



Pelagic Advisory Council

2nd Performance Review

(2020-2025)

final report

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Authors: Benoît Guerin, Benoit Caillart

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the second independent performance review of the Pelagic Advisory Council (PelAC), covering the financial years 2020-2025. The Pelagic Advisory Council (PelAC) was established in accordance with the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) Regulation¹. Annex III of the CFP Regulation specifies the area of competence of the PelAC as covering Pelagic stocks (blue whiting, mackerel, horse mackerel, herring, boarfish) in all geographical areas of the European Union excluding the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean

The review was carried out in accordance with the obligation set out in Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/242, which requires every Advisory Council to undergo an independent performance review at least every five years aiming to identify best practices and shortcomings, propose recommendations to improve the functioning of the Council, and assess its overall contribution to the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy as set out in Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013.”

By engaging a wide range of stakeholders from the fishing sector (Sector Organisations) – commercial vessel owners, producer organisations, processors and traders – and Other Interest Groups (OIGs) – environmental NGOs, animal welfare NGOs, consumer representatives and civil society – the Pelagic AC reflects stakeholders’ views with the aim of working towards the sustainable management of pelagic fisheries.

A triangulation methodology. The evaluation combines five complementary sources: a literature review of the PelAC's five annual work programmes and five annual technical reports; an analytical grid of the 108 advice and correspondence issued by the PelAC over the 2020-2025 period, categorised according to eight criteria (recipient, scope, area, quality, recommendation type, response status and quality); 26 semi-structured interviews with PelAC members, the Secretariat, the European Commission, Member States, ICES and EFCA; an online survey to which 17 stakeholders responded (including 14 PelAC members); and on-site observation of the February 2026 PelAC meetings. Interim findings were shared with the Executive Committee on 16 April 2026. The triangulation of these sources ensures that every major conclusion is supported by at least two sources of different nature and allows for the objectivation of discrepancies between documented performance and stakeholder perceptions.

Seven key findings. The triangulation of sources converges on a globally positive diagnosis of the PelAC's institutional maturity, while identifying seven areas where attention is required.

- **Confirmed institutional maturity.** The PelAC has weathered Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, a budget deficit in 2022-2023 and three successive senior staff transitions while maintaining the continuity of its production. All governing bodies receive satisfaction levels above 80% from the survey respondents (Chair 100%, Working Group chairs 100%, Secretariat 94%, Management Team 82%). The working atmosphere is unanimously described as positive, respectful and constructive.
- **Robust advice production, systematically exceeding the target.** 108 advice were issued over the period, with the annual target of eight recommendations exceeded every year (19 in 2024-

¹ Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC. OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, pp. 22–61. [Link](#)

2025). 90.6% of the advice for which quality assessment is meaningful are classified as "Robust" (evidence-based); 91% contain a clearly structured "concise" recommendation section; 30% are co-signed with other Advisory Councils; all are adopted by full Executive Committee consensus.

With a main focus on stock conservation and scientific expertise in relation to the main pelagic commercial species, the PelAC could maintain its set-up and functioning after Brexit and improved its productivity through an increase number of advice released annually which are mostly founded on scientific evidence. Its functioning includes three working groups, with two of them being species specific (WG I on herring, blue whiting, boarfish, and WG II on mackerel, silver smelt, sprat) and a third one WG III created in 2024 to deal with crosscutting issues such as environmental protection or social matters.

- **Recognised but partial representativeness.** 94% of respondents consider the PelAC's practices and work to be relevant to their organisation's needs, and pelagic interests are described as well represented. **Three under-representation gaps nevertheless persist.** First and foremost, In early 2026, PelAC's membership included of 28 Sector Organisations from 9 EU Member States (PT, ES, FR, IE, NL, DK, DE, PL, SE), and 7 from Other Interest Group (7 seats out of 35, the 60/40 ratio not reached), making a total number of members of 35. Also, participation is limited from southern European organisations (particularly Spanish and Portuguese ones, affected by language and cultural differences²) and small-scale fisheries' — although the PelAC explicitly acknowledges that the stocks under its remit are overwhelmingly fished by large-scale fleets.
- **Power imbalances perceived by several members.** 47% of survey respondents identify power imbalances to a significant extent. Interviewees explain this through (i) the structural informational advantage of the main pelagic fishing organisations whose scientific leads also sit in ICES expert groups; (ii) the technical nature of debates and the language barrier (meetings conducted in English mainly); (iii) the perception that part of the deliberation takes place partly out of the meetings.
- **Socio-economic dimension as a deliberate blind spot.** Combined economic, social and financial topics account for only 4.6% of advice (5 out of 108). This deliberate omission, intended to avoid divisive discussions on fleet segments, is increasingly difficult to sustain in the context of declining pelagic stocks (NEA mackerel, blue whiting, North Sea herring) and TAC reductions. Almost all interviewees support reopening this dimension of the PelAC's work.
- **Institutional follow-up shortfall objectified by the figures.** The grid analysis documents an overall formal response rate of 49.1%: 57.5% from DG MARE and 0% from Member States (none of the twelve advice sent directly to Member States or regional groups received a traceable written response). The 49 substantive replies received are however of acceptable quality: 61% are "specific". The issue is the consistency of feedback rather than its content.
- **Absence of a non-EU contact group.** Although pelagic stocks are intrinsically straddling stocks under Coastal States arrangements, the PelAC has no formal channel of exchange with non-EU stakeholders (Norway, Iceland, Faroe Islands, UK, and Russia post-2027). The creation of such a contact group is supported almost unanimously by the interviewees and is a priority cross-cutting recommendation, particularly in the context of the current Coastal States crisis.

² « cultural differences » include inter alia a different approach to negotiation, a different weight given to the scientific advice, different ways of phrasing and expressing opinions in writing and speaking

The report concludes with twenty-one actionable recommendations, organised in three blocks (A internal operations, governance and inclusivity; B advice production; C institutional cooperation) and prioritised P1 (within 12 months), P2 (within 24 months) and P3 (next multi-annual cycle). Five recommendations are classified P1, including the launch of a dedicated OIG and diversity plan, the improvement of linguistic inclusivity and document circulation, the cleaning and full utilisation of PelAC's budget, the negotiation of a formal feedback channel with the Commission, and the creation of the non-EU stakeholder contact group. Taken together, these recommendations are designed to strengthen the PelAC's representativeness, internal functioning and institutional reach in time for the next performance review cycle, and to consolidate its position as a unique trans-regional stakeholder voice on EU pelagic fisheries.

Collaborations have diversified and intensified over the period, particularly with ICES through its physical attendance at PelAC meetings and specific working groups, with DG MARE through its proactive participation in PelAC meetings, and with other EU Advisory Councils through various focus groups and joint advice.

However, at the same time, the European Union's pelagic fisheries are facing an increasingly challenging situation, driven on the one hand by the impact of climate change and, on the other, by the ongoing disagreement between the European Union and coastal states, which is leading to the overfishing of stocks.

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1. Introduction

The Pelagic Advisory Council (PelAC) was established in 2006 in accordance with the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) Regulation³. Annex III of the CFP Regulation specifies the area of competence of the PelAC as covering Pelagic stocks (blue whiting, mackerel, horse mackerel, herring, boarfish) in all geographical areas of the European Union excluding the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. PelAC's advice feeds into the European Commission and Member States, providing stakeholders' views on the management of pelagic fish stocks.

As an EU fisheries and aquaculture stakeholder body co-funded by the European Commission the PelAC shall subject itself at least once every five years to an independent performance review. This review shall aim to identify 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 current review aims to describe the current functioning of the PelAC, the participation level of its members, its internal functioning and its working practices with other bodies.

³ Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC. OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, pp. 22–61. [Link](#)

2. Methodology

The methodology is thoroughly described has been presented and discussed with the PelAC's management team in advance of the data collection programme. Various sources of information has been used including:

- Feedback from members and observers;
- observation of PelAC meetings;
- desk analysis of PelAC's advice.

Feedback from members and observers have been obtained through i) semi-structured interviews (see Annex 1: Interview guidance and list of interviewees), which provided qualitative insights from key stakeholders on the functioning of the system, and ii) an online survey (see Annex 2: PelAC on-line survey questions), which provided quantitative information to confirm the main issues identified or provide further details.

Observation of PelAC working groups meetings (10th, 11th and 12th of February 2026) have allowed the consultants to have a direct experience of the working dynamics within the PelAC, and provided direct evidence of the tone and atmosphere and efforts made by members to contribute to dialogue and to reach consensual positions.

Desk analysis of PelAC's advice relied on a qualitative screening of advice emitted over the 2020-2025 period through 7 main descriptors: scope of the advice, area of the advice, answer received, qualitative assessment of the advice, recommendations formulated, recipient of the advice, answer from the recipient (see Annex 3: Synthesis of the advice analysis grid).

2.1 Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation focuses on the performance of the Pelagic Advisory Council (PelAC) for the period 2020-2025. It is structured around three complementary areas:

Area 1 – Representation, Participation, and Internal Functioning: composition of members, governance of bodies (General Assembly, Executive Committee, Management Team, Working Groups, Focus Groups, Secretariat), working atmosphere, inclusivity, HR and budgetary framework, and protection against harassment.

Area 2 – Production of advice: volume and quality of adopted recommendations, consensus processes, thematic mapping, adoption timelines and conditions, and institutional monitoring.

Area 3 – Institutional Cooperation: relations with the European Commission, Member States and their regional groups, ICES, STECF, EFCA, other advisory councils, the European Parliament, and non-EU parties.

The period 2020-2025 covers five fiscal years⁴ and includes the structuring episodes of the UK's exit from the EU, the COVID-19 pandemic, the revision of the statutes (notarisation early 2022), the three transitions of senior staff (Chair, Vice-Chair, Head of Secretariat, Executive Secretary, Chairs of Working Groups) and the creation of a third horizontal Working Group in October 2024.

2.2 A triangulation methodology

The report uses a triangulation methodology based on five complementary sources, the combination of which makes it possible to cross-reference documented facts, quantified characteristics of opinions produced, perceptions shared by actors and the official reading delivered in interim feedback to the ExCom.

Table 1 : sources and contents used for the triangulation methodology

Source	Content	Specific contribution
Official documents	5 annual work programmes (2020-2025), 5 technical reports ANNEX V-B / ANNEX 5 submitted to DG MARE, PelAC statutes, annual accounts	Establishing the facts: volumes, dates, references, decisions, finances, composition, references to opinions and correspondence
Advice analysis grid	108 PelAC opinions and correspondence over 2020-2025, qualified according to 5 criteria: (1) addressee, (2) scope (CMF, other EU policies, organisational, scientific research), (3) domain (conservation, environment, social, economic, MSP, horizontal), (4) quality (robust / moderately robust / not applicable), (5) type of recommendation (concise / diluted / no), with follow-up on the response received and its quality (specific / moderately / not specific / no answer)	Objective quantification of production: response rate per recipient, thematic distribution, quality, co-production with other ACs
Semi-structured interviews	26 interviews: 18 PelAC members (industry and OIGs), Secretariat, 3 European Commission officials (including DG MARE D3), 3 representatives of Member States (NL, DK, other), 1 ICES (Colm Lordan), 1 EFCA (Leon Bouts)	Qualitative understanding of practices, tacit rules, relationships, shared perceptions, and points of tension
Online survey	17 respondents, including 14 members; 17 questions covering the three themes; bilingual EN/ES; administered between January and February 2026	Quantitative measurement of perceptions regarding representativeness, governance, quality

⁴ A fiscal year runs from 17th August year n to 16th August year n+1

Source	Content	Specific contribution
		of opinions, institutional monitoring, and cooperation.
Presentation to Ex Com 16/04/2026	Presentation of preliminary conclusions to the PelAC Executive Committee; nine preliminary recommendations shared and discussed	Institutional validation of an initial analytical framework and recommendations
Participant observation	Participation in PelAC meetings in February 2026 (including Working Groups)	On-site verification of the practices described in the interview and in the survey

This triangulation methodology offers three advantages for evaluation. First, it reduces the risk of a finding relying on a single source: each major conclusion below is supported by at least two sources of a different nature. Second, it allows for the objective assessment of discrepancies between documented performance (programs, reports, opinions) and perceived performance (interviews, surveys), these discrepancies being themselves objects of analysis. Finally, it integrates an internal (members) and external (Commission, Member States, agencies) perspective into the PelAC framework.

2.3 Analytical Framework: PelAC Intervention Logic

The evaluation is based on the reconstructed PelAC intervention logic, which describes the chain linking fisheries governance needs, the objectives assigned to the Advisory Council, its resources, its activities, and the expected chain of results (outputs, outcomes, impacts) as shown in Figure 1.

Needs: To ensure stakeholder participation in the design and implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in accordance with the principle of good governance promoted by the EU.

Objectives: To create a platform enabling the CFP to benefit from the knowledge and experience of stakeholders interested in pelagic fisheries.

Inputs: Establishment under Dutch law; internal rules aligned with Regulation (EU) 1380/2013 and Delegated Regulation 2015/242; human resources of the members and the Secretariat; funding from the Commission, Member States, and contributions.

Activities. Meetings of the General Assembly, the Executive Committee, and Working Groups; representation in consultation platforms and research programs; cooperation with other Advisory Councils on horizontal topics.

Outputs. Adoption of written opinions at the request of the Commission or on its own initiative; contributions from PelAC representatives to the platforms; contribution to the collection of technical and scientific information.

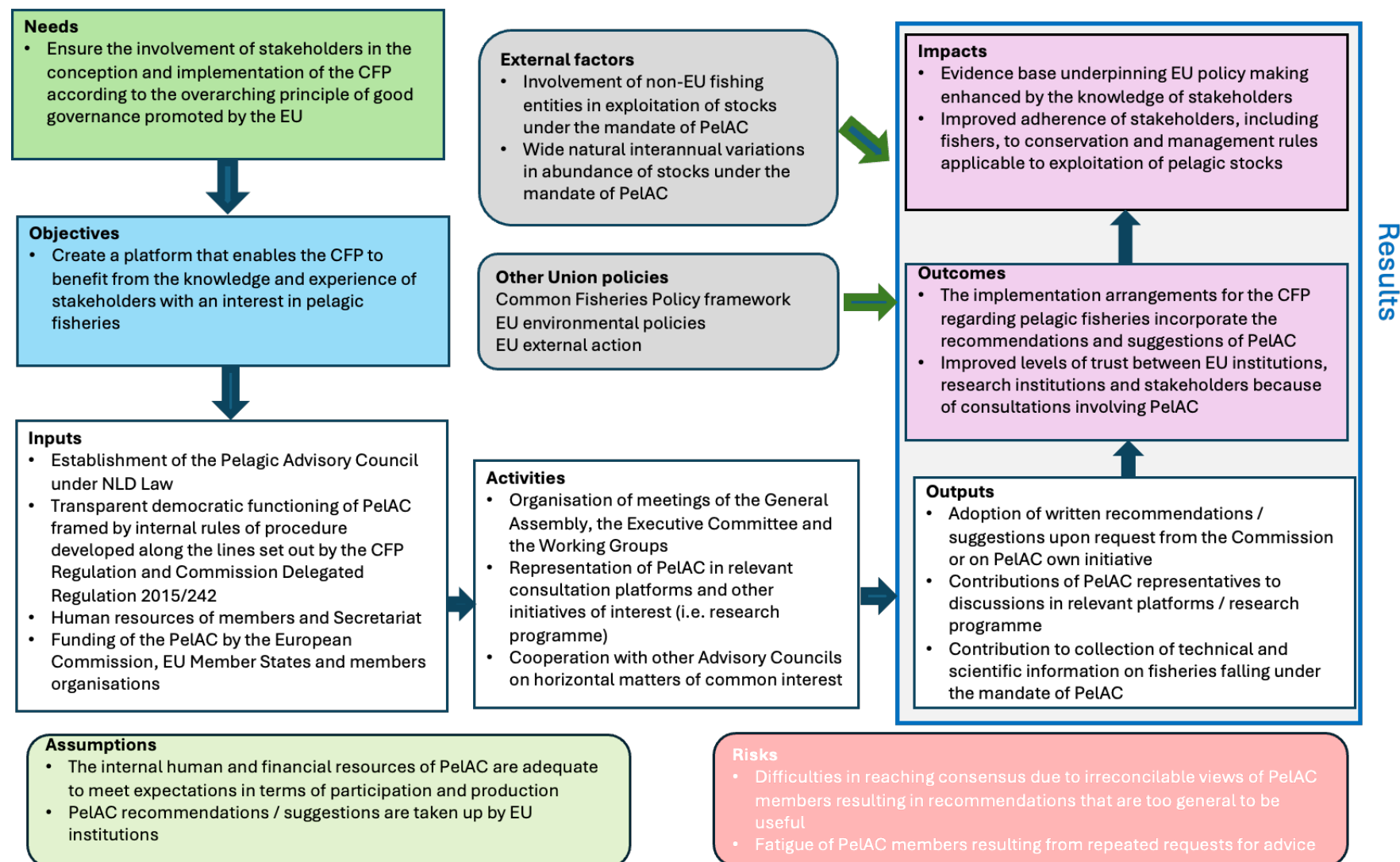
Expected Outcomes. Integration of opinions into the CFP implementation arrangements; improved levels of trust between EU institutions, research, and stakeholders.

