

Aquaculture Advisory Council

Executive Committee meeting

15 April 2026 (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 (1st Vice-Chair)
Philippe Le Gal (2nd Vice-Chair)
Addy Risseuw (Treasurer)

Operators

Ola Öberg (Recirkfisk)
Javier Ojeda (FEAP)
Pier Antonio Salvador (COPA)
Maria Luisa Alvarez (FEDEPESCA)
Thibault Pivetta (EMPA)
Teresa Morrissey (IFA)
Lorenzo Gennari (AMA)
Anne-Laure Prego-Cauchet (CNC)

Other interest groups

Phil Brooke (CIWF)

Excused: Ole Christensen (FEFAC)

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Secretariat: Cynthia Benites, Alicia Mouthuy



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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 without any AOBs.

The minutes of the previous ExCom meeting (27.01.2026) were adopted by written procedure.

2. Action plan: Internal evaluation 2024/2025

The Chair presented an action plan following the internal evaluation of 2024-2025:

1. Keeping the same meeting formats for FG, WG, ExCom and GA as in the past.
2. Introducing two different recommendations layouts for the European Commission and the (relevant) Member States.
3. When political support is critical, drafting a one-page summary of the recommendation in English.
4. Include a Zoom link in agendas for online meetings, ask members to include a summary of the context and objectives when proposing recommendations to the SP, inform WG speakers to limit their presentations, and invite the project officer of the EC to the WG meeting when exchanging views on a recommendation of interest to them.
5. To improve the response rate, deleting some questions from the internal evaluation questionnaire.

The ExCom approved the action plan with the following changes:

- Point 2: the ExCom does not support the idea of splitting recommendations in two separate documents (one for the Member States, one for the Commission).



- Regarding point 3, the template for drafting recommendations will request a 1-page summary to facilitate the dissemination of recommendations towards decision-makers.
- Regarding point 5, useful evaluation feedback will be discussed at the next WG meetings.

3. Budget progress 2025/2026 and decisions for next months

The Secretariat presented the budget progress for 2025-2026. The Treasurer highlighted a very healthy financial situation. The Secretariat also presented the estimated budget of the ExCom meeting to be organised in Dublin on 22 June 2026.

The ExCom adopted the budget for the organisation of the ExCom meeting in Dublin. The Secretariat will send an email with the details of the programme and open the registration process.

4. Strategic Plan 2026/2027: Plan for approval

The Secretariat presented the timeline for the AAC Strategic Plan for 2026-2027, noting that Working Group members had been invited to propose topics for future recommendations. Members were also requested to outline the context and rationale for each proposed recommendation, as well as its objectives.

Following the submission of inputs, the Secretariat will circulate a survey to facilitate the prioritisation of the proposed recommendations.

5. Geopolitical developments - decision on drafting a letter requesting activation of the emergency support mechanism

The Secretariat indicated that the *Conseil Consultatif pour les Régions UltraPériphériques* (CCRUP) had proposed drafting a recommendation requesting the increase of the *de minimis* state aid. In addition, the Market Advisory Council (MAC) proposed using this recommendation to address the impact of the conflict in the Middle East on the aquaculture and fisheries sectors. Consequently, should the AAC proceed with this recommendation, there would be no need to draft a separate letter on the same issue.

Ola Oberg (Recirkfisk PO) and Teresa Morrissey (IFA) indicated that the notion of food security should be included in the draft recommendation, as well as a reference to the activation of Article 26 of the EMFAF. **Maria Luisa Alvarez (FEDEPESCA)** also supported raising the *de minimis* aid ceiling for primary production, on the condition that beneficiaries do not engage in direct sales, and stressed the need for support across the value chain to address costs and avoid competition distortions.

No new letter will be drafted. Instead, a revised version of the draft recommendation will be circulated, incorporating the comments received from the AAC ExCom members and from the other Advisory Councils.

6. Strategic Plan 2025/2026 recommendations – update on completion

The Secretariat provided an update on the planned recommendations included in the Strategic Plan for 2025-2026 to be adopted by the end of October 2026. **The work on all the recommendations has been initiated and is ongoing.**



7. Improving recommendations (2 trial recommendations)

At the last ExCom meeting, the members decided to ask the support of the Secretariat to draft two recommendations. The Secretariat explained that this process is being applied to the WG1 recommendation on biocides, as well as the WG2 recommendation on restorative aquaculture. **The Secretariat further indicated that a meeting had taken place with the two rapporteurs to clarify the context and objectives of the recommendations. The drafting is currently underway, and the first versions are expected to be circulated to the rapporteurs in early May.**

8. EFSA fish welfare mandate: DG SANTE meeting

The Secretariat recalled the AAC previous letter to DG MARE and DG SANTE regarding delays in EFSA mandates on fish welfare. As the European Commission indicated that no new mandates are planned, WG1 chair agreed to first consult DG MARE on the possibility of a meeting with DG SANTE to address the state of play on this matter and the ways forwards. If supported, a preparatory discussion will be organised, otherwise an exchange with the WG1 members will take place to discuss internally the next steps. **DG MARE has confirmed it relayed the request to DG SANTE, and members will be informed of the response.**

9. Updates by the Secretariat

The Secretariat gave more details about different points:

- **Evaluation of the first 2026 webinar:** the first 2026 webinar took place on 26 March. The Secretariat noted very positive results: a wide audience, a good balance between presentations and interactive sessions, and the presence of experts from DG MARE, the AAM and EFSA. The Secretariat will keep the ExCom members updated on the topic of the second AAC webinar that will take place in September, following the next biannual meeting with DG MARE.
- **Next biannual meeting with DG MARE:** it with DG MARE will take place on 23 April.
- **MAC-AAC 10-year anniversary:** invitations are out.
- **Ocean Board:** the European Ocean Board first meeting took place in March. The AAC was involved as an observer. The AAC Chair, Brian Thomsen, explained that his intervention focused on the need for an aquaculture policy reform and the inclusion of