible to reach agreement neither on a TAC for 2026 nor on a comprehensive sharing arrangement. This is why the Council has eventually aligned on the TAC level of 299,010 tonnes, which was set by the four mentioned parties, and set the EU quotas for the current year on that basis. This approach has been adopted to ensure a level playing field and to avoid placing EU fishers at a disadvantage compared to other fleets.

Regarding the sharing arrangement, the Commission, given the EU's Chair position for the mackerel consultations until end March 2026, acted proactively by convening several

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rounds of negotiations. While the four-party arrangement has been presented as a stepping stone towards a comprehensive agreement, it appears at this stage that the UK and Norway expect the EU to show flexibility downwards of its historical share. By contrast, in the four-party arrangement Norway and the UK set much higher shares for themselves than what they had in 2020.

Consultations on mackerel will now continue under the chairship of Norway. In this context, it will be essential for Norway and the UK to recalibrate their increased quotas to ensure adequate scope for the EU within a comprehensive arrangement among all coastal States. The successful outcome of the negotiations will continue to depend and count on the highest political leverage and a package approach to ensure the EU strategic interests are preserved.

For 2026, the coastal States have set quotas amounting to a cumulative level of approximately 108% of the TAC. In the meantime, the Russian Federation has continued to set an annual quota of 110,000 tonnes, which, if confirmed in 2026, would correspond to around 35% of the TAC for this year. Such scenario raises serious concerns regarding the sustainability of the stock.

In response to these developments, the Commission recently tabled an EU proposal for a recommendation in the framework of the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), with a view to limiting unsustainable fishing activities and mitigating the risk of stock collapse.

Let me finally thank you and all PelAC members for their support, advice, and constructive input. I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

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