Expected Impacts. Strengthening of the knowledge base underpinning policy decisions; greater stakeholder (particularly fishermen) support for conservation and management rules.

Critical Assumptions. Adequacy of internal resources; adoption of recommendations by EU institutions. Risks: Difficulty in reaching consensus due to overly diverging opinions; member fatigue due to the frequency of requests.

This logic of intervention provides the framework for reading the report: at each stage of the chain, the evaluation questions what the triangulation of sources allows us to establish and where adjustments are necessary.

Figure 1 : Intervention logic of the PelAC



Source: own elaboration

2.4 Limitations of the Approach

The evaluation has four main methodological limitations, which are highlighted here for the sake of transparency.

- **Sample size.** With 17 respondents (including 14 of the 35 PelAC members), the survey provides significant but not exhaustive coverage of the diversity of viewpoints. Quantitative results should be interpreted with caution regarding subgroups (particularly the small number of OIG respondents).
- **Representativeness of interviews.** The majority of interviews involved members and observers with already sustained participation; less active or silent members are structurally underrepresented in the qualitative data.
- **Measuring impact.** The Commission's formal written response rate to PelAC's advice is around 50%, but the actual impact of these advice (uptake of the Joint Recommendations, the Coastal States negotiations, and the positions adopted by the Council) cannot not be systematically measured due to the lack of a structured monitoring mechanism within PelAC.

3. Participation and functioning of internal bodies

3.1 Composition and representativeness

The PelAC has 35 members divided between the sector (28 seats – 80%) and the Other Interest Groups (OIGs, 7 seats – 20%), which means the Advisory Council falls short of the 60%/40% sector/OIG target ratio set out in the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) Regulation⁵. The PelAC is already very much aware of this under-representation of the OIG group. To overcome this situation, it launched a specific initiative in 2024 to organize the round of meetings in Brussels and convene various OIG not members of PelAC. No new memberships followed this event. In a targeted consultation, “strategic relevance, capacity and the resource implications of sustained engagement in multiple Advisory Councils” have been mentioned by an OIG not member of the PelAC, but member of other AC. Thus, it can be concluded that the situation is rather due to OIG not considering being member of the PelAC as a priority for their organisation due to insufficient internal resources to support proper engagement.

Originating from 9 European Union Member States (PT, ES, FR, IE, NL, DK, DE, PL, SE), the PelAC's membership **reflects adequately the diversity and geographical extent of pelagic fisheries in Europe**. According to the survey (Annex 4 : Synthesis of the main results of the online survey), 94% of respondents consider PelAC's practices and work to be relevant to their

⁵ Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC. OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, pp. 22–61. [Link](#)

organisation's needs (35.3% 'to a high degree', 58.8% 'to some extent'). Almost all interviewees describe the representation of pelagic interests as 'good'.

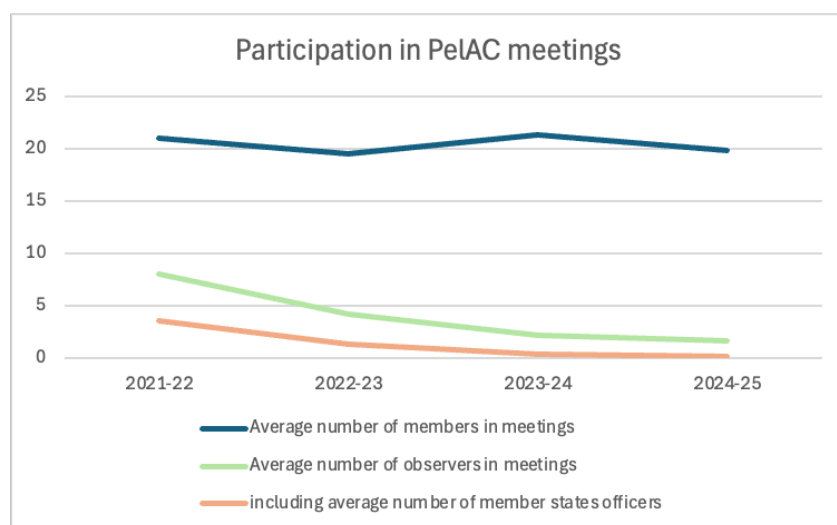
The Executive committee is composed of 13 members, including 3 (23%) from the other interest group. The number of 13 members is neither intentional nor required by the statutes: it is the result of the number of candidates (following the departure of several member organisation after Brexit and the long-standing difficulty to attract OIG organisations), a fact that PelAC explicitly acknowledges in its technical reports.

The Management Team, comprising 7 people (Chair, Vice-Chair, Chairs of the Working Groups, Head of Secretariat, Executive Secretary), with 4 of them being representatives of sector organisations and 2 representatives of OIG's, meaning a 67%-33% (excluding the Executive Secretary who is neither from the sector or from the OIG) balance between the two groups.

3.2 Participation to PelAC's meetings and functioning

The participation of members in PelAC's meetings has remained stable over the years as shown in Figure 2 below, at around 20 members per meeting.

Figure 2 : participation in PelAC meetings (2021-2025)



With regard to participation, three interrelated shortcomings have been identified to varying degrees

Within the membership, **the participation of other interest groups** has remained rather weak with 4 OIG members participating to meeting on average, meaning that the OIG represent 20% of members participating to PelAC meetings on average. Several interviewees highlighted the absence of certain NGOs interested in pelagic issues that are not members of PelAC.

The lack of participation from southern Europe organisations (Spain and Portugal) has also been raised in several interviews. Whilst the interests of the Spanish fleets are de facto represented through the members of PelAC for Spain (ten Spanish organisations

are part of PelAC, making it by far the largest group in terms of Member State of origin), the problem seems to lie more in actual attendance at meetings due to cultural differences and/or the language issue. As for Portugal, no sector organisation does belong to the PelAC, yet one organisation from the OIG is based in Portugal.

Lastly, a concern has been raised recently by some members **in terms of representation of small-scale fishing sector**. This situation is acknowledged by the PelAC.

« The PelAC has a particular focus that explains the relatively modest engagement of the organization with small scale fisheries. The PelAC fish stocks are overwhelmingly fished by large scale fleets (LSF). These stocks are very important for the large-scale fleets that depend heavily on a few pelagic species. This contrasts with the miniscule proportion of revenues and catches represented by PelAC stocks for small scale fisheries (SSF). » - PelAC technical report 2022-23, section B.5

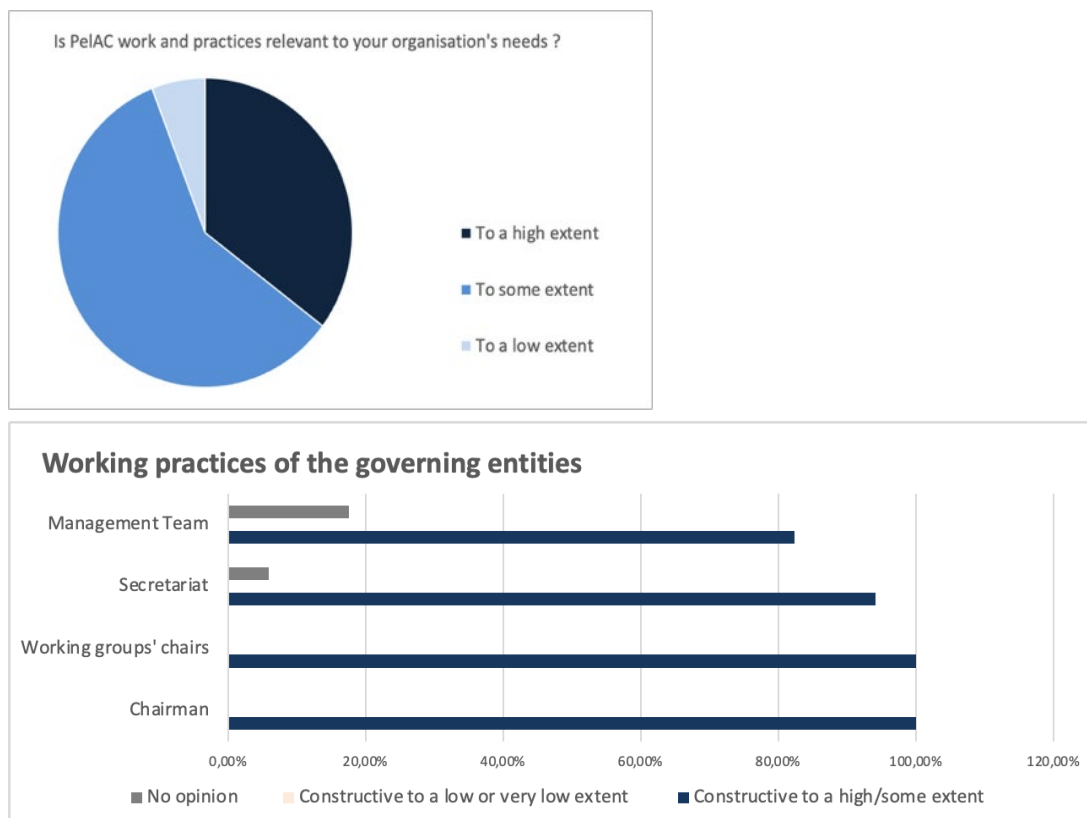
However, whereas the bulk of pelagic fisheries' catches originate from large-scale vessels, the PelAC's member organisations do also count on small-scale fishers' membership.

Without exception, **all interviewees described the working atmosphere as positive, respectful, constructive or collaborative**. The survey confirmed this: all respondents consider the practices of the Chairperson and the Chairs of Working Groups to be constructive (100% 'to a high degree or to some extent'); the Secretariat and the Management Team achieve satisfaction rates of 94% and 82% respectively (see Figure 3).

"A well-functioning AC, with good discussions, where all parties can have their say" (survey quote, January 2026).

"The PELAC is well managed, and members participate in a collaborative and constructive manner. Meetings are well organised and well run, with plenty of opportunities for discussion and feedback" (survey quote, January 2026).

Figure 3 : relevance and functioning of the PelAC



Source: on line survey, January 2026 (17 respondents)

Unwritten rules are effective but need to be formalised. Several interviewees describe an informal code of conduct that underpins the quality of the dialogue: the primacy of scientific advice as evidence, a systematic search for consensus, and a commitment not to respond publicly until a matter has been discussed within PelAC. This code is not written down. Its transmission relies on the cumulative experience of long-standing members and on the moderating role of the Chairs and the Secretariat.

However, the interviews identified three potential areas of tension. Feedback highlights some factors that could undermine internal dialogue:

The central role of the three major fishing organisations (DPPO, PFA, KFO). Several members emphasise that the three main pelagic organisations have a structural informational and scientific advantage: they have in-house scientists who are also members of relevant ICES working groups (notably WGWIDE and WGHANSA), which gives them early access to assessments and methodological discussions.

The technical nature of the discussions and the language barrier. It has been acknowledged in interviews that the “high technical level can be a barrier to participation for some members”. Other verbatim quotes from the survey highlights the linguistic consequence: “The fact that meetings are held mainly in English means that non-English speakers are largely unable to contribute during sessions” despite translation services provided by the Secretariat.

Discussions taking place partly in the margins of formal meetings. Several comments from the survey and interviews point to the same conclusion. *“Discussions do not appear to happen over the floor but more in the hallway, focus should be on discussing on the floor”* (survey quote, January 2026). One member also suggest that members of the Management Team do not sufficiently report on their participation as PelAC in external forums.

3.3 Governance of PelAC bodies

3.3.1 Existing structure

PelAC’s institutional structure was consolidated during the 2020–2025 period. It comprises six bodies:

General Assembly (GA) — annual meeting in October; membership increased from 34 (2020–2022) to 36 (2023–2024) and then stabilised at 34–35 (2024–2025);

Executive Committee (ExCom) — 13 to 16 members depending on the year, four meetings per year, responsible for the final adoption of opinions by consensus;

Management Team — 7 people;

Secretariat — based in Zoetermeer; Head of Secretariat (Tim Heddema since January 2022), Executive Secretary (Paul Thomas since 2024), Assistant Secretary;

Working Groups — increased from two (WGI, WGII) to three in October 2024 (formal creation of WGIII Horizontal);

Focus Groups — structures of variable duration activated on demand; PelAC has operated up to ten FGs in parallel (Control, Ecosystem, 6a herring, WHOM/NSHOM, SHOM, 3 horse mackerel stocks, etc.).

3.3.2 Cross-verified findings on the governance of the Working Groups

The analysis carried out for the ExCom meeting of 16 April 2026 highlighted four potential areas of concern relating to the Working Groups, which are supported by the interviews and the survey:

Mandates of varying clarity. WGI and WGII have clearly defined (species-specific) mandates. The Horizontal WGIII has a much broader scope (regulation and control, EAFM, energy transition, Spatial Dimension, animal welfare, etc.), which requires additional expertise and enhanced coordination capacity.

Absence of a vice-chair. The Working Groups rely solely on a single appointed Chair, with no designated vice-chair. This structure undermines continuity should the Chair be unavailable and concentrates authority on a single person. Several interviewees also emphasise the importance of formalising terms of reference for the Chairs.

Insufficient definition of Focus Groups. A verbatim quote from the survey highlights this: “It is often unclear what the expected deliverable is, especially for Focus Groups.” FGs are effective at mobilising ad hoc expertise, but their coordination with WGs and their path towards a final opinion would benefit from standardisation.

Gender parity has not been achieved. The Chairs of the three Working Groups are men; the Management Team comprises of one woman out of seven members.

