

BSAC Report from the European Maritime Day 24-25th May 2023

Attended by the Executive Secretary

Opening Session

Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius

The Commissioner presented the main challenges ahead: self-sufficiency, resilience and competitiveness of the fisheries sector. He asked how can we plan for a good future for the next generations?

The Commission has been working to meet these challenges.

- **Decarbonisation** is an immediate priority. It won't happen without marine renewable energy. Essential for strategic autonomy security and economy. Target for offshore renewable keep on going up. Objectives will be reached and exceeded thanks to Member States sea-basin agreements. Development has to be inclusive, and stakeholders have to have the feeling to be part of the decision. Clarity is needed for businesses and communities. Tidal and wave energy should be rolled out too.
- **Fisheries** is important and valuable source of food but energy intensive. The Commission suggests that the sector should start to adapt vessels and gradually scale up technologies. The task is not easy, and it will take time. Otherwise, the sector will not be sustainable and unappealing to younger generations. The sector dependence on fossil fuel and the costs incurred should also decline.
- **Constant degradation of marine ecosystem** should be stopped for the fisheries to thrive. We **need fisheries that are modern, digital, sustainable and profitable**. These are the premisses behind the energy transition partnership¹ that will be launched on the 16th June. The Commission is also launching the Blue Forum² on the 26th May to develop synergies and reconcile competing use.
- The 2023 **Blue Economy** report³ is published and the Blue Economy Observatory⁴ is now running. The Mission **Restore our oceans and waters by 2030** will boost research. Blue Invest will also foster financing of blue projects. The EU also works abroad to push for a green digital transition and further blue research.

Herve Berville, the Secretary of State – Maritime Affairs French Minister

He welcomed participants and explained that they were many important challenges ahead: sovereignty, biodiversity loss, climate change.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_23_829

² <https://maritime-spatial-planning.ec.europa.eu/european-blue-forum>

³ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/news/european-blue-economy-report-2023-economic-crisis-takes-toll-doesnt-stop-growth-2023-05-24_en#:~:text=The%202023%20edition%20of%20the,sectors%20increased%20their%20economic%20performances.

⁴ https://blue-economy-observatory.ec.europa.eu/index_en

- **Decarbonisation** of the maritime sector is a priority. France is working on net 0 emission vessels. The goal is to have a carbon neutral sector by 2050, hydrogen and wind propulsion are to be developed, and new industry needs to emerge. France is investing in this and has established an investment fund.
IMO will also work on an ambitious goal for 2050.
- **Food sovereignty** is essential. Fisheries need to be put forward. A lot of efforts have been asked to this sector like no others. We should be proud of our fisheries and the CFP led to 77% of landings to come from sustainable stocks, a huge increase since the 90s.
We rely too much on imports of fisheries product that represent 80% of the consumption. These products come from countries with tax regulation comparable to the EU.
France is glad to hear that the Action Plan of the Commission is an invitation for discussions. He believed that MPAs regulation should be established on a case-by-case basis. Fisheries are important also because they represent the identity of coastal regions.
Further work is needed on renewal of the vessels, less impacting fishing gears,
- **Energy sovereignty** is also needed. France will establish 50 offshore renewable areas by 2050. Important goals on that matter and work on floating offshore wind.
- **Biodiversity conservation:** France has pushed at international level, along with the European Union, for the establishment of the historical agreement on high seas protection in March 2023.
France is also opposed to any sea bottom mining both in national and international seas.
- France also has a specific focus on safety at sea, international geopolitical strategy, and IUU fishing.

Pierre Karleskind, PECH Committee Chair

The Chair of the Fisheries Committee highlighted 3 priorities:

- **Food sovereignty**, with fisheries being an answer to this challenge.
- **Energy sovereignty**, specifically in the geopolitical context
- **Data sovereignty**, the work on the ocean digital twin is instrumental in this way but more work is needed on data safety.

High level panel on a new approach to a Sustainable Blue Economy: preparing the future.

Charlina Vitcheva – Director General - DG MARE

The Director General explained that energy transition is not only about sustainability as such and the Green Deal it is also about profitability of the sector, and economics. She insisted that fisheries should join the energy transition partnership. The Commission will prepare a document on guidance on finances to accompany this transition. For Ms. Vitcheva, maritime planning is essential to make blue economy a strategic initiative. A sea basin approach has been developed for a long time. Sea basins share horizontal objectives such as the offshore wind goals. This goal is expressed differently for each sea basin. Finally, she concluded that investment in research is the only way to advance. We need smart innovative solutions. The Commission has launched a platform to promote and deliberate on strategic priorities in science and research in order to bring blue growth.

