

MEDAC advice on the call for evidence Vision 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture

The MEDAC,
in response to the call for evidence on the 'Vision 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture', launched by DG Mare on 20 February 2026 (Ref. Ares (2026)1964203), which was also discussed during the MEDAC WG1 meeting on 25 February 2026 in Naples,
Noting that:

- the initiative is based on the letter of assignment to the Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans, Costas Kadiis, which, among other things, called for the development of a “vision for the fisheries and aquaculture sector looking ahead to 2040” with the aim of establishing a medium- to long-term strategic framework for the development of policies on the value chain in the fisheries, aquaculture and processing.
- The vision for 2040 also aims to address the systemic challenges still affecting the fisheries sector, with a view to long-term sustainability and competitiveness, integrating the various initiatives already launched by the Commission, such as 'Fishers of the Future', the “EU Ocean Pact”, the revision of the CFP, not to mention more general policies such as simplification, the proposed EU budget for the period 2028-2034, and others.
- The Communication acknowledges the work done in recent years by fishers, aquaculture producers, the scientific community and Member States to improve sustainability, although some species are still being overfished.
- It is highlighted, as repeatedly emphasised by MEDAC itself, that the fisheries and aquaculture sector continues to face significant challenges, recognising that eutrophication, pollution and climate change combine with issues more related to fishing activities in damaging marine habitats: all of which, together with the sector's variable economic performance, declining employment and growing labour shortages, threaten the long-term viability of the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector. The picture is complicated by other negative forces affecting the sector, such as competition for maritime space and recent geopolitical changes (Brexit and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine), which have further complicated the sector's prospects.
- The problems faced by those working in the fishing industry are highlighted, starting with difficult working conditions, declining wages, uncertainty about the future profitability of businesses and difficulties in generational renewal, as well as excessive dependence on fossil fuels, which makes the sector particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in energy prices.

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It sets out its considerations below:

The MEDAC welcomes the initiative to develop a holistic, medium- to long-term approach to improving many aspects of the fisheries and aquaculture sector, from economic and social issues to environmental sustainability, integrating various policy measures already undertaken (regulations, directives, action plans, strategies) that have not yet realised their potential or achieved their objectives.

The MEDAC welcomes the fact that the vision for 2040 will also address access to funding to achieve the objectives set and will focus on simplification in order to achieve them in a cost-effective manner.

The MEDAC, reaffirms what was stated in the advice of the public consultation of the MFF (Ref.125/2025 6 May 2025) *“believes that a possible shift from a dedicated financial fund - as for fisheries and aquaculture the current EMFAF is – to single Funds for each Member State (MS) would be highly negative and impactful for the sector and contrary to the guidelines of the Treaty and the CFP Regulation itself. Single funds per MS would also lead to a real weakening of the Single Market and there would be less and less of the bond that holds the EU together today. The supply of fish animal protein, as well as jobs and incomes of many European citizens and the viability of coastal communities would be put at risk.”*

However, it stresses that without a clear legal basis within the Multiannual Financial Framework, which will remain in force until 2034, it is difficult to have a workable and credible vision: the paradigm shift currently proposed by the Commission, with the merging of several financial funds into a single fund (with greatly reduced resources for the fisheries sector), does not suggest the possibility of effective developments that could lead to radical changes capable of overcoming the problems identified by the Commission itself.

One of the major structural gaps in EU fisheries funding over the past programming periods has been the absence of a comprehensive strategy for fleet renewal. Current rules allow only limited interventions (energy efficiency, safety upgrades), but do not permit the replacement of obsolete vessels—a condition that severely limits the effectiveness of any modernisation effort. Without a clear EU policy enabling actual vessel replacement, the fleet will struggle to meet modern standards in sustainability, safety, and efficiency. Investing in new vessels results in lower fuel consumption, reduced emissions, improved safety for workers, better product quality and traceability, more efficient resource monitoring. This is the only way to empower EU fisheries to compete globally on sustainability, energy efficiency, and technological innovation.

Furthermore, faced with challenges of this magnitude, MEDAC once again deplores the absence of a socio-economic impact assessment: this choice – which cannot be dictated by urgency, given that it is a long-term vision – appears risky, to say the least, since defining a strategy without analysing the possible socio-economic and coastal community impacts could lead to objectives that are as ambitious as they are technically or economically unsustainable for workers and businesses in the sector.



With a view to promoting more open and shared reflection, the MEDAC proposes a careful assessment of the results of the fisheries and aquaculture policies implemented to date, analysing their impact on the environment and resources, on businesses and their profitability, and on workers and coastal communities. The assessment *“would require a more efficient process, timely data and tasks delivery”* as highlighted in the conclusions of the STECF Expert Working Group (EWG) on the Fishing effort regime for demersal fisheries in West Med (STECF-25-11). The aim is to develop new tools for modernising the sector in order to improve environmental sustainability, but also to optimise incomes for businesses and wages for workers.

The ecological transition of fisheries should be socio-economically sustainable and fair. The collaboration between stakeholders such as national governments, marine conservation organisations, and fisheries organisations, for example within EU Advisory councils, should work towards implementing social equity and ecosystem-based management in fisheries policies. Co-management is also a critical tool for inclusive and participatory decision-making and for effective sustainable management in many coastal fisheries.

For the future, the MEDAC believes it is necessary to accompany the process of modernisation and digitalisation in the sector for the possible introduction of AI through a shared process of growth and coordinated strategic planning between stakeholders and institutions regarding its use.

Attached is the MEDAC's advice (Ref.148/2024, 24 July 2024 “MEDAC advice on the consultation on the CFP”), which analyses the previous CFP in detail, addressing various topics with a view to the Vision 2040.