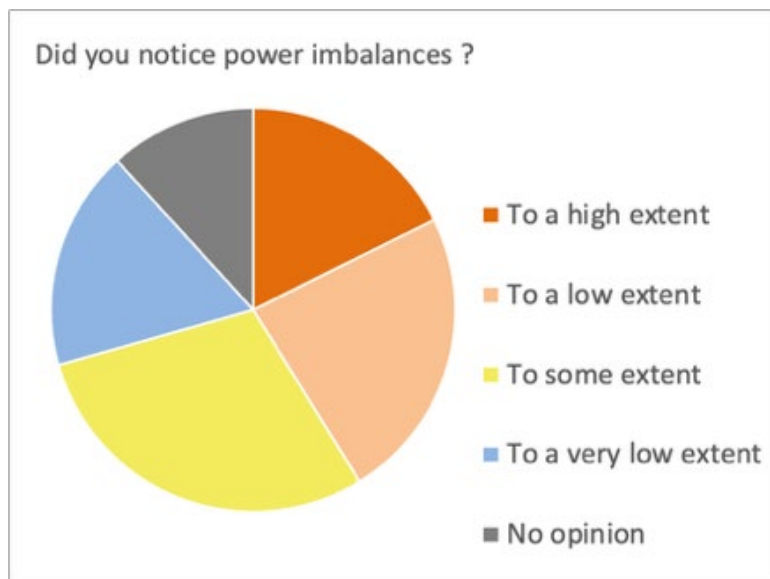
3.3.3 The division of responsibilities between the Management Team and the Executive Committee

A specific point of concern raised both during the interviews and in the Executive Committee presentation on 16 April 2026 relates to the balance of responsibilities between the Management Team and the Executive Committee. Several interviewees questioned the “division of responsibilities between the Management Team and the Executive Committee” suggesting that the Management Team should refer to the Executive Committee on a more regular basis.

3.4 Power imbalances and inclusivity

The **issue of power imbalances** had been specifically highlighted by the Management Team and was raised again during the presentation of the PelAC at the Inter-AC meeting on 18 November 2025. In response to the question raised in the survey “Have you noticed power imbalances in the debates held at PelAC?”, the answers were distributed as follows: 17.6% ‘to a high degree’, 29.4% ‘to some extent’, 23.5% “to a small extent”, 17.6% “to a very small extent”, 11.8% “no opinion” (see Figure 4). Nearly one in two respondents therefore identifies power imbalances to a significant degree. *“To support balanced and inclusive deliberations, it would be beneficial to ensure that all members have an equal opportunity to access information, prepare their positions and contribute meaningfully to discussions.” “On occasion, OIGs can be overwhelmed by the fishing sector on certain issues, even though the Chairs always try to accommodate their views”* (survey quotes, January 2026). This analysis should, however, be treated with caution because the responses in the survey were drafted in a confusing way, the “to a high extent” response meaning a negative where the other questions linked “to a high extent” to a positive outcome

Figure 4 : power imbalances within PelAC's functioning



Source: on line survey, January 2026 (17 respondents)

The risk of adoption by default via the electronic consultation is a sensitive issue raised in several interviews and highlighted in a verbatim transcript of the survey. One interview specifically mentions the *“risk of opinions being adopted by default through electronic validation procedures”* and the *“superiority of opinions formed during discussions rather than via email”*. Some interviewees have therefore suggest convening a virtual meeting to ensure advice are being adopted with the participation of all ExCom’s members.

3.5 Human Resources, budgetary and anti-harassment framework

The literature review traces a **clear pattern of continuity and transition within the Secretariat**: the Executive Secretary’s prolonged absence due to health reasons in 2020–2021 (managed by an external acting officer), the Executive Secretary’s maternity leave in 2022 (with Cabinet Aliénor stepping in), the Heddema transition in January 2022, and the Kats to Paul Thomas transition in 2024 (with a 5-month period without an Executive Secretary). The 2024–2025 technical report explicitly states that *“PelAC has not encountered any difficulties in its internal operations”*, a sign of post-transition stabilisation. Interviewees confirm the robustness of the current system.

Staffing of the Secretariat (3 persons) is broadly adequate. However, additional human resources would be welcome to support the work of WGIII in view of the diversity and of the complexity of the thematics under its remit.

The analysis of the budget (see Figure 5), presented to the ExCom on 16 April 2026, highlighted two budgetary issues:

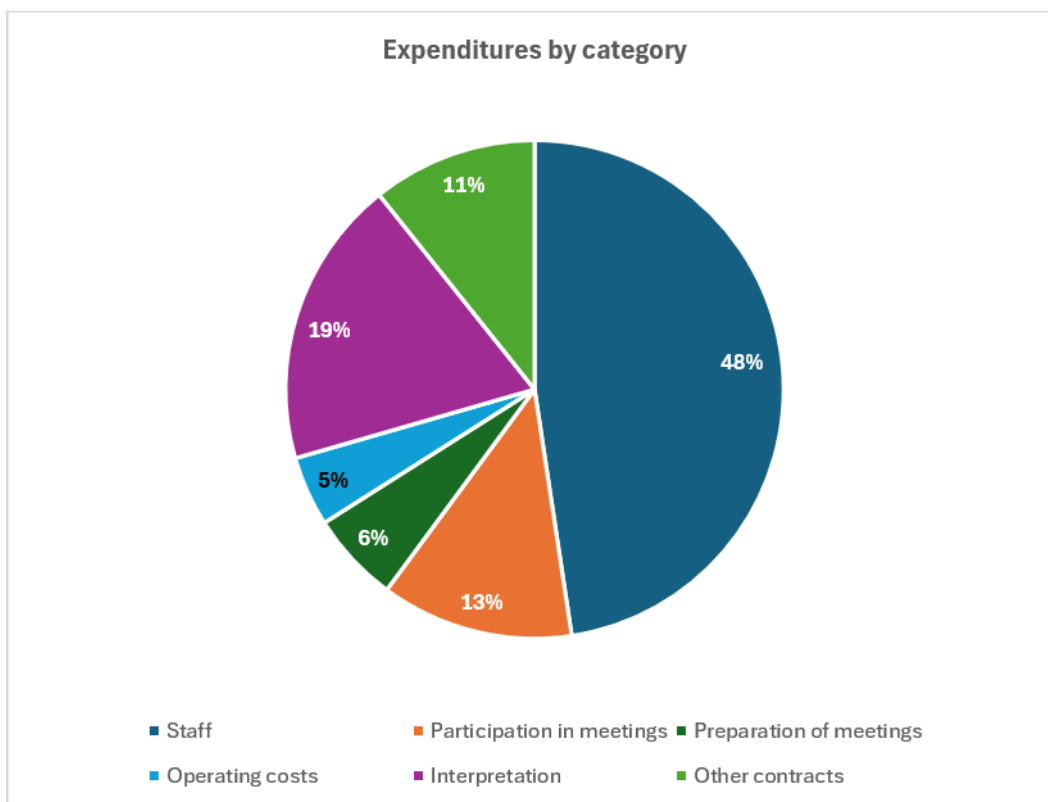
Recurring under-spending. The annual budget is not always fully utilised. Whilst this may reflect a cautious approach to management (to cover contingencies), it also points to possible shortcomings in multi-annual planning.

Obsolete 'Reserve loss foreign exchange' budget line. This line, a legacy from the period prior to the setting of contributions in euros, no longer has any operational relevance and should be removed, with its budget reallocated to operational tasks.

Figure 5 : expenditures, comparison between initial and actual budgets, and average by category

(EUR)	FY2122	FY2223	FY2324	FY2425	Average
Expenditures (forecasts vs actual)					
Staff		-36 660	21 798	14 019	-281
Participation in meetings		28 793	-16 042	-22 770	-3 340
Preparation of meetings		-2 303	-8 806	1 075	-3 345
Operating costs		-1 049	7 027	7 596	4 525
Interpretation		-18 845	12 038	27 185	6 793
Other contracts		-10 558	-6 973	11 452	-2 026
Change reserve		14 389	14 389	12 719	13 832
Total expenditures		-26 233	23 431	51 276	16 158

Note: red: budget exceeded / black: budget underspent



Note: average FY2223-FY2425

Source : PelAC audited financial reports

On request from the Management Team for the performance review, the **issue of protection against workplace harassment** was specifically included in the survey. No cases were reported by contributors. The survey indicates that 94% of respondents have not witnessed or been victims of harassment in connection with PelAC activities; 6% chose not to answer.

Nevertheless, protection measures against workplace harassment are considered to be an area for improvement of PelAC functioning. PelAC does not currently have an established mechanisms for reporting and following up on cases of workplace harassment by an independent third party. This shortcoming needs to be addressed.

4 Production of advice

4.1 Volume, quality and thematic mapping

In terms of volume, the PelAC is consistently exceeding the target set in its annual work program (eight annual recommendations). Over the five financial years covered (2020–2025), the target has been exceeded every year: 16 recommendations in 2022–2023, 16 in 2023–2024, 19 in 2024–2025. The analysis grid established for this evaluation identifies a total of 108 PelAC communications over the 2020–2025 period.

Table 2: quantitative analysis of the advice issued by PelAC (2020-2025)

Calendar year	advice	robust	Co-signed	Replied
2020	4	3	0	2
2021	26	15	7	13
2022	19	10	6	11
2023	18	9	4	11
2024	23	13	8	11
2025	18	8	7	5
Total 2020-2025	108	58	32	52

Source: PelAC 2020–2025 advice analysis grid, key indicators. 2020 = partial year (October–December).

In terms of quality, 91% of advice were classified as ‘robust’ amongst those where the nature of the advice permitted such classification. Indeed, 41 opinions were simple requests, letters where the assessment of robustness was not considered relevant. The advice analysis grid classifies each opinion into three quality levels: ‘Robust’ (opinions based on evidence—statistical data, references to scientific or technical publications, verified facts); ‘Moderately robust’ (reasoning based on qualitative information); “Not applicable” (opinions not requiring substantiation by evidence, e.g. procedural letters or statements of principle). This measure confirms the emphasis of PelAC’s advice on scientific evidence, which was unanimously praised in interviews.

In terms of structure of the advice, 91% of advice contain concise recommendations. The advice analysis grid also evaluates the clarity of the recommendations: 98 advice (91%) include a dedicated section with clear recommendations (‘concise’); only 6 (5.5%) have recommendations that are diluted within the text (‘diluted’). This feature confirms the **Secretariat’s editorial rigour and is an asset in terms of the accessibility to PelAC’s opinions** for recipients.

In terms of thematic mapping, the advice analysis grid enables the distribution of advice to be quantified precisely along two dimensions: their scope (the subject matter of the advice), and their area (the underlying topic, see Table 3).

Table 3 : area of advice released by PelAC over 2020-2025

Area of advice	Number	Share
Stock conservation (quotas, technical measures, MCS)	49	45,4 %
Horizontal (broad scope, multi-policy)	23	21,3 %
Environmental protection (EBFM, energy, ecosystems)	18	16,7 %
Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)	6	5,6 %
Other / Not specified	7	6,5 %
Economic aspect (operating costs, performance)	3	2,8 %
Financial support (grants, EMFAF, etc.)	1	0,9 %
Social dimension (labour standards, employment)	1	0,9 %
Total 2020-2025	108	100%

Source: PelAC 2020–2025 advice analysis grid. Shaded rows: cumulative socio-economic factors account for only 4.6% of advice (5 out of 108).

Three key findings emerge from this quantitative mapping. Firstly, the **predominance of advice on stock conservation is confirmed** (45%). The share of horizontal and environmental issues combined account for 38% of output, which retrospectively justifies the creation of the WGIII Horizontal in 2024. Secondly, the combined socio-economic dimensions (economic 3%, financial 1%, social 1%) account for only 4.6% of opinions over the period — a figure that quantifies the lower emphasis of PelAC work on these issues identified in interviews. Finally, a significant number of advice (nearly one in five opinions, 19%) concerns organisational matters involving the different ACs, highlighting the need for PelAC to coordinate with other ACs in view of overlapping mandates on specific issues but also the concern of the ACs for a continuous improvement of their role and functioning.

Looking at the evolution overtime, analysis by calendar year reveals some notable shifts: stock conservation remains the dominant theme each year (8 to 13 advice per year); ‘Horizontal’ opinions emerged in 2022 (7 advice) and have remained at a high level (4 to 6 per year since then); the economic dimension appears only sporadically (3 advice in 2021, none thereafter); consideration over the Marine Spatial Planning has been growing steadily since 2023. Over the entire period, PelAC has played an **‘instrumental’ role in several key issues: the long-term management plan** for North Sea herring, southern horse mackerel, boarfish and blue whiting. *“PelAC is one of the best ACs in terms of understanding and engagement with scientific advice. It has played a decisive role in the North Sea herring LTMP, boarfish and southern HOM”* (ICES ACOM, Colm Lordan, com. Pers.).

4.2 Consensus-building processes and unwritten rules

The PelAC operates on the principle of consensus: no advice is adopted if only one member opposes it. This internal rule is unanimously acknowledged by those interviewed. The PelAC

thus differs from other advisory councils, where minority or dissenting opinions are sometimes accepted and formally recorded.

This has two consequences: on the one hand, the **institutional robustness of the advice** (once published, they represent the view of all relevant stakeholders, sector organisations and other interest groups); on the other hand, the **cost in terms of the ability to address divisive issues**. Several interviewees thus question “PelAC’s deliberate choice to avoid topics of conflict, notably between NGOs and industry”, and some note that “opinions do not need to be based on science all the time” and that it would be interesting to “clarify divergent opinions”.

Three **shared unwritten rules**. The informal code of conduct described by several interviewees is based on:

- the primacy of science-based advice (PelAC’s advice follows and transposes ICES advice for the EU);
- the systematic pursuit of consensus (until the discussions had succeeded in resolving all the disagreements);
- a commitment not to comment publicly until an issue has been discussed within PelAC.

These rules work and largely underpin the positive atmosphere described. But they are not written down in any document. Their transmission to new members relies on experience and self-regulation. This informal transmission constitutes both a strength (flexibility) and a risk (loss of institutional memory in the event of rapid transition).

4.3 Socio-economic dimension: a deliberate blind spot

A deliberate choice, stated in no uncertain terms. The literature review and the presentation to the ExCom state this unambiguously: “The socio-economic aspect has been deliberately omitted, as PelAC does not wish to explore issues regarding fleet segments.” Several interviewees confirm this choice : one interviewee explains that “the socio-economic dimension has always been difficult to incorporate but could become more important in the future”; another one highlights the “added value of combining scientific elements and socio-economic impacts, distinct from the positions of fishermen’s associations”; lastly one member calls for the inclusion of the socio-economic dimension in the transition towards EBFM (Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management).

There seems to be a **consensus on the need to move beyond this approach**. Given the current vulnerability of stocks (NEA mackerel, blue whiting, herring in 6a and the North Sea under pressure) and the reduction in TACs, almost all those interviewed (industry representatives, NGOs, Member States) consider that the PelAC should start considering discussing socio-economic issues.

4.4 Timelines and conditions for adoption

The responsiveness of the PelAC is particularly noticeable. PelAC publishes its TAC advice just a few days after the publication of the ICES advice, to meet the schedule for Coastal States negotiations. For example in 2024–2025: ICES publishes on 30 September, PelAC publishes on 4 October, e.g. D+4. This responsiveness is praised by all external stakeholders (Commission, Member States, ICES).

But this responsiveness puts pressure on time dedicated to the debates. Several sources agree that there is a tension between responsiveness and the quality of the collective debate. Various interviewees indicate that **preparing high-quality advice requires in-person meetings, more dialogue and time to allow for in-depth discussion**. Furthermore, there is a risk of advice being adopted by default through electronic validation procedures.