Eric Banel- Ministry of fisheries in France (DGAMPA)

The speaker presented the work of France in the elaboration of its strategy for blue economy. He insisted on the need to work at sea basin and regional level on synergies between sectors and with environmental protection. He also focused on research needs. The representative of the ministry concluded on the offshore windfarm development and the need to work with all stakeholders on this topic.

Pierre Karleskind, PECH Committee Chair

The MEP stressed that environmental protection is the insurance that our economy can be sustainable and that our fisheries can be prosperous. The Fisheries Committee Chair explained that EMFAF is instrumental in the energy transition and today it is possible to get funding for fishing practices that lead to less carbon emissions. We will need more partnerships between the different sectors. The green electricity of offshore wind farms should allow for the production of hydrogen for the future fishing vessels. More work is needed to integrate all sectors on land and at sea. The EP has published a report on fisheries co management, and it shows that stakeholders are needed implement good policies.

Jakob Granit - SWAM

He explained that the Swedish Presidency of the Council has allowed to progress on many files including the Fit for 55 package, energy efficiency and fuel initiative. Agreement has been reached on the support for Ukraine.

Sweden also developed a maritime strategy with key indicators allowing to monitor progress. CFP is still looking at stocks one by one and stocks in the Baltic are still in poor conditions. Much work is still needed to ensure ecosystem-based science for the management of our fish stocks.

Sweden's objectives on renewable and offshore energy production are ambitious and 3 major offshore energy farms have been decided recently.

He concluded that policies coherence has to be ensured by giving Member States the lead on these strategies, backed by EU level legislation.

Marisa Lameiras da Silva- Chair of the Atlantic Strategy Committee

The speaker explained that Portugal is also investing in sustainable blue economy, blue skills, digitalisation, decarbonisation and circular economy.

Workshop 4 - Path to decarbonisation: cross-sea basin synergies

The workshop presented how Member States and stakeholders are actively working to achieve decarbonisation.

European Commission Head of Unit DG Mare

When the Commission adopted communication on sustainable blue economy 2 years ago the agenda was ambitious. 2 years after, a new communication has been published for energy transition in the fisheries sector. It is a long-term approach to allow the sector to stay competitive, resilient and future proof.

The Commission will launch the Energy Transition Partnership on the 16th June. Participants can bring ideas to the meeting to make the transition easier.

Sea-basin initiatives have been developed with already successful strategies developed in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Stakeholders play a very important role here, building community of practice. A single assistance mechanism supports the development of the sea basin strategies. It allows to share the lessons learnt and develop communalities and synergies.

The Westmed initiative, the Mediterranean Sea basin strategy was presented. It is unique because it is shared by the EU MS and 3rd countries in the south of the Mediterranean. The Commission gave a positive evaluation of the initiative, and a new ministerial declaration is being prepared for June 2023.

Alexandra Bogdan: Black sea common maritime agenda

The Black Sea maritime agenda was then presented by Alexandra Bogdan. It is also shared with third countries in the Black Sea.

Pitch session 5 - Common Fisheries Policy – today and tomorrow

Vincent Guerre from DG MARE presented the **Fisheries and Ocean Pact**. 10 years after the CFP revision, overfishing has been almost eliminated for TAC species. The reform 10 years ago has put into place a more inclusive process involving stakeholders at different level: regionalisation -Joint Recommendations- and Advisory Councils -platform with industry and civil society collaborating. There are still some challenges: Overfishing in some areas like in the Mediterranean Sea, other impact of fishing like on the seabed, and some issues on capacity with too many vessels for limited resources. The Landing Obligation was also difficult to implement and discarding still happens. Further selectivity of fishing gear should be enforced to end discarding. Finally, the impact of climate change and post Brexit situation call for new system and new approaches to fisheries management.

The pact is a dialogue with stakeholders to improve management: there is a need for an improved governance, inclusive and recognising the role of fishers as providers of food and identity. There is work also to be done on the fishing vessels of the future, the fishers of the future, ...

The **CMO report** was also presented by Ms. Joli from DG MARE.

The Commission representative presented the **Communication on the Energy transition of the EU fisheries**. The high dependency of the sector for fossil fuel is the starting point for the Communication. Energy transition is an opportunity to breakaway and improve resilience of the sector in the future, improve its carbon footprint and reach the Green Deal objectives. Four main barriers have been identified for the energy transition: fragmented cooperation between stakeholders, need for innovation, need for new skills, and access to funding and financing opportunities. The Communication proposes to work on those 4 aspects: launching the energy transition partnership for fisheries and aquaculture, a study will present the skills need and the technology that exist, and a guide with the existing and current EU funding will be published.

