

# Aquaculture Advisory Council

## Executive Committee meeting

28 October 2025 (10:00-12:00)

Online meeting - ZOOM – Interpretation available in EN – FR – ES – IT

### Minutes

#### PARTICIPATION LIST

##### EXCOM MEMBERS

Brian Thomsen (AAC Chair)  
Charlotte Epinay (1<sup>st</sup> Vice-Chair)  
Philippe Le Gal (2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair)

##### Operators

Ola Öberg (Recirkfisk)  
Javier Ojeda (FEAP)  
Pier Antonio Salvador (COPA)  
Béla Halasi-Kovács (COGECA)  
Maria Luisa Alvarez (FEDEPESCA)  
Alexander Doring (FEFAC)  
Thibault Pivetta (EMPA)  
Teresa Morrissey (IFA)  
Lorenzo Gennari (AMA)  
Angeles Longa Portabales (Consello Regulador do Mexillón de Galicia)  
Anne-Laure Prego-Cauchet (CNC)

##### Other interest groups

Phil Brooke (CIWF)

#### OTHER PARTICIPANTS

**Secretariat:** Cynthia Benites, Alicia Mouthuy

**Invited:** Andrea Fabris (API)



T +32 (0) 2 720 00 73

E [secretariat@aac-europe.org](mailto:secretariat@aac-europe.org)

[www.aac-europe.org](http://www.aac-europe.org)

31, rue Montoyer

BE 1000 Bruxelles

## AGENDA

- [Welcome words by the Chair and adoption of the agenda](#)
- [2024-2025 budget](#)
- [2025-2026 budget implementation](#)
- [Public webinars in 2026](#)
- [Contracts with WG rapporteurs](#)
- [Update & agenda of the AAC 10-year anniversary](#)
- [Updates by the Secretariat](#)
- [Updates by the Chair](#)
- [Any other business](#)
- [Conclusions and closing of the meeting](#)

## MEETING MINUTES

### **1. Welcome words by the Chair and adoption of the agenda**

Chair Brian Thomsen welcomed the Executive Committee (ExCom) members and confirmed the quorum.

The agenda was approved with the following AOBs requested by:

- Ola Oberg (Recirkfisk) on a letter to send to DG MARE on small-scale aquaculture
- Ola Oberg (Recirkfisk) on the circulation of a document on hidden labour
- The Chair on Vissenbeschermering representation in the ExCom and membership fees

The minutes of the previous ExCom meeting (24.06.2025) were adopted by written procedure.

### **2. 2024-2025 budget**

The Secretariat provided an update on the current budget and indicated that the AAC is expected to conclude the year with a positive balance.

**The Chair** highlighted the importance of enhancing the AAC organizational approach to better anticipate and plan for upcoming expenses, particularly those related to translating additional recommendations that are not covered by the strategic plan.

Following a discussion with the members, it was decided that no additional expenses will be incurred.

### **3. 2025-2026 budget implementation**

The Secretariat asked the ExCom members whether they wished to hold an in-person ExCom meeting on 30 June 2026, followed by a farm visit. Members expressed an interest in participating in an on-site ExCom meeting.

**The Secretariat will launch a hosting application.**



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#### 4. Public webinars in 2026

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The Secretariat presented a review of the first AAC webinar held on 30 September as well as possible topics for the two webinars planned for 2026 (February/March and September). Many members reacted to this presentation and suggested areas for improvement, such as more communication on the AAC website and exploring the possibility of organising a webinar with other ACs, as well as possible topics, such as on animal welfare, fish aetiology, environmental benefits of aquaculture and the Vision for Aquaculture in 2040.

The members also agreed not to create a registration form for the upcoming webinars and to keep using the existing Zoom meeting set-up.

**The Secretariat will launch a two-step consultation regarding the future topics of the webinars. First, the ExCom members will be invited to propose ideas of topics, and as a second step, a vote will be organised to choose two topics between them.**

#### 5. Contracts with WG rapporteurs

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The Chair outlined the current system for compensating rapporteurs for drafting recommendations and proposed introducing a lump-sum payment for each recommendation. This suggestion prompted several reactions: **Phil Brooke (CIWF)** favoured allocating the budget to external studies rather than internal recommendations, while **Lorenzo Gennari (AMA)**, **Thibault Pivetta (EMPA)** and **Javier Ojeda (FEAP)** recommended using the funds to enhance the quality of recommendations, and providing assistance to the rapporteurs, noting the difficulty of assigning a fixed price to them.