4.5 Institutional follow-up: a varied response rate, with striking differences across Member States

The overall response amounts for 49%, but with considerable variation depending on the recipient. The analysis grid (see Annex 3: Synthesis of the advice analysis grid) enables the follow-up to each advice to be measured precisely as displayed in the Figure 6.

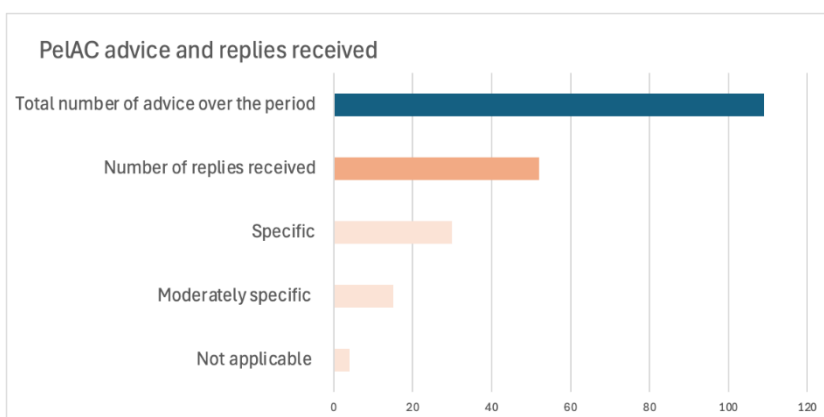


Figure 6 : replies to PelAC advice (2020-25)

Source: on line survey, January 2026 (17 respondents)

Of the 108 advice and letters adopted during the 2020–2025 period, 53 received a formal written response and 55 remained unanswered — giving an overall response rate of 49.1%. However, this average rate masks considerable variations depending on the recipient.

Table 4 : replies to PelAC's advice

Recipient of the advice	Advice sent	Replies received	Reply rate	Share
DG MARE (European Commission)	87	50	58 %	81 %
Member State (or MS regional group)	12	0	0 %	11 %
Scientific bodies (ICES, STECF, EFCA, ...)	6	1	17 %	6 %
Other EU institution	3	2	67 %	3 %
Total 2020-2025	108	53	49%	100%

Source: PelAC 2020–2025 advice analysis grid.

The most striking finding is the **stark contrast between DG MARE** (58% of formal responses) and **the Member States** (0% out of 12 opinions sent directly). None of the twelve communications sent to Member States or regional groups of Member States received a traceable formal written response during the period. This figure confirms the intuition relayed by the members on the lack of engagement of EU Member States in PelAC work.

In terms of quality of the replies, the analysis shows 61% of ‘specific’ responses from the Commission. The grid also assesses the quality of responses received according to three levels: ‘Specific’ (provides concrete details on the points raised and on the envisaged follow-up); ‘Moderately specific’ (covers certain technical aspects without addressing concrete follow-up actions); ‘Not specific’ (general response, simple acknowledgement of receipt). Of the 49 classifiable responses (mainly from DG MARE), the distribution is as follows: specific: 30 (61%); moderately specific: 15 (31%); not specific: 4 (8%).

The majority of responses received are therefore substantial, which puts the sense of frustration into perspective: when the Commission does respond, it does so in the vast majority of cases with useful content. The problem may not so much be the quality of the response as the consistency of the feedback.

Aside from this description, it is also important to consider members’ satisfaction of the replies sent to PelAC as it is the most objective output of the efforts and contributions they have put in the advisory process. The survey and interviews point to a critical assessment of how feedback is considered. The survey figures corroborate and supplement this assessment as shown in Figure 7.

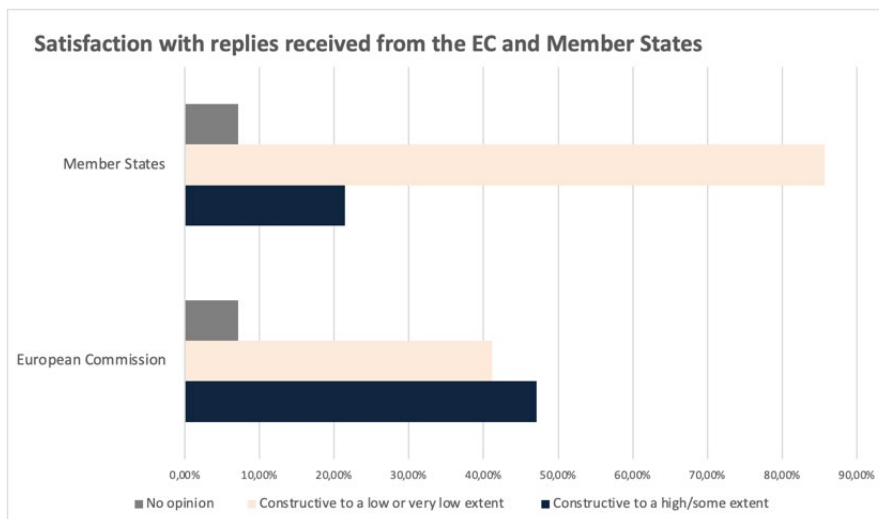


Figure 7 : satisfaction with replies received from the European Commission and Member States

Source: on line survey, January 2026 (17 respondents)

Key findings emerge from this analysis, which combines the data with the interviews:

Frustration is focused on the Member States. With 86% of respondents expressing dissatisfaction, the lack of follow-up of advice by Member States represent the most glaring shortcoming. The interviewees explain this: although Member States acknowledge the quality of PelAC’s advice, use it in Council negotiations and in discussions with the Commission, they attend PelAC meetings strictly as observers without participating in the debate. No regional Member State group is dedicated to pelagic stocks exists.

“PelAC’s responsiveness in assessing ICES recommendations and translating them into recommendations for the European Union, adding value by combining scientific

elements and socio-economic impacts, distinct from the positions of fishermen's associations" (Member State official, com. Pers.)

The literature review had identified as early as 2023–2024 a concern raised by PelAC regarding the lack of explicit consultation of the Advisory Councils by Member States under Article 13(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 when a Member State submits a Joint Recommendation⁶.

Regarding the Commission, satisfaction is more mixed, but frustration is widespread.

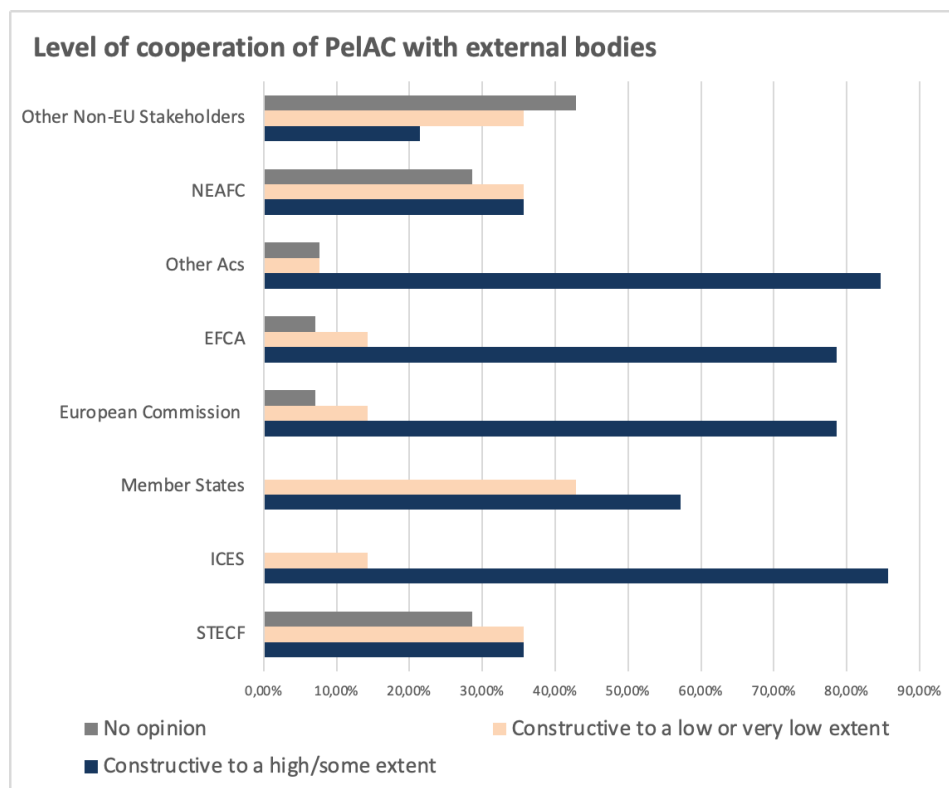
A 47% satisfaction rate and a 41% dissatisfaction rate reflect a polarised view. The interviewees reveal the reasons: "disappointment with the Commission's consideration of advice, need for follow-up on advice" ; "considers that the EC is abusing the PelAC's goodwill and should make better use of the advice provided" (verbatim interview); "the EC's internal procedure of answers to PelAC advice tends to render responses meaningless; importance of strengthening collaboration between the EC and Member States" (verbatim interview).

"Advice is frequently ignored and responses to requests are often superficial and unhelpful. Engagement with the Member States' regional groups is ineffective and frustrating" (verbatim survey).

⁶ References 2324PAC14 (letter to the Commission, Ares reply 2023/8945123 of 28/12/2023) and 2324PAC62 (letter to the Commission, Ares reply 2024/3127586 of 24/04/2024) confirm this.

5 Institutional cooperation

Figure 8 : assessment of the level of collaboration with PelAC's external partners



Source: on line survey, January 2026 (17 respondents)

5.1 European Commission

This is a close and institutionally supported cooperation. The survey indicates that 79% of respondents consider cooperation with the Commission to be constructive: the annual technical reports document, DG MARE's regular attendance at the four annual plenary meetings, systematic briefings on the state of play of bilateral (EU-Norway), trilateral and Coastal States negotiations, participation in the biannual Inter-AC meetings, and — a major innovation since January 2025 — inclusion of ACs in the preparation of the MIRIA (Meeting between ICES and Requesters of ICES Advice). Acknowledgement of Commission's engagement was further strengthened by the attendance of the February 2026 meeting by the Commissioner responsible for fisheries and oceans with members of its cabinet.

There is a strong call for the post-advice dialogue to be formalised. **Follow-up discussion with the European Commission is a key request from PelAC.** All interviewees agree: the quality of operational contacts is recognised, but formal follow-up on advice is lacking. One interviewee highlights the existence of an "ongoing informal dialogue between the Commission and the main pelagic fishing organisations, but one that is not formalised and does not involve the participation of NGOs".

5.2 International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

The cooperation with ICES is viewed by respondents as an exemplary scientific partnership. Cooperation with ICES is deemed constructive by 85.7% of survey respondents and can be described as **instrumental to the functioning of PelAC**. It includes annual participation in MIAC and MIACO in January, the participation of several PelAC members (DPPO, PFA, KFO) in the ICES expert groups (WGWIDE, WGHANSA, WGNEW), the Secretary's participation in the ICES Advice Drafting Group, the agreement on ACOM's physical attendance at at least one annual PelAC meeting (secured in January 2023), and engagement in the new ICES Stakeholder Engagement Strategy Working Group (WGENGAGE).

“Good representation of the sector and NGOs. PelAC is one of the best ACs in terms of understanding and participation in scientific advice” (ICES representative, interview).

This cooperation also underpins PelAC's upstream investment in fisheries science: involvement in the Northeast Atlantic mackerel and blue whiting genome sequencing project endorsed by the General Assembly in October 2021, support for ATHERE and IMBUS, the project on spasmodic boarfish, and support for CIBBRiNA. However, we could consider that this **scientific contribution is insufficiently documented in the public domain** and represents an undervalued asset of PelAC.

5.3 Member States and regional groups (Scheveningen, NWW, SWW)

Interviewed Member States recognise the quality of PelAC's advice and use it in their negotiations within the Council, but 86% of survey respondents consider the follow-up to be of little or very little constructive value; all interviewees agree on the lack of interaction; the literature review confirms that PelAC is in a **structurally uncomfortable position within the regionalisation process**.

Two key factors characterise this relationship:

Continued apparent reluctance to establish a pelagic sub-group. None of the three regional groups (Scheveningen, North Western Waters, South Western Waters) has agreed to create a sub-group dedicated to pelagic stocks, even though these are by nature trans-regional. The consequence of this is documented in the 2024–2025 technical report: some meetings attended by PelAC ‘contain no items of interest to its members’. *“The engagement with the Member States’ regional groups is ineffective and frustrating”* (verbatim survey).

When MS participate they **do not make active contribution**. MS participate in PelAC meetings strictly as observers. Several interviewees note that ‘greater participation by MS would be desirable’.

5.4 European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA)

79% of survey respondents consider cooperation with the EFCA to be constructive. The PelAC has held the AC's rotating seat with EFCA's management board from April 2021 to March 2022. PelAC and EFCA have organized a joint Control & Compliance workshop in January 2024, and the holding of the July 2025 PelAC plenary at EFCA's premises.

There is a **shared request by PelAC and EFCA for more frequent interactions**. EFCA indicated implementation of the landing obligation and compliance with some control measures (e.g. weighing) as a concrete item for collaboration (EFCA representative, interview), with PelAC being considered by EFCA as useful “eyes on the ground”. executive summary).

5.5 Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF)

Cooperation with the STECF is the weakest as measured by the survey: only 36% of responses were ‘constructive’, with a ‘no opinion’ rate of 29%, reflecting a lack of visibility. The STECF representative did not wish to be interviewed during the performance review for organisational reasons (STECF being a body of the Commission).

The literature review shows a mainly reactive engagement: a request to STECF to include a pelagic chapter in the Annual Economic Report (reference 2122PAC06), and the systematic inclusion of STECF as a recipient of correspondence on PelAC’s request to include of pelagic chapter in future STECF Annual Economic Reports on the EU fishing fleet. However, no regular operational cooperation is maintained, unlike with ICES. This area for improvement is explicitly highlighted as an opportunity by several interviewees.

5.6 Other Advisory Councils

The survey confirms the strength of this aspect: 85% of respondents rated cooperation with other ACs as ‘constructive’. The literature review provides further details:

NWWAC. The closest collaboration. Gentlemen’s Agreement of April 2022 on sprat (7d-7e) and greater silver smelt (zones 6 and 7); joint advice on underwater noise (October 2022); Joint Focus Group on the Spatial Dimension active since 2024.

SWWAC. Sustained collaboration on the three horse mackerel stocks; joint Focus Groups on Southern Horse Mackerel; joint advice on 3 horse mackerel stocks (April 2024). On this front, we should also notice an informal cooperation practice with the chair of PelAC’s Working Group presenting PelAC’s activities to SWWAC, and reciprocally, SWWAC’s pelagic working group’s chair participating to PelAC’s meetings.

NSAC. Discussions initiated in September 2021 (in response to PelAC’s request). The Gentlemen’s Agreement has been finalised at the last PelAC’s Executive Committee on the 16th of march, clarifying cooperation on stocks of common interest (sandeel, Norway pout, sprat, greater silver smelt).

LDAC, MAC, AAC, MEDAC, BSAC. There are partnerships via the Inter-AC Brexit Forum (established in February 2022 on the initiative of PelAC, gathering LDAC, MAC, NWWAC and NSAC) and joint statements on cross-cutting issues (deep-sea mining, post-2027 Multi Funding Framework, stakeholder engagement, European Maritime Days).

