

Aquaculture Advisory Council

Executive Committee meeting

27 January 2026 (14:00-16:00)

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

Minutes

PARTICIPATION LIST

EXCOM MEMBERS

Brian Thomsen (AAC Chair)
Charlotte Epinay (1st Vice-Chair)
Philippe Le Gal (2nd Vice-Chair)
Addy Risseuw (Treasurer)

Operators

Ola Öberg (Recirkfisk)
Javier Ojeda (FEAP)
Pier Antonio Salvador (COPA) – proxy given to Béla Halasi-Kovács (COGECA)
Béla Halasi-Kovács (COGECA)
Maria Luisa Alvarez (FEDEPESCA)
Thibault Pivetta (EMPA)
Teresa Morrissey (IFA)
Lorenzo Gennari (AMA)
Angeles Longa Portabales (Consello Regulador do Mexillón de Galicia)

Other interest groups

Phil Brooke (CIWF)

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Secretariat: Cynthia Benites, Alicia Mouthuy

Invited: Andrea Fabris (API)



AGENDA

- [Welcome words by the Chair and adoption of the agenda](#)
- [Approval annual accounts 2024-2025](#)
- [Appointment external certified auditor](#)
- [ExCom meeting Ireland: Programme and date](#)
- [New meeting rooms October 2026](#)
- [Vissenbescherming \(VB\) representation in the ExCom](#)
- [Improving recommendations](#)
- [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 AOB requested by:

- Charlotte Epinay (Eurogroup for Animals) on the Commission's reply to the AAC letter on the EFSA fish welfare mandates

The minutes of the previous ExCom meeting (28.10.2025) were adopted by written procedure.

2. Approval annual accounts 2024-2025

The Secretariat presented the final accounting report, accompanied by a remark from the Treasurer, Addy Risseuw, highlighting that the financial situation of the AAC is good and stable and recommending then the approval of the annual accounts.

The ExCom approved the annual accounts, and they will be submitted for approval to the next General Assembly meeting (25 February 2026).

3. Appointment external certified auditor

Following the recent amendments to the AAC Statutes, ExCom members are required to appoint an external auditor. The Secretariat suggested appointing Nathalie Lusson, from the CFG Company, who has been carrying out the AAC's annual audit for several years.

The ExCom appointed Nathalie Lusson as the AAC external auditor for a period of three years.



4. ExCom meeting Ireland: Programme and date

Teresa Morrissey (IFA) presented the preliminary programme for the next ExCom meeting in Dublin on 30 June, with a possible short address by Minister Timmy Dooley and a site visit to Carlingford Oysters.

Private transport will be arranged to bring the members to the oyster farm and back to Dublin, from where they will be able to depart as of 21:00.

The ExCom adopted the programme and the date. The Secretariat will keep the members updated on any further development.

5. New meeting rooms October 2026

As the COPA-COGECA premises are not available on 13-14 October 2026, the Secretariat proposed rescheduling the October Working Group meetings, as the alternative venues exceeded the budget allocated for this type of expense.

The ExCom approved rescheduling the Working Groups meetings on 20-21 October 2026 at the COPA-COGECA premises.

6. Vissenbescherming (VB) representation in the ExCom

To balance the representation of sector organisations and other interest groups, the AAC Chair proposed to reduce Vissenbescherming ExCom membership fee to 200 €. Subsidiarily, Vissenbescherming could be offered a position as observer.

Several members shared their views and expressed concerns on introducing exceptions. Consensus was not reached on the Chairs proposals and on this the VB will not be represented in the ExCom.

7. Improving recommendations

Several ExCom members proposed allocating more resources to improve the quality of recommendations and/or to assist rapporteurs. The Secretariat presented two axes of work: strengthening the impact of previously adopted recommendations, and improving the quality of recommendations by strengthening support for rapporteurs. Focusing on the latter, the Secretariat proposed organising a preparatory meeting immediately after the appointment of a rapporteur, to discuss the key elements of the recommendation (e.g., policy context, key issues, main messages, and the intended recommendations). Where deemed useful by the rapporteur, the Secretariat could also consult specific members to refine the draft. Finally, a questionnaire could be launched to gather focused feedback on essential components to be included in the recommendation, following the meeting with the rapporteur.

Several members shared their views and agreed to continue using the Chair and Secretariat's follow up procedure, which they considered effective. **The ExCom also decided to apply the new support process for rapporteurs, beginning with a trial on one or two recommendations.**



8. Updates by the Secretariat

The Secretariat gave more details about different points:

- **First 2026 webinar:** the first 2026 webinar will take place on 26 March at 13:00 and will focus on the Code of Good Practices on Fish Welfare. The Secretariat has already shared the concept note with the ExCom and will keep them updated on further developments.
- **Evaluation of the first webinar:** the Secretariat noted that the evaluation of the first webinar was positive and that more time needs to be allocated for questions and answers.
- **Inter-AC meeting on 18/11:** The last Inter-AC meeting was held online on 18 November, during which several topics were discussed, including the MFF and the Code of Conduct in the framework of potential guidelines on the functioning of Advisory Councils. The Secretariat also circulated to AAC members an email from DG MARE requesting comments, inviting them to individually submit a list of keywords or concepts they wished to see included in a future draft Code of Conduct.
- **EMD 2026:** the next European Maritime Days will take place on 21-22 May 2026 in Cyprus. The workshop organ by the ACs is coordinated by the CCRUP, CCSUD and BSAC. Two topics will be key: SSF and MSP.
- **MAC & AAC 10-year anniversary:** The agenda is currently being finalised. Once completed, the Secretariat will send out the official invitations.
- **Evaluation of the functioning of the AAC:** The Secretariat reported that the initial evaluation of the AAC's functioning had received insufficient feedback, prompting the Secretariat and the Chair to relaunch the process. The Secretariat stressed the importance of having the survey completed by as many members as possible, in particular ExCom members, so that the evaluation provides a balanced and accurate overview of the AAC's current performance and helps identify areas for improvement.

9. Updates by the Chair

The Chair gave more details about different points:

- **Invitation to speak at the European Ocean Days:** The Chair was invited by DG MARE to participate as a speaker in the panel discussion "The successful transition of aquaculture – practical steps and solutions" on 4 March. The Secretariat will circulate the Chair's talking notes to the ExCom for comments and approval ahead of the event.
- **Follow-up recommendations:** this item was discussed at point 7.

10. Any other business

One item was added:

- **Commission reply to the AAC letter on the EFSA fish welfare mandates:** Charlotte Epinay (Eurogroup for Animals) proposed contacting DG SANTE to clarify the reasons behind their reply and to understand their planned next steps regarding the delayed EFSA farmed finfish and invertebrate mandates and animal welfare revision. **Charlotte Epinay will reach out to the Secretariat to explore obtaining a mandate for a bilateral meeting with DG SANTE.**



11. Conclusions and closing of the meeting

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

The next ExCom meeting will take place online on **15 April 2026**.