**A new proposal will be made by the Chair at the next ExCom meeting.**

#### 6. Update & agenda of the AAC 10-year anniversary

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The Secretariat gave an update on the agenda and on the preparations for the AAC and MAC 10-year anniversary. Some members reacted, stressing that the agenda should include animal welfare, and environmental considerations. Some also suggested to showcase local aquaculture products. The Secretariat confirmed that the Palais des Académies has been booked for the event.

**The Secretariat will revise the agenda, in coordination with the MAC and the Chair, and submit a proposal on the aquaculture expert(s) to the ExCom members.**

#### 7. Updates by the Secretariat

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The Secretariat gave more details about different points:

- **DG MARE bilateral meeting:** the next meeting with the AAC Chair & Vice-Chairs and the aquaculture unit of DG MARE will be held on 20 November. During the previous one held in June, the AAC primarily briefed the Commission on the AAC's 10-year anniversary event, the agenda for the upcoming public webinar and requested also that DG MARE continue its participation to the AAC WG meetings.
- **Next inter-AC meeting:** the next meeting will be held online on 18 November. The agenda will be shared when available (but general matters related to fisheries, MFF and functioning will be included). A preparatory meeting with the Secretaries is scheduled for 13 November.
- **Next audit of the accounts in November:** the next audit is scheduled for 26 November. Its objective is



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to verify the accuracy and compliance of our financial records, ensuring that all expenditures align with the terms of the grant agreement and internal procedures. The audit report will be available in early December.

- **Update of the AAC achievements in November:** the Secretariat and the Chair will prepare a summary of the AAC's achievements for the 2024-2025 year.
- **FAMENET evaluation of Advisory Councils:** the DG MARE has commissioned a short-term review of the Advisory Councils (ACs), which is part of the CFP evaluation. FAMENET, on behalf of DG MARE, has undertaken this assessment of the ACs. The objective of this review is to provide an insight of the "governance tool" of the ACs in relation to relevance, coherence, and effectiveness of their actions and outputs. An online questionnaire was sent to the AAC members, and the Secretariat participated in an interview on 10 October.
- **EC grant request:** the Secretariat submitted the EC grant request on 17 September and is waiting for its approval. Once the application is accepted, the first payment will be processed at the end of December, with the final quarter arriving in March of the following year. Additionally, the Secretariat will have to submit the report covering all activities between 1st of November 2024 and 31 October 2025 before the end of December.
- **EMD 2026:** the next European Maritime Day will take place in Cyprus, on 21-22 May 2026. The AAC is currently awaiting input from DG MARE regarding the main topics to be addressed during this new edition. Based on their guidance, the Secretariat will assess the relevance of the AAC's involvement and decide whether it would be appropriate for the AAC to join the organising committee for next year's edition.
- **Press release:** the Secretariat proposed to issue a new press release that will highlight the recent elections, the upcoming 10-year anniversary of the AAC in 2026 and the launch of two new public webinars. **Following the approval of the members, the Secretariat will proceed with drafting the press release, have it validated by the Chair, and then circulate it to all AAC members.**
- **Animal Welfare Observatory:** the AAC has received a membership application from the Spanish organisation "Animal Welfare Observatory". The Secretariat is waiting confirmation from the Spanish authorities that the organisation may join the AAC. Once this approval is granted, the ExCom members will be invited to endorse its membership, before being formally presented to the General Assembly.

## 8. Updates by the Chair

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The Chair gave more details about different points:

- **Update on the follow-up of recommendations:** the Chair received the updated table on the follow-up of the recommendations from the Secretariat, and he will streamline and finalize it by the end of November.
- **Update on strategic tasks:** the Secretariat has already shared the updated overview of strategic tasks, which includes a list of AAC's strategic and tactical priorities. Its purpose is to inform ExCom members about what AAC is currently working on and planning for the future.

## 9. Any other business

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Three points were added:

- **Letter to DG MARE on small-scale aquaculture:** Ola Oberg (Recirkfisk) proposed sending the document to DG MARE regarding small-scale aquaculture. **After discussion, it was agreed that the letter will first be circulated to WG3 for comments and approval.**
- **Study on hidden labour:** Ola Oberg (Recirkfisk) requested the Secretariat to share the document on



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hidden labour with WG3 and either organize an ad hoc online meeting or include it in the agenda of the next WG3 meeting in February.

- **Vissenbescherming representation in the ExCom and membership fees:** the Chair explained that the ExCom can decide to reduce membership fees when a member faces financial difficulties, and he suggested lowering Vissenbescherming membership so that this organisation can integrate back the ExCom. Several members shared their views, but no consensus was reached. **A revised proposal could be presented at the next ExCom meeting.**

## **10. Conclusions and closing of the meeting**

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The Chair thanked the ExCom members for a productive ExCom meeting.

The next ExCom meeting will take place online on **28 January 2026**.



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