A nuance emerged during the interviews: one interviewee (an EM member) “doubts the relevance of the -AC collaborations as we must not undermine the achievements of regionalisation” This point of concern is held by a minority but deserves to be considered in the design of future cooperation.

Also it is worth noticing that while AC cooperations has increased in the recent years, established procedures for cooperation still lag behind and **processes would probably need to be more harmonized and more transparent**.

5.7 European Parliament (PECH and ENVI committees)

We can notice a new initiative launched in 2024–2025: participation in the AAC-NSAC-MAC event ‘The role of Advisory Councils under the Common Fisheries Policy’. Also advice are being systematically sent to the ENVI and PECH secretariats but no other concrete cooperation can be identified. The survey did not specifically assess this aspect. The interviewees mention it as an opportunity for future structuring.

5.8 International dimension and third countries

PelAC is not present as such in international discussions and there is no formal channel for exchange with non-EU stakeholders. The survey confirms this: only 21% of respondents consider cooperation with non-EU stakeholders to be constructive; 43% have no opinion (a sign of invisibility). Cooperation with NEAFC receives 36% of constructive responses but 29% of ‘no opinion’.

A call that has received almost unanimous support. All those interviewed are in favour of establishing a **contact group for non-EU stakeholders** to discuss issues in relation to exploitation of shared stocks. Several models are mentioned: the Inter-AC Brexit Forum (in which PelAC is actively involved), NAPA (limited to market players), the North Sea Fisheries Alliance (limited to the sector). None of these covers all North Atlantic pelagic stakeholders (Norway, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, the UK, and Russia post-2022).

The creation of such a contact group therefore appears to be a priority cross-cutting recommendation (see Block C — Institutional Cooperation).

6 PelAC’s contribution to the Common Fisheries Policy

The PelAC’s contribution to the common fisheries policy has been analysed through identifying from the advice grid analysis (see Annex 5 - PelAC’s contributions to the Common Fisheries Policy objectives (2020-2025 period)), those contributing to the different objectives laid down in CFP basic regulation n°1380/2013. Mapping the 108 advice reveals a highly asymmetrical distribution of the PelAC’s contribution according to the CFP’s objectives. Three categories can be identified:

- First (green), four objectives concentrate most of the production: Art 2(2) (MSY) and Art 2(5)(d) (**adjust capacity to opportunities**) — two sides of the same TAC-setting policy — together cover 49 advice out of 108 (45%). Art 2(5)(j) (coherence with EU environmental legislation) combined with Art 2(3) (ecosystem-based approach) represents 38% of advice. Art 2(4) (collection of scientific data) is also strongly addressed through the PelAC’s upstream engagement in fisheries science (ICES, genetics projects, benchmarking). Together, these two sets of objectives represent more than 80% of the PelAC’s output. Objective j (article 2(5) - **consistency with environmental legislation**) is steadily increasing over the period. The creation of WGIII Horizontal in October 2024 and the progressive inclusion of the topics of Ecosystem Approach to fisheries Management, Offshore Renewable Energy, Marine Spatial Planning, underwater noise, deep-sea mining, and animal welfare demonstrate a structured increase in the importance of this objective

- Second (yellow and red), **other objectives seem to be left aside or dealt with in a minor extent**. Overarching CFP objective (Art 2(1), *Long-term environmental sustainability and economic, social and employment benefits*) — is addressed via strategic but limited and less detailed contributions (Ocean Pact, CFP Package, CFP evaluation, AC functioning) but less detailed. The best use of unwanted catches (objective b, Article 2(5)) is addressed only indirectly. The promotion of coastal fishing activities (objective i) Article 2(5)) is marginal due to the structural focus of the PelAC on industrial pelagic fleets. Overall, regarding the socio-economic dimension (economic 3%, social 1%, financial support 1%), only 5 out of 108 opinions (4.6%) were produced (see Annex 4 : Synthesis of the main results of the online survey) though gaining visibility since 2024 amid the crisis of main pelagic stocks.
- Third, **some objectives of the CFP fall out of the scope** of the PelAC as for sustainable aquaculture (objective e, Article 2(5)) or consumer/producer interests (objective h, Article 2(5)) which falls under the remit of the MAC.

Overall the **PelAC is very well aligned with the objectives of the CFP** though providing limited contribution on the socio-economic objectives.

7 Evaluation perspective of the PelAC

This chapter presents the conclusions of the performance review according to the five evaluation criteria used by Oxford Research for the 2021 review of the Pelagic AC — relevance, operational effectiveness, efficiency and coherence — supplemented by the EU added value criterion. Each section draws on the empirical material gathered through the literature review of PelAC technical reports, the analysis grid of the 108 advice issued over 2020-2025, the 26 semi-structured interviews and the online survey (17 respondents, including 14 PelAC members).

7.1 How relevant is the Pelagic AC?

This section assesses the PelAC's relevance in relation to the needs of its members and external stakeholders, and the appropriateness of its work to the management of pelagic fisheries in the EU.

The PelAC's work is highly relevant to its members and to external stakeholders

94% of survey respondents consider the PelAC's practices and work to be relevant to their organisation's needs (35% "to a high extent", 59% "to some extent"); only one respondent rated relevance "low". Without exception, the interviewees describe the representation of pelagic interests as "good". This judgement is shared by members and external stakeholders alike. ICES describes the PelAC as "one of the best ACs in terms of understanding and engagement with scientific advice". DG MARE values the PelAC's responsiveness (TAC advice published four days after the ICES advice, fitting the Coastal States negotiation calendar).

Member States acknowledge the quality of the advice produced and report using it in Council negotiations.

The PelAC is unique in providing a trans-regional voice on pelagic stocks

PelAC stocks span three regional Member State groups (Scheveningen, NWW, SWW) but none of them has accepted to create a dedicated pelagic sub-group so far, even though the stocks are by nature trans-regional. The PelAC fills this institutional gap by providing the only stakeholder forum that addresses pelagic stocks as a coherent management unit. It also represents a unique platform for industry – OIG dialogue at EU level on issues that cross internal/external dimensions of the CFP (mackerel NEA, blue whiting, Atlanto-Scandian herring).

Three areas where relevance can be improved

The mapping nevertheless identifies three areas of partial under-representation that limit the comprehensiveness of the PelAC's voice: (i) Other Interest Groups (7 seats out of 35 — the 60%/40% ratio set by the CFP Regulation is not reached, with long-standing difficulties faced by PelAC to attract pan-European environmental NGOs); (ii) southern European interests (Spanish organisations participate less actively than their share of membership would suggest, partly due to language and cultural differences⁷); (iii) small-scale fisheries, although the PelAC explicitly acknowledges that PelAC fish stocks are overwhelmingly fished by large-scale fleets, which structurally limits SSF engagement in the AC.

7.2 How effective is the Pelagic AC?

Effectiveness is about whether the PelAC does the right things and produces the desired results. The analytical grid covering the 108 advice issued over 2020-2025 provides a precise picture.

The PelAC produces a high volume of high-quality advice

Over the 2020-2025 period, the PelAC issued 108 communications, well above its annual target of eight recommendations (19 in 2024-2025). 91% of the advice for which quality assessment is meaningful are classified as "Robust" — i.e., grounded in evidence (figures, references to scientific or technical publications, verified facts). 91% of the advice contain a clearly structured "concise" recommendation section. All advice are adopted by full consensus of the Executive Committee. This combination of volume, robustness, structure and consensus is unique among the eleven Advisory Councils and confirms the assessment already made in 2021 that the PelAC's procedure for drafting advice is mature and effective.

The Secretariat, Chairpersonship and Management Team operate effectively

The survey indicates very high satisfaction with the working practices of all governing bodies: 100% of respondents consider the practices of the Chairperson and Working Group chairs to be "constructive to a high or some extent", 94% for the Secretariat and 82% for the Management Team. Interviewees confirm strong trust in the Secretariat's institutional

⁷ « cultural differences » include inter alia a different approach to negotiation, a different weight given to the scientific advice, different ways of phrasing and expressing opinions in writing and speaking.

continuity through successive transitions (long-term sick leave of the Executive Secretary in 2020-2021, maternity leave in 2022, Heddema transition in January 2022, Kats-Thomas transition in 2024). The 2024-2025 technical report explicitly notes that PelAC has encountered no internal operational difficulties — a sign of post-transition stabilisation.

The institutional follow-up to advice is the main effectiveness limitation

The grid analysis shows an overall formal response rate of 49% (53 out of 108), with very large variations by recipient: 58% from DG MARE, and 0% from Member States (none of the twelve advice sent directly to MS or regional groups received a traceable response). Of the 49 substantive replies received, 61% are "specific" (provide concrete answers on the issues raised and follow-up actions), 31% "moderately specific", 8% "not specific". The quality of the replies received is therefore satisfactory; the issue is the consistency and systematicity of the feedback. This is the most consistent grievance shared by members in interviews and the survey.

7.3 How efficient is the Pelagic AC?

Efficiency relates to how resources are used and how work is done in achieving results. It is assessed here through the organisational structure, the quality of decision-making, internal collaboration, and human and financial resources.

The organisational structure is conducive to delivering results

The PelAC's six-body architecture (General Assembly, Executive Committee, Management Team, Secretariat, Working Groups, Focus Groups) is well-established and unanimously considered as appropriate. The structure has been adapted iteratively to respond to the needs of the AC: creation of the WGIII Horizontal in October 2024 to absorb the rising volume of issues on cross-cutting topics (control regulation, EAFM, energy transition, ORE, animal welfare); activation and disbanding of Focus Groups (Brexitec, Ecosystem, 6a herring, control, etc.) according to operational needs. Procedural rules are clear, agendas circulate in advance, and minutes are detailed. The PelAC's pace of advice production (D+4 after ICES) demonstrates the operational efficiency of this structure.

Decision-making is consensus-driven, transparent and internally coherent

The PelAC operates on a full-consensus principle: no advice is adopted unless every member supports it. This makes the PelAC distinctive among ACs (others sometimes record minority opinions) and underpins the institutional robustness of the advice. The internal atmosphere is unanimously described as positive, respectful and constructive. Three unwritten rules — the primacy of scientific advice, the systematic pursuit of consensus, and the commitment not to comment publicly before internal discussion — function as an effective informal code of conduct. The transmission of these rules nonetheless relies on cumulative member experience and the moderating role of the Chairs and Secretariat, which constitutes both a strength (flexibility) and a risk (loss of institutional memory under accelerating transitions).

Three efficiency limitations to address

Nearly one survey respondent in two identifies power imbalances to a significant extent (18% "high", 29% "some"). The interviews provide explanations: (i) the structural informational

advantage of the main pelagic organisations whose scientific leads also sit in ICES working groups; (ii) the technical science-based nature of debates and the language barrier (meetings conducted mostly in English, along with the difficulty of following the debates through the interpretation provided and email communications not translated); (iii) the perception that part of the deliberation takes place outside the floor, in informal corridor discussions. A second efficiency limitation lies in budget management: the annual envelope is recurrently under-utilised and an obsolete "Reserve loss foreign exchange" line persists in the budget structure. A third limitation is the absence of a formal anti-workplace harassment procedure with independent third-party reporting — no case has been raised but the 29% of survey respondents indicating that safeguards need to be improved signal a gap to be addressed.

7.4 How coherent is the Pelagic AC?

Coherence is about how well the PelAC's activities and objectives work together internally and how well they align with the Common Fisheries Policy and the broader EU policy framework.

The PelAC strongly adheres to the Common Fisheries Policy

The mapping of the 108 advice against the objectives set out in Article 2 of Regulation (EU) 1380/2013 (see Section 7) demonstrates a high level of substantive coherence with the CFP. Two combinations of objectives concentrate most of the production: Article 2(2) (MSY/precautionary approach) and Article 2(5)(d) (adjusting capacity to fishing opportunities) — the two faces of the TAC-setting policy — together cover 49 advice out of 108 (45%); Article 2(5)(j) (coherence with EU environmental legislation) combined with Article 2(3) (ecosystem-based approach) represents 38% of advice. Article 2(4) (collection of scientific data) is also strongly addressed through PelAC's upstream engagement in fisheries science. Together, these four objectives cover more than 80% of the PelAC's output, which translates a coherent strategic alignment of the AC with the CFP cardinal objectives.

Internal coherence is supported by consensus and consistent messaging

The 100% consensus rule mechanically generates internal coherence: the PelAC speaks with a single, harmonised voice. Members report aligning their individual positions across other channels (Member State consultations, ICES working groups, multi-AC initiatives) with the agreed PelAC recommendations — a finding already documented in 2021 and confirmed by the current evaluation. The Working Groups and Focus Groups operate under coordinated supervision of the Management Team and present unified outputs to the Executive Committee. The cooperation pipeline with ICES (annual MIAC/MIACO, presence of ACOM at one annual PelAC meeting since January 2023, joint work on stock-ID genetics) ensures direct coherence between scientific advice and stakeholder advice. The PelAC's leadership in inter-AC initiatives (Gentlemen's Agreement with NWWAC in 2022, finalised agreement with NSAC in March 2026, joint advice with up to 10 ACs) extends this internal coherence to the broader AC system.

Three coherence gaps to monitor

First, the socio-economic dimension of the CFP is poorly covered: combined Article 2(5)(c), (f) and (i) and the social dimension account for only 5% of advice (5 out of 108). The PelAC explicitly recognises this deliberate omission to avoid divisive discussions on fleet segments,

but the current vulnerability of pelagic stocks (NEA mackerel –70%, blue whiting –61%, boarfish –22%) and the decline in TACs are making this position increasingly difficult to sustain. Second, Articles 2(5)(b) (best use of unwanted catches), (e) (sustainable aquaculture) and (h) (interests of consumers and producers) fall outside the practical remit of the PelAC and are not covered. Third, despite increased inter-AC cooperation in recent years, the procedural framework for joint advice (timelines, consultation, leadership) would benefit from a more harmonised and transparent design, an issue likely to be raised again in the 2026 Inter-AC discussion.

7.5 What is the added value of the PelAC?

The added value criterion examines what the PelAC contributes that would not be achieved — or would be achieved less effectively — through actions at Member State level or by other EU bodies. Three main channels of added value emerge from the analysis.

A trans-regional stakeholder voice on pelagic stocks that no other body can provide

Pelagic stocks under PelAC's remit span three regional groups of Member States (Scheveningen, NWW, SWW), none of which has agreed to create a dedicated pelagic subgroup. Pelagic stocks are also intrinsically straddling stocks under Coastal States arrangements (UK, Norway, Iceland, Faroe Islands). In this multi-level governance landscape, the PelAC is the only forum that articulates a coherent stakeholder position on these stocks at EU scale, in a timeframe compatible with the political decision cycle (TAC advice issued D+4 after ICES, fitting the Coastal States negotiation window). Without the PelAC, the EU institutions would have to navigate up to 35 individual organisational positions on each stock decision. This added value has been particularly visible during the current Coastal States crisis on NEA mackerel and blue whiting, where the PelAC has issued repeated coordinated advice that no individual Member State or industry organisation could have produced with the same legitimacy.