The CINEA: European Climate Infrastructure and Environment Agency was presented. It carries project to implement Commission policies.

Day 2

High Panel on innovation in the Blue Economy – preparing the future

Kestutis Sadauskas, DG MARE, presented the EU Missions to restore our ocean and waters. Many projects have been carried through the missions during the first year. It looked at small scale vessels with low carbon emissions, reusability of offshore platforms and multiuse of marine space. The missions also ensures that knowledge was shared between regions. The missions are also to create the digital twin ocean built on all the data being available.

The Joint Research Center presented the EU Blue Economy Observatory. It is there to fill the knowledge gaps when it comes to the EU blue economy. It was launched 1 year ago and takes the form of a website with data and socioeconomic analysis. These are here to help decision making at national and EU level. The blue economy observatory will help implement the Marine Action Plan and other policies from the Green Deal.

The President of IFREMER, the Marine Research Institute of France, presented a competition open by the institute to fund new research projects.

Finally, **the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership** was presented. It is also called the blue arm of the green deal. It started in September 2022. It is a joint endeavour of 25 MS and associated countries that will pool financial resources with the EU to fund research and innovation and better structure EU research.

Workshop: Achieving Marine Protection targets in the EU

Marine Planning and Management

Antonia Leroy, WWF, gave a recap of the WWF assessment of the status of the EU MSP. WWF has released the Baltic, NS and NE Atlantic assessment. The assessment is based on the MSP directive translated in 33 indicators. The results show that very few countries are successful in the full implementation of the MSP. For the Baltic, the MSP was partially successful, not enough MPA, no space for restoration (inclusion of nature), but it was the 1st exercise and review might be better. HELCOM collaboration and exchange of data was cost efficient and helpful. WWF recommendations are to

establish effective stakeholder management, establish MPAs, designate in a participative way the offshore renewable, engage in constructive dialogue with fisheries.

The French biodiversity agency presented Ocean Governance. Ocean Governance is a project for the protection and restoration of marine ecosystems as a catalyst to build peace and security and fostering sustainable economies (in Southeast Asia and Atlantic Ocean). The project started in 2020 and will end in December 2023. It has identified good practices for governance of MPAs at different levels. 4 components of ocean governance projects: aiming for increasing knowledge and practice of protecting marine area in Southeast Asia, improve MPA management in the Atlantic using the concept of shared environmental protection, strengthen knowledge exchange, improve basis for dialogue of stakeholders in Southeastern Asia.

Sunken ammunition - hybrid and environmental threat in Baltic Sea

The Polish Naval Academy presented the results of different studies on the chemical dumped in the Baltic. Work has been focused on mapping the location of dumped chemicals and assessing risk connected to them.

It is estimated that 300 000tons of ammunition in shells, barrels, bombs were dumped (40 000tons were dumped in the Bornholm deep) by the allies after WWII until the 50s and even 60s by the USSR. They were dumped in the Bornholm Deep, Gotland Deep, and the unofficial site of Gdansk Deep. However, there are indications that chemicals were also dumped on the way to the official dumping sites. They are scattered on the ground. In salty water these chemicals will leak because of corrosion.

These chemical weapons, under the convention of chemical weapons, cannot be retrieved. But if they are considered to have deteriorated to such extent that they are considered as toxic waste, then it is allowed to bring them back on shore and destroy them. Following studies of the corrosion rate, it appears that the chemicals have already started leaking and is therefore a waste.

These chemicals accumulate in fish but at the moment it is not estimated to be dangerous for human consumption if consumed in a usual way.

Large scale recovery operation is almost impossible because of huge costs and limited effect.

Unfortunately, fisheries and sailing transport routes go through the same areas. Search and rescue service are not trained and specialised in the handling of these chemicals, and it is usually the navies that play this role. Sea usage pushes for more monitoring.

HELCOM has set up an expert group in 1993 called CHEMU to establish guidelines for handling of chemicals by fishers, later in 2013 HELCOM Group MUNI in 2010 and now EG SUBMERGED since 2013.

There are 2 actions in the BSACP related to submerged hazardous object: S35 (HELCOM will develop a thematic assessment on the topic), and S34 (develop best environmental practices for risk assessment of munitions by 2025 and implement them by 2028).

The BSAC Secretariat also discussed with the Blue Forum organisers, MEP Karleskind (Thanking him for the video to the BSAC Workshop on the Baltic MAP), EFCA, other ACs secretariats, representatives of the Commission, WWF, and EAPO.

All recorded information is available on the EMD website: <https://european-maritime-day-2023.b2match.io/>