A bridge between EU science, EU policy and stakeholder knowledge

The PelAC plays a structuring role in bringing stakeholder knowledge into the EU evidence base. It co-funded the EASME 6a herring genetics project (2016-2020), supports the CIBBRiNA bycatch mitigation project, the ATHERE and IMBUS surveys, ERGA mackerel/blue whiting, and several other scientific initiatives. It contributed actively to the ICES Stakeholder Engagement Strategy Working Group (WGENGAGE) and to the integration of stakeholder information into the ICES advisory process. Since January 2025, it participates in the MIRIA meetings (request formulation to ICES). It has championed AC participation in the EU-UK TCA Specialised Committee on Fisheries through the Inter-AC Brexit Forum, which it initiated in February 2022 and which has now stabilised in biannual rotation. These contributions complement the science-policy dialogue at a level that neither single-MS bodies nor purely industry forums could replicate. They also represent a sizeable but undervalued investment of EU resources in upstream fisheries science.

Three conditions to strengthen the EU added value going forward

The PelAC's added value can be further strengthened by addressing three structural conditions. First, the post-advice dialogue with the Commission needs to be formalised — currently the 49% response rate, with 0% on Member State advice, reduces the loop-back of stakeholder views into the EU decision-making process. Second, the absence of a structured non-EU contact group (Norway, Iceland, Faroe Islands, UK, Russia post-2027) limits the PelAC's ability to inform EU positions in Coastal States and NEAFC negotiations — almost all interviewees support the creation of such a group. Third, addressing the socio-economic blind spot in PelAC outputs would make the AC fully complementary to the rest of the CFP architecture (notably STECF on economic data) and would respond to a growing political demand in the context of declining TACs and the energy transition challenges faced by EU pelagic fleets. These three improvements are translated into specific recommendations in the next section.

8 Recommendations for improving PelAC's performance

Each recommendation is prioritized as P1 (high, to be implemented within the next 12 months), P2 (medium, within 24 months), or P3 (to be scheduled in the next multi-year cycle). The proposed lead organization is indicated in brackets: ExCom, MT for Management Team, Sec for Secretariat, WG for the relevant Working Group, and GA for General Assembly. Targets and deadlines would need to be specify through an hoc workshop.

Block A — Internal Operations, Governance, and Inclusivity

A1. [P1 — ExCom + Sec] Launch an “OIG and Diversity 2026–2028” plan.

Identify 6 to 10 target organizations covering the three documented gaps (southern fisheries, diverse pan-European environmental NGOs, and small-scale coastal fisheries). Design a suitable onboarding package (cross-sectoral/OIG mentoring, bilingual communications during the first few months, and an onboarding agenda), a strengthened reimbursement policy, and a systematic hybrid participation offer. Objective: to increase the number of active OIG seats at the ExCom to 12-13 by 2027.

A2. [P2 — MT + Sec] Update the rules of procedure

Clarify the roles and mandates of the Chair, Vice Chair,, the Working Group Chairs, the Management Team, and the Executive Committee. Specifically, include: (i) financial compensation for the Chairs; (ii) the systematic appointment of a Vice-Chair from the other category (sector/OIG) for each Working Group; (iii) a gender parity target to be achieved in executive positions; (iv) the scope and expected deliverables of the Focus Groups. Recommendation directly derived from the ExCom presentation of April 16, 2026 (#03).

A3. [P2 — ExCom + MT] Formalize the tacit code of conduct in writing

Put in writing the widely shared tacit rules: primacy of scientific opinion, systematic pursuit of consensus, commitment not to comment publicly before a topic has been

discussed within PelAC. Add a rule on the transparency of discussions outside of meetings and a commitment from Management Team members to report on their participation as representatives of PelAC. Recommendation from ExCom presentation.

A4. [P1 — Sec + Communication WG] Improve linguistic inclusivity and document circulation

Systematically distribute important email communications (meeting notices, ExCom reports, drafts of key opinions) in English, French, and Spanish. Guarantee a minimum of 10 working days between the circulation of a decision-making document and the decision-making process (particularly for ExCom reports sent in July, which were flagged as problematic in several verbatim comments). Allow for systematic hybrid meetings.

A5. [P2 — MT + Sec] Operational continuity of the Secretariat and reinforcement of WG III

Establish a formalized succession procedure for the positions of Head of Secretariat, Executive Secretary, and Assistant Secretary. Document the knowledge base (ongoing files, financial statements, institutional calendar). Strengthen human resources to support WG III Horizontal.

A6. [P2 — Sec + Communication WG] Restore the newsletter frequency to 3-4 issues/year.

Assign production to a rotating pair: Assistant Secretary + Working Group Chair. Include a "feedback" section based on documented feedback and measured uptakes (see recommendation B1). This recommendation aims to recover the pre-2023-2024 frequency, which had dropped to 1 issue during the Executive Secretary transition.

A7. [P2 — Sec + Communication WG] Develop a member directory and an educational factsheet on pelagic fisheries.

A detailed directory presenting each member organization (mission, scope, expertise, contacts), similar to DPPO's presentation at ExCom (ExCom recommendation #01). An educational factsheet on pelagic fisheries (practices, scientific data, economic dimension) to facilitate mutual understanding and the onboarding of new members (ExCom recommendation #02).

A8. [P2 — ExCom + GA] Implement a formalized anti-workplace harassment system

Implement an anonymous whistleblower scheme for workplace harassment, with follow-up on complaints by an independent third party⁸. Include annual training. Recommendation from the ExCom presentation (#07) and corroborated by the survey (29% of respondents: safeguards to improve; 12%: to develop).

A9. [P1 — MT] Restructure the budget and ensure full utilisation

Ensure full utilization of the annual budget. Reallocate the now obsolete "Reserve loss foreign exchange" line item and restructure the budget template to reflect actual expenditure items.

Block B — Advice Production

B1. [P3 — Sec + MT] Establish a public dashboard for the impact of advice

For each advice published, create a structured tracking sheet: subject, date, recipients, response received (yes/no, date, Ares link), documented uptake (integration into Joint Recommendations, Commission communications, Coastal States positions). Publish a summary annually. Index this rate in the annual technical report, section B.2

B2. [P2— MT + WG] Launch a structured socio-economic Focus Group

Establish a cross-cutting project (Working Group to be determined) on the socio-economic dimension of pelagic fisheries, structured around three axes: (i) characterization of European pelagic value chains; (ii) impact of TAC changes on fleet segments and coastal communities; (iii) Conditions for the economic acceptability of the transition to EBFM. This should be based on the STECF (see recommendation C3) and on the contributions of industry and processing members.

B3. [P2 — Sec + Chair] Advance the production of annual TAC advice (advice, framework, details)

Prepare, in advance of the ICES calendar, a framework opinion on the principles (MSY, ESM, ecosystem, Coastal States sharing arrangement) to be published one day before the ICES opinion, followed by detailed stock-specific opinions three to seven days later. This two-stage structure addresses both the need for responsiveness and the demand for more in-depth debate expressed in the interviews and survey.

⁸ The mechanism implemented by DPPO may serve as an example

B4. [P2 — WG + Sec] Capitalize on the workshop → Focus Group → opinion model

The LTMS 2022 / EAFM 2023 / Energy Transition 2023 / Spatial Dimension 2024 triad has proven its worth. Schedule a similar cycle for 2025-2027 on three priority topics: (i) bycatch of sensitive species (in connection with CIBBRiNA); (ii) socio-economic dimension of the transition (see B2); (iii) value chains and pelagic markets.

B5. [P2 — MT + Sec] Adopt a 2-page executive summary format for long advice

For long advice (TAC, CFP Package), produce a 2-page executive summary for decision-makers in addition to the detailed document. This reduces the attention cost for the Commission, Parliament, and Member States, and facilitates dissemination through newsletters and side events.

Block C — Institutional Cooperation

C1. [P1 — Chair + ExCom] Request a formal feedback channel Commission → PelAC

Propose to DG MARE an annual feedback protocol: a consolidated letter that, for each PelAC advice adopted during the year, indicates "taken into account / partially taken into account / not adopted with justification." This protocol could be negotiated in light of PelAC's commitment to produce executive summaries (see B5) to facilitate the Commission's work.

C2. [P1 — ExCom + Sec] Create a non-EU stakeholder contact group

Following the model of the Inter-AC Brexit Forum, propose a contact group with non-EU pelagic stakeholders (Norway, Iceland, Faroe Islands, United Kingdom, post-2027 Russia). Initial scope: non-politically sensitive topics (seismic impact, ecosystem dimension, shared science). Coordination with the Commission to respect its negotiating prerogatives. This possibility is based on CFP basic regulation⁹

C3. [P2 — MT + WG II] Invest in the relationship with the STECF

Identify a STECF contact person for cross-cutting issue (economics, control, ecosystem). Solicit input at least once per year. Aim for a joint PelAC-STECF workshop on the socio-

⁹ See Regulation EU 1380/2013, Annex III, art 2.k) : « (k) When issues that affect them are discussed, representatives of the fisheries sector and other interest groups from third countries, including representatives from RFMOs, that have a fishing interest in the area or fisheries covered by an Advisory Council, may be invited to participate as active observers ».

economic dimension of pelagic fisheries in 2026-2027 (in conjunction with recommendation B2).

C4. [P3 — Chair + MT] Advocate for a cross-cutting mechanism across the three regional groups

The central argument: stock mobility and the unity of exploitation justify an ad hoc inter-regional mechanism rather than multiple meetings. Present a costed technical note (cost of PelAC travel to meetings with no pelagic relevance vs. cost of a cross-cutting mechanism). Seek parliamentary support (PECH/ENVI) if necessary.

C5. [P2 — Chair + ExCom] Organize joint workshop with ECFA on the operational issues of the control regulation

Organize joint workshop with ECFA to provide reality-checks of the implementation of the control regulation and the landing obligation.

9 Summary of prioritization

Table 5 : Summary and prioritization of recommendations proposed through PelAC's performance review (2020-2025)

Ref	Synthetic title	Priority
A1	"OIG and Diversity 2026-28" Plan	1
A2	Update Rules of Procedure (roles, vice-chairs, gender balance, focus groups)	2
A3	Formalize the tacit code of conduct in writing	2
A4	Improve linguistic inclusivity and document circulation	1
A5	Operational continuity of the Secretariat and reinforcement of WG3	2
A6	Restore the newsletter frequency to 3-4 issues per year	2
A7	Develop a member directory and educational factsheet on pelagic fisheries	2
A8	Implement a formalized anti-harassment system	2
A9	Restructure the budget and ensure its full utilisation	1
B1	Establish a dashboard for the impact of advice	3
B2	Launch a structured socio-economic Focus Group	2
B3	Advance the production of annual TAC advice (advice, framework, details)	2

B4	Capitalize on the workshop → focus group → advice model	2
B5	Adopt a 2-page executive summary format for long advice	2
C1	Feedback channel Commission → PelAC	1
C2	Create a non-EU stakeholder contact group	1
C3	Investing in relationship with STECF	2
C4	Advocate for cross-cutting mechanism across the three regional groups	3
C5	Strengthen cooperation with EFCA	2

Red	Urgent, could and should be implemented in the next 12 months
Yellow	Important but no urgent need, or requires sustained efforts over the medium term
Green	Important but required sustained efforts over the long term

The five recommendations classified as P1 should allow to strengthen PelAC's representativeness and internal functioning, make full use of its budget, and secure the feedback mechanism from the European Commission which fuel stakeholders' commitment to invest time and effort in the advisory process. The creation of a non-EU stakeholder group contact group is also needed taking into account the dire states of different pelagic species due to long lasting failure in coastal states' negotiations.

The 12 recommendations classified as P2 would contribute to reinforce the PelAC's structure and record the foundations of its functioning (written updated procedures) and eventually develop a new work stream around the socio-economic dimension of pelagic fisheries.

The 2 recommendations classified as P3 will require sustain efforts in the longer term as there rely on internal changes within the European Commission on one side, and the Member States with interest on pelagic species on the other side.

Conclusion

Five years on from the first independent performance review carried out by Oxford Research, the PelAC has demonstrated a strong capacity to absorb structural shocks (Brexit, COVID-19, financial pressure and successive Secretariat transitions) while consolidating its institutional maturity, the quality of its advice and the breadth of its cooperation network. The diagnosis put forward by the present review, structured around the five evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value, can be summarised as follows.

A relevant and respected forum. The PelAC's work is highly relevant to both members (94% positive response in the survey) and external stakeholders. It is the only forum in the EU governance landscape that articulates a coherent trans-regional stakeholder position on pelagic stocks — stocks that span three regional groups of Member States and that are intrinsically managed under Coastal States arrangements. Three areas of partial under-representation persist (Other Interest Groups, southern European organisations and small-scale fisheries) and should be addressed through a dedicated diversity plan, although the structural focus of pelagic fisheries on large-scale fleets sets natural limits to the engagement of small-scale operators.

An effective and high-quality advice producer. The PelAC has issued 108 advice and correspondence over the period, with 90.6% of evaluable advice classified as "Robust" and 91% structured around a concise recommendation section. The Secretariat, Chairpersonship and Management Team operate effectively, and the working atmosphere is unanimously praised. The main effectiveness limitation lies outside the PelAC itself: the very uneven institutional follow-up of advice (57.5% response rate from DG MARE but 0% from Member States) reduces the loop-back of stakeholder input into the EU decision-making process. This shortfall is now objectively documented and provides a basis for a renewed dialogue with the Commission and Member States.

An efficient organisation that needs to formalise its informal foundations. The PelAC's six-body architecture (General Assembly, Executive Committee, Management Team, Secretariat, Working Groups, Focus Groups) is appropriate, agile, and has been adapted to new needs through the creation of the WGIII Horizontal in October 2024. Decision-making is consensus-driven, transparent and internally coherent. However, three efficiency limitations need to be addressed: perceived power imbalances (raised by 47% of survey respondents), recurrent under-spending of the annual budget with an obsolete legacy budget line, and the absence of a formal anti-harassment mechanism. Above all, the unwritten rules that underpin the PelAC's effectiveness — the primacy of scientific advice, the systematic pursuit of consensus, the commitment not to comment publicly before internal discussion — would benefit from being formalised in writing to preserve them through future transitions.

A council strongly aligned with the Common Fisheries Policy. The mapping of the 108 advice against the objectives of Article 2 of Regulation (EU) 1380/2013 demonstrates a high level of coherence with the cardinal objectives of the CFP: MSY and capacity adjustment (45% of

advice), coherence with EU environmental legislation and ecosystem-based approach (38%), and collection of scientific data are strongly addressed. The socio-economic dimension remains a deliberate blind spot (4.6% of advice) that the current crisis of pelagic stocks and the energy transition make increasingly difficult to sustain. Inter-AC cooperation has intensified and matured, but the procedural framework for joint advice would benefit from greater harmonisation and transparency.

A specific and irreplaceable EU added value. The PelAC delivers value at EU level that no Member State body or single industry forum could replicate. It provides a trans-regional stakeholder voice on pelagic stocks in a timeframe compatible with the political decision cycle (TAC advice issued four days after ICES, fitting the Coastal States negotiation window). It acts as a bridge between EU science, EU policy and stakeholder knowledge through its participation in ICES advisory processes (WGENGAGE, MIRIA), its co-investment in upstream fisheries science (genome sequencing project for NEA mackerel and blue whiting, CIBBRiNA, ATHERE, IMBUS, spasmodic boarfish project), and its leadership in inter-AC initiatives (Inter-AC Brexit Forum, Gentlemen's Agreements with NWWAC and NSAC, joint advice with up to ten ACs). This added value is most evident in the current Coastal States crisis on NEA mackerel and blue whiting, where the PelAC has issued repeated coordinated advice that no individual actor could have produced with the same legitimacy.

Priorities for the 2026-2030 cycle. The current performance review identifies twenty-one actionable recommendations, five of which are classified as priority 1 (P1) and should be implemented within the next twelve months. They cover the launch of a dedicated OIG and diversity plan, the strengthening of linguistic and documentary inclusivity, the cleaning and full utilisation of PelAC's budget, the negotiation of a formal feedback channel with the Commission, and the creation of the non-EU stakeholder contact group. Implementing these P1 recommendations will reinforce the PelAC's representativeness, secure the feedback mechanisms that fuel stakeholders' commitment, and contribute to reduce the dire state of several pelagic stocks. The PelAC enters this new cycle as a mature, respected and unique forum at the service of the Common Fisheries Policy.

Annex 1: Interview guidance and list of interviewees

Interview guidance

Participation to the PelAC functioning

- What are the main motivations for you to participate to the PelAC meetings?
- To what extent do you consider the different existing interests pelagic fisheries are being represented through the PelAC's membership?

Internal functioning of the PelAC

- To what extent are you able to shape the PelAC's work program? working group agendas?
- To what extent do you consider that internal communication helps to ensure a common understanding of the issues and challenges facing PelAC members?
- To what extent do you consider the working atmosphere in the PelAC to be constructive and facilitates free expression among members? Did you ever notice any inadequate practice or behavior ?
- If the secretariat and chairpersons were to change or leave the PelAC, what do you think would guarantee continuity in the working environment ? (could reflect on post Brexit changes)

Production of advices

- To what extent do you consider PelAC's advices are being evidence-based ? What kind of evidence are being provided (resource assessments, socio-economic analysis, value chain approaches, legal ...) ?
- To what extent do you consider the advice are proposing alternative options to difficulties or challenges?
- To what extent do you consider the search for consensus dilutes the recommendations made by the PelAC ?

PelAC's collaboration with other bodies

- To your opinion, what are the main important external partners the PelAC is working with?
- To what extent do you think the PelAC contributed to improving the level of trust and mutual understanding between EU institutions, research institutions and stakeholders ?
- What is your view on the extent to which the Commission uses PelAC advice in the process of designing measures to implement the CFP?
- To what extent do you consider the PelAC's advices and presence in relevant platforms influence the decision-making process ? (could you give examples)
- To what extent do you consider the PelAC's functioning has helped to improve adherence of stakeholders, including fishers, to conservation and management rules applicable to exploitation of pelagic stocks ? (could you give examples)

List of interviewees

Interviewee	Organisation	Category
Jérôme. Jourdain	UAPF	Sector
Malin Skog/Annelie Rosell	Swedish pelagic fishing industry	Sector
Paul Denekamp	Stichting Vissenbescherming	OIG
Gonçalo Carvalho	Sciaena	OIG
Tim Heddema	PFA / Head of PelAC Secretariat	Sector / MT
Justyna Zajchowska	Pew	OIG
Merel den Held	North Sea Foundation	OIG
Dominic Rihan	KFO	Sector
Patrick Murphy	ISWFPO	Sector
James Hinchcliffe	EFFOP	Sector
Alexandra Philippe	EBCD	OIG
Esben Sverdrup-Jensen	DPPO	Sector
JM Beltran	CEPESCA	Sector
Paul Thomas Merel Barbosa	Secretariat PelAC	Secretariat
Dirk-Jan Stelt	Netherlands	Member State
Uffe Sveistrup	Denmark	Member State
Daphnée Roch	France	Member State
Julia Rubeck, Maël Le Drast, Thomas Bregeon	DG MARE Unit D3 and C5	European Commission
Colm Lordan	ICES	Scientific
Leon Bouts	EFCA	EU agency
Chloé Pochaud	SWWAC	AC
Mo Mathies	NWWAC	AC
Tamara Talevska	NSAC	AC

Annex 2: PelAC on-line survey questions

Version 5th of January

What category of interest are you representing

Fishing sector
Processing sector
Civil society
Public administration
Other, please specify

To what extent is the Pelagic AC's work and practises relevant in relation to your organisation's needs

To a high extent
To some extent
To a low extent
To a very low extent
No opinion

To a high extent – PelAC's work and practises **fully** meet the needs of your constituents (cover the majority of your own goals as organisation), **greatly** facilitates networking e.g some contacts and exchanges with relevant partners or authorities **would be impossible** without being member of the PelAC.

To some extent - PelAC's work and practises **partly** meet the needs of your constituents (cover a significant amount of your goals as organisation), **partly** facilitates networking e.g contacts and exchanges with relevant partners or authorities **would be possible** even without being member of the PelAC but more difficult.

To a low extent - PelAC's work and practises **anecdotally** meet the needs of your constituents (marginally cover your goals as organisation), **moderately** facilitates networking e.g contacts and exchanges with relevant partners or authorities **would be possible** even without being member of the PelAC but you have further opportunities to exchange through your PelAC's membership.

To a very low extent – PelAC's work and practises **do not meet the needs** of your constituents (cover almost very little of your goals as organisation), does not facilitate networking e.g contacts and exchanges with relevant partners or authorities mostly rely on **collaboration you have built outside the PelAC**

Do you perceive the working practices of the following governing entities to be appropriate in relation to your organisation's expectations on the Pelagic AC? (only one answer by line)

	<i>To a high extent</i>	<i>To some extent</i>	<i>To a low extent</i>	<i>To a very low extent</i>	<i>No opinion</i>
<i>Chairman</i>					
<i>Working groups' chairs</i>					
<i>Secretariat</i>					
<i>Management team</i>					

To a high extent - ensures a good working environment, promotes participation of everyone, is independent, identifies common grounds and is instrumental to the development of work

To some extent – makes some effort to ensure a good working environment or promotes participation of everyone, is independent, helps to identify common grounds and contributes to the development of work

To a low extent – no noticeable efforts to ensure a good working environment or to promote participation of everyone, not always independent, does not contribute to identifying common grounds or the development of work.

To a very low extent – no efforts made to ensure a good working environment, focuses on contribution of a few number of members, is not independent, is making the identification of common grounds and the development of work more difficult.

Any additional comment on working practices

Free text

Do you find the secretariat's communication appropriate in terms of numbers and relevance of emails ?

To a high extent

To some extent

To a low extent

To a very low extent

No opinion

To a high extent – Emails are necessary and timely, I am able to follow them all, efforts are made by the secretariat to keep the amount to the minimum necessary.

To some extent – Emails are necessary and timely but I sometimes skip some of them, I notice some efforts are made by the secretariat to limit the amount of emails.

To a low extent – Emails are sometime unnecessary and I used to skip many of them, I consider few efforts are made by the secretariat to limit the amount of emails.

To a very low extent – for a significant amount mails are unnecessary, I have difficulty to follow the information spread by the secretariat, I consider no efforts are made by the secretariat to limit their amount.

Have you noticed any power imbalances in debates held in the PelAC?

To a very low extent

To a low extent

To some extent

To a high extent

No opinion

To a very low extent – I can hardly notice power imbalances : members have usually the same opportunities to propose agenda items, work priorities, express their opinion or have their views reflected in the final advice.

To a low extent – I rarely notice power imbalances : members generally have the same opportunities to propose agenda items, work priorities, express their opinion or have their views reflected in the final advice with some exceptions I can remind.

To a some extent – I sometimes notice power imbalances : some members have less opportunities to propose agenda items, work priorities, express their opinion or have their views reflected in the final advice

To a high extent – I regularly notice power imbalances : some members have very little opportunities to propose agenda items, work priorities, express their opinion or have their views reflected in the final advice

Any additional comment on power imbalances

Free text

I believe that the set-up and composition of the different bodies of the advisory council is conducive to a constructive dialogue

To a high extent

To some extent

to a low extent

To a very low extent

No opinion

To a high extent – the dialogue process, from focus groups to the executive committee runs smoothly and allows for both in-depth technical discussions and the expression of all the different interests, the roles are distributed in a balanced manner among the various interests present.

To some extent – the dialogue process, from focus groups to the executive committee, runs smoothly and allows for both technical discussions and the expression of almost all the different interests, the roles are distributed in a balanced manner among the various interests present though some improvements could be proposed.

To a low extent - the dialogue process, from focus groups to the executive committee, may prove difficult and does not always allow for both technical discussions and the expression of the different interests, the roles are not distributed in a balanced manner among the various interests present.

To a very low extent - the dialogue process, from focus groups to the executive committee, is difficult and does not allow for both technical discussions and the expression of the different interests, the roles are distributed in a clearly imbalanced manner among the various interests present.

I believe that the internal collaboration with other members and stakeholders is well functioning

To a high extent

To some extent

To a low extent

To a very low extent

No opinion

To a high extent - I collaborate regularly and easily with all members of the PelAC, members from the fishing sector as well as members from other interest groups, it is easy to contact each other, I often prepare agenda items in advance with other members.

To some extent - I collaborate with most members of the PelAC, but not as much with members from the fishing sector as I do with members from

other interest groups, I can contact each other, I sometimes prepare agenda items in advance with other members.

To a low extent – I only collaborate with few members of the PelAC, I have difficulty to establish contacts with some members, I rarely prepare agenda items in advance with other members.

To a very low extent – I hardly collaborate with other members of the PelAC, I usually don't contact other members, I prepare agenda items on my own without coordinating with others in advance.

How would you rate the level of cooperation with the following organisations: STECF, ICES, MS, EC, EFCA, other Acs ,NEAFC and non-EU stakeholders?(only one answer by line)

	<i>Constructive , to a high extent</i>	<i>Constructive , to some extent</i>	<i>Constructive , to a low</i>	<i>Constructive , to a very low extent</i>	<i>No opinio n</i>
<i>STECF</i>					
<i>ICES</i>					
<i>Member States</i>					
<i>European Commission</i>					
<i>EFCA</i>					
<i>Other Acs</i>					
<i>NEAFC</i>					
<i>Other non- EU stakeholder s</i>					

Constructive, to a high extent - Advice from the PelAC are well received and replies are systematic, requests for meetings with PelAC are answered and discussions take place in a constructive manner.

Constructive, to some extent - Advice from the PelAC is usually well received and the organisation usually replies, requests for meetings with PelAC are answered and discussions take place.

Constructive, to a low extent - No clear feedback on PelAC's advice is being provided, requests for meetings with PelAC are rarely answered and discussions remain unconstructive.

Constructive, to a very low extent - Advice remain unanswered, representatives rarely join meetings, discussions are tense

To what extent do the following statements apply to the PelAC advice? (only one answer by line)

	<i>To a high extent</i>	<i>To some extent</i>	<i>To a low extent</i>	<i>To a very low extent</i>	<i>No opinion</i>
<i>PelAC advice reflect the range of opinions expressed by members</i>					
<i>PelAC advice are clear and well-structured</i>					
<i>PelAC advice are evidence-based</i>					
<i>PelAC advice propose realistic and actionable recommendations</i>					

To a high extent – this statement can be applied to all PelAC’s advice

To some extent – this statement can be applied to the majority of PelAC’s advice

To a low extent – this statement can be applied to a minority of PelAC’s advice

To a very low extent – this statement rarely applies to PelAC’s advice

To what extent to you use PelAC advice for your own activities ?

To a high extent

To some extent

To a low extent

To a very low extent

No opinion

To a high extent – I **almost always** use the PelAC’s advice in my activities, referring to them and forwarding them to contacts outside the PelAC.

To some extent - I **regularly** use the PelAC’s advice in my activities, referring to them and forwarding them to contacts outside the PelAC.

To a low extent – I **rarely** use the PelAC’s advice in my activities, referring to them or forward them to contacts outside the PelAC.

To a very low extent - I use the PelAC’s advice **in a very limited number of occasions** within my activities, **hardly** referring to them and forwarding them to contacts outside the PelAC.

How satisfied are you with the responses to and subsequent actions taken on submissions made by the Pelagic AC? (only one answer by line)

	<i>To a high extent</i>	<i>To some extent</i>	<i>To a low extent</i>	<i>To a very low extent</i>	<i>No opinion</i>
<i>European Commission</i>					
<i>Member States</i>					

To a high extent – the responses are clear, specific and exhaustive and actionable concrete actions are proposed in the response and subject to follow-up

To some extent - the responses are usually clear, specific but not always exhaustive, some actionable concrete actions are proposed but follow up is unclear.

To a low extent – the responses are not always clear, nor specific or exhaustive, concrete actions are rarely proposed nor taken.

To a very low extent - the responses are vague, not connected with the questions raised, no concrete actions are proposed.

Have you experienced, or witnessed, any instances of harassment in the course of PelAC activities?

Yes

No

I would rather not answer that question

Any specific comment or testimony you would like to leave

Free text

Do you think there are sufficient safeguards against workplace harassment in the context of PelAC activities?

Yes, there are sufficient safeguards

Yes, to some extent, but safeguards measures should be improved

No, safeguard measures against harassment must be developed

No opinion

Annex 3: Synthesis of the advice analysis grid

The analytical framework used for this evaluation categorizes each PelAC correspondence over the 2020-2025 period according to eight criteria. The main aggregated indicators are summarized below.

Volume and Nature

- Total: 108 categorized correspondences.
- Types: 75 single letters (69%), 26 joint letters (24%), 6 formal "Advice" opinions (6%), 1 joint opinion (1%).
- Co-production: 76 issued by PelAC alone (70%), 32 co-signed with other CCs (30%). Most frequent partners: NWWAC (13 cases), multi-AC partners (15 cases).

Recipients

- DG MARE: 87 opinions (80.6%).
- Member State or regional MS group: 12 opinions (11.1%).
- Research body (ICES, STECF, EFCA): 6 opinions (5.6%).
- Other EU institution (EP...): 3 opinions (2.8%).

Scope

- CFP measures: 52 (48.1%) — TAC, technical measures, control, landing obligation.
- Organizational matters: 21 (19.4%).
- Scientific research: 15 (13.9%).
- Other EU policies: 14 (13.0%).
- Other: 6 (5.6%).

Area

- Stock conservation: 49 (45.4%).
- Horizontal: 23 (21.3%).
- Environmental protection: 18 (16.7%).
- Maritime spatial planning: 6 (5.6%).
- Economic dimension: 3 (2.8%).
- Social dimension: 1 (0.9%).
- Financial support: 1 (0.9%).
- Other / not specified: 7 (6.5%).

Quality of Advice

- Robust: 58 opinions (54% of total; 90.6% of evaluable).
- Moderately robust: 6 (5.5%).
- Not applicable (opinion not requiring supporting evidence): 41 (38%).
- Not specified: 3 (2.5%).

Recommendation Structure

- Concise (clear dedicated section): 98 (91%).
- Diluted (recommendations within the body of the text): 6 (5.5%).

- No (no recommendations): 1 (0.9%).
- Not specified: 3 (2.5%).

Response Status and Quality

- Formal response received: 53 (49.1%).
- No response: 55 (50.9%).
- “Specific” response (provides concrete details): 30/49 classifiable responses (61.2%).
- “Moderately specific” response: 15/49 (30.6%).
- “Not specific” response (generic acknowledgment): 4/49 (8.2%).

Annual trend

- 2020 (Q4 only): 4 responses; 2021: 26; 2022: 19; 2023: 18; 2024: 23; 2025: 18.
- The 2021 peak reflects the intense post-Brexit activity/statute review.
- The “Horizontal” segment emerged in 2022 (7 responses) and has stabilized at 4-6 per year since.
- The “economic” and “social” opinions are concentrated in 2021 and do not appear in subsequent years.

Annex 4: Synthesis of the main results of the online survey

Survey administered in January-February 2026. 17 respondents in total, including 14 PelAC. Categories represented: fishing sector (64.7%), civil society (11.8%), processing sector (5.9%), public administration (5.9%), other including scientists (11.8%).

Relevance and Functioning

- Relevance of PelAC's work to the respondent's organization: 35.3% "high", 58.8% "certain", 5.9% "low". Positive cumulative score: 94.1%.
- Constructive practices of the bodies — Chair: 100%. Working Group chairs: 100%. Secretariat: 94.1%. Management Team: 82.4%.
- Communication from the Secretariat (number and relevance of emails): 69.2% "very appropriate", 30.8% "appropriate".
- Perceived power imbalances: 17.6% "high", 29.4% "certain", 23.5% "low", 17.6% "very low", 11.8% no opinion.
- Composition conducive to constructive dialogue: 52.9% "high", 35.3% "certain". Overall positive: 88.2%.
- Internal collaboration among members: 41.2% "high", 29.4% "certain", 17.6% "low".

Quality of opinions

- Reflect the range of opinions: 35.3% "high", 58.8% "certain" → 94.1% positive.
- Clear and well-structured: 41.2% "high", 52.9% "certain" → 94.1% positive.
- Evidence-based: 52.9% "high", 29.4% "certain" → 82.3% positive (lowest of the four items).
- Realistic and actionable recommendations: 35.3% "high", 58.8% "certain" → 94.1% positive.
- Respondent's use of PelAC advice: 5.9% "high", 70.6% "certain", 17.6% low/very low.

Cooperation

- ICES: 85.7% constructive (highest).
- Other CAs: 84.6%.
- European Commission: 78.6%.
- EFCA: 78.6%.
- Member States: 57.1% (with 42.9% not very constructive).
- STECF: 35.7% (with 28.6% no opinion: low visibility).
- NEAFC: 35.7% (but 28.6% no opinion).
- Other non-EU countries: 21.4% (42.9% no opinion: very low visibility).

Follow-up to advice

- Commission: 47.1% satisfied, 41.2% dissatisfied.
- Member States: 21.4% satisfied, 85.7% dissatisfied.

Harassment

- Personal experiences/witness accounts: 0%. Prefer not to answer: 5.9%. No: 94.1%.
- Safeguards against harassment: sufficient 23.5%, needs improvement 29.4%, needs development 11.8%, no opinion 35.3%.

Annex 5: PelAC's contributions to the Common Fisheries Policy objectives (2020-2025 period)

Mapping of the 108 PelAC advice and communications in accordance with the objectives of Article 2 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013

The table below reproduces the objectives set out in Article 2 of Regulation (EU) 1380/2013 establishing the Common Fisheries Policy, in the order of the regulatory text: paragraphs 1 (environmental sustainability and economic, social and employment benefits), 2 (precautionary approach and MSY), 3 (ecosystem-based approach), 4 (collection of scientific data), then paragraph 5 (a to j). Each row specifies the official wording of the objective, a synthesis of the PelAC's contribution, and the list of contributing advice (identified by their official PelAC reference). 108 advice items have been mapped over the 2020-2025 period.

Correspondence table — Objectives of Article 2 of Regulation (EU) 1380/2013

CFP objective	PelAC contribution (rationale)	Source of verification (PelAC advice)
Art 2(1) — Long-term environmental sustainability and economic, social and employment benefits <i>"The CFP shall ensure that fishing and aquaculture activities are environmentally sustainable in the long-term and are managed in a way that is consistent with the objectives of achieving economic, social and employment benefits, and of contributing to the availability of food supplies"</i>	Overarching objective of the CFP, addressed through the PelAC's strategic contributions to the CFP evaluation, the Ocean Pact, the CFP Package, the joint advice on the functioning of ACs, and through advice defending access to resources (LPF, Coastal States) and EU food security for pelagic species (NEA mackerel, blue whiting, herring).	2122PAC23 CFP review, 2223PAC76 CFP Package, 2324PAC68, 2425PAC02 NEA mackerel urgent, 2425PAC23 Ocean Pact, 2425PAC25 Norway access, 2425PAC75 CFP Evaluation, 2526PAC01 AC functioning
Art 2(2) — Precautionary approach and maximum sustainable yield (MSY) <i>"The CFP shall apply the precautionary approach to fisheries management, and shall aim to ensure that exploitation of living marine biological resources restores and maintains populations of harvested species above levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield"</i>	Core of PelAC output on stock conservation (49 advice out of 108). All annual TAC advice, advice on ICES benchmarks, advice on management plans (LTMP, MAP), and advice on the revision of stock assessments aim at implementing MSY. The precautionary approach is mobilised in particular on critically depleted stocks (NEA mackerel –70%, blue whiting –61%, boarfish –22%, North Sea herring).	Annual TAC advice: 2021PAC05, 2122PAC07, 2223PAC08, 2324PAC04, 2425PAC01, 2425PAC15, 2425PAC81, 2526PAC0264. Benchmarks and review of assessments: 2021PAC15, 2021PAC16, 2021PAC17, 2021PAC53, 2021PAC55, 2021PAC54, 2021PAC61, 2021PAC64, 2122PAC15, 2122PAC24,

CFP objective	PelAC contribution (rationale)	Source of verification (PelAC advice)
		2223PAC07, 2223PAC14, 2223PAC65, 2223PAC75, 2324PAC08, 2324PAC69, 2425PAC04, 2425PAC03, 2425PAC11, 2425PAC24 Management plans: 2122PAC15 (SHOM), 2122PAC68 (sprat), 2223PAC73 (sprat), 2324PAC61 (sprat), 2425PAC11 (SHOM LTMP), 2425PAC77 (sprat). Stocks in crisis: 2223PAC04, 2223PAC66, 2324PAC68, 2425PAC02, 2425PAC25, 2425PAC80 (NEA mackerel, Norway, blue whiting).
Art 2(3) — Ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management <i>"The CFP shall implement the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management so as to ensure that negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem are minimised, and shall endeavour to ensure that aquaculture and fisheries activities avoid the degradation of the marine environment"</i>	Growing focus over the period. The PelAC issued a detailed advice on EAFM and an advice on the ICES "Ecosystem Informed Science and Advice" framework. It contributed to the MSFD revision, the Marine Action Plan, the Ocean Pact and the CIBBRiNA biodiversity project. The creation of WGIII Horizontal in October 2024 formalises this institutional ramp-up.	Advice 2021PAC17, 2122PAC12 CIBBRiNA, 2122PAC74 ICES stakeholder strategy, 2324PAC02 EAFM, 2324PAC65 policy coherence env-fish, 2425PAC08 stakeholder ICES advice, 2425PAC70 ICES Ecosystem framework
Art 2(4) — Contribution to the collection of scientific data <i>"The CFP shall contribute to the collection of scientific data"</i>	Strongly addressed objective. The PelAC actively invests in upstream fisheries science: participation in the ICES Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, requests to include genetics data (6a herring, mackerel/blue whiting ERGA) in the Data Collection Framework, support to research projects (CIBBRiNA, EASME, ATHERE, IMBUS), benchmark requests and assessment	2021PAC15-16-17 ICES genetics, DCF, stakeholder info, n2021PAC54 ICES genetics, 2021PAC63-64 peer review EASME, 2021PAC69 / 2122PAC06 STECF AER pelagic chapter, 2122PAC12 CIBBRiNA, 2122PAC74 ICES stakeholder

CFP objective	PelAC contribution (rationale)	Source of verification (PelAC advice)
	methodology improvements (HOM, NEA mackerel, Irish/Celtic Sea herring), inclusion of a pelagic chapter in STECF Annual Economic Report, and joint advice on AC stakeholder engagement in STECF processes.	strategy, 2223PAC12 ICES presentation, 2223PAC72 ICES training, 2324PAC08 HOM benchmark, 2324PAC69 HOM assessments, 2425PAC04 NEA mackerel benchmark prep, 2425PAC03 Irish/Celtic Sea herring benchmark, 2425PAC08 stakeholder ICES advice, 2425PAC11 SHOM LTMP MSE, 2425PAC18 stakeholder STECF, 2425PAC70 ICES Ecosystem framework, 2425PAC80 mackerel benchmark
Art 2(5)(a) — Gradual elimination of discards <i>"gradually eliminate discards, on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the best available scientific advice, by avoiding and reducing, as far as possible, unwanted catches, and by gradually ensuring that catches are landed"</i>	Addressed through continuous follow-up of compliance with the landing obligation (repeated requests for full publication of EFCA mackerel reports 2015-2017 then 2018-2020), the Control Regulation revision and advice on unwanted bycatch (cetaceans in the Bay of Biscay).	Advice 2021PAC08, 2021PAC13, 2223PAC01–02–03, No. 65 (2324PAC06), 2324PAC14, 2324PAC59, 2324PAC62, 2425PAC10, 2425PAC73
Art 2(5)(b) — Best use of unwanted catches <i>"where necessary, make the best use of unwanted catches, without creating a market for such of those catches that are below the minimum conservation reference size"</i>	No specific PelAC advice directly addresses this objective. Indirect coverage via joint advice on the Control Regulation (traceability mechanisms and MCRS).	Indirect coverage: advice n°100 (2425PAC73)
Art 2(5)(c) — Economically viable and competitive capture, processing and land-based fishing activities	Addressed via the defence of a Level Playing Field against Coastal States unilateralism (Norway, Faroe Islands) on mackerel, blue whiting and Atlanto-Scandian herring; advice on the energy	Advice 2223PAC04, 2223PAC07, No. 2223PAC13, 2223PAC66, 2223PAC71, 2223PAC76 — CFP Package, 2324PAC03, 2324PAC63, 2324PAC68, 2425PAC02,

CFP objective	PelAC contribution (rationale)	Source of verification (PelAC advice)
<i>"provide conditions for economically viable and competitive fishing capture and processing industry and land-based fishing related activity"</i>	transition (impact on fleet economic viability); and advice on offshore wind development and the spatial squeeze.	2425PAC10, 2425PAC23, 2425PAC25, 2425PAC67
Art 2(5)(d) — Adjust fishing capacity to fishing opportunities <i>"provide for measures to adjust the fishing capacity of the fleets to levels of fishing opportunities consistent with paragraph 2, with a view to having economically viable fleets without overexploiting marine biological resources"</i>	Core of PelAC production: annual TAC recommendations, ICES benchmark requests on main stocks, long-term management plans (LTMP, MAP), rebuilding of depleted stocks.	Annual TAC advice: 2021PAC05, 2122PAC07, 2223PAC08, 2324PAC04, 2425PAC01, 2425PAC15, 2425PAC81, 2526PAC0264. Benchmarks and review of assessments: 2021PAC15, 2021PAC16, 2021PAC17, 2021PAC53, 2021PAC55, 2021PAC54, 2021PAC61, 2021PAC64, 2122PAC15, 2122PAC24, 2223PAC07, 2223PAC14, 2223PAC65, 2223PAC75, 2324PAC08, 2324PAC69, 2425PAC04, 2425PAC03, 2425PAC11, 2425PAC24 Management plans: 2122PAC15 (SHOM), 2122PAC68 (sprat), 2223PAC73 (sprat), 2324PAC61 (sprat), 2425PAC11 (SHOM LTMP), 2425PAC77 (sprat). Stocks in crisis: 2223PAC04, 2223PAC66, 2324PAC68, 2425PAC02, 2425PAC25, 2425PAC80 (NEA mackerel, Norway, blue whiting).
Art 2(5)(e) — Sustainable aquaculture	Outside the PelAC core remit (fisheries only). Indirect coverage via the Fish Welfare advice which was transferred to DG SANTE in charge of the aquaculture dimension.	Indirect coverage: advice 2425PAC06 Fish Welfare, forwarded to DG SANTE for aquaculture

CFP objective	PelAC contribution (rationale)	Source of verification (PelAC advice)
<i>"promote the development of sustainable Union aquaculture activities to contribute to food supplies and security and employment"</i>		
Art 2(5)(f) — Fair standard of living for fishing-dependent communities <i>"contribute to a fair standard of living for those who depend on fishing activities, bearing in mind coastal fisheries and socio-economic aspects"</i>	Limited focus by the PelAC. Addressed punctually via the advice on the social dimension (2021), the CFP Package advice highlighting the importance of pelagic coastal communities, the Fishers of the Future advice and the Ocean Pact contribution.	2021PAC68 Social dimension, 2223PAC76 CFP Package, 2324PAC64 Fishers of the Future, 2425PAC23 Ocean Pact, 2425PAC75 Evaluation CFP
Art 2(5)(g) — Efficient and transparent internal market and Level Playing Field <i>"contribute to an efficient and transparent internal market for fisheries and aquaculture products and contribute to ensuring a level-playing field for fisheries and aquaculture products marketed in the Union"</i>	Recurring focus through advice on Coastal States unilateralism (Norway, Faroe Islands) threatening LPF and internal market integrity, and through calls for activation of Regulation (EU) 1026/2012 on non-sustainable fisheries. The PelAC has also championed AC participation in the EU-UK TCA Specialised Committee on Fisheries.	2021PAC18, 2122PAC25, 2122PAC67, 2223PAC04, 2223PAC66, 2324PAC68, 2425PAC02, 2425PAC25 Norway access
Art 2(5)(h) — Interests of consumers and producers <i>"take into account the interests of both consumers and producers"</i>	No specific PelAC advice addresses this objective (mainly within the remit of the MAC for consumer matters).	No advice identified
Art 2(5)(i) — Promote coastal fishing activities (socio-economic aspects) <i>"promote coastal fishing activities, taking into account socio-economic aspects"</i>	The PelAC has a structural focus on industrial pelagic fleets; small-scale coastal fisheries exploit PelAC pelagic stocks only marginally. Punctual coverage via the CFP Package advice and the CFP evaluation contribution.	2223PAC76 CFP Package, 2425PAC23 Ocean Pact, n°103 2425PAC75 Evaluation PCP

CFP objective	PelAC contribution (rationale)	Source of verification (PelAC advice)
Art 2(5)(j) — Coherence with EU environmental legislation <i>"be coherent with the Union environmental legislation, in particular with the objective of achieving a good environmental status by 2020 as set out in Article 1(1) of Directive 2008/56/EC, as well as with other Union policies"</i>	Heavily addressed objective: MSFD, ecosystem-based approach, energy transition, underwater noise, offshore renewable energy (ORE) interaction with pelagic fisheries, deep-sea mining, cetacean bycatch, maritime spatial planning, animal welfare and the Ocean Pact. With 18 "environmental protection" advice and 6 on MSP, this is the PelAC's second largest area of activity after stock conservation.	MSFD : 2122PAC08. EAFM : 2324PAC02, 2425PAC70. Energy transition : 2223PAC13, 2223PAC71, 2324PAC03. Underwater noise and offshore renewable energy : 2021PAC06, 2223PAC09, 2324PAC65, 2425PAC14 (Celtic Sea MPA), 2425PAC16 (OR, 2425PAC20, 2425PAC22, 2425PAC74. Deep-sea mining : 2122PAC13, 2425PAC09. Cetacean bycatch : 2324PAC14, 2324PAC62. Technical measures : 2021PAC13. Fisheries Action Plan : 2122PAC18. CIBBRiNA biodiversity : 2122PAC12. Fish welfare : 2425PAC06. Ocean Pact : 2425PAC23

Green	<i>PelAC has produced a significant contribution to this objective</i>
Yellow	<i>PelAC's contribution to this objective has been reduced</i>
Red	<i>PelAC did not contribute to this objective</i>
Grey	<i>This objective is out of PelAC's scope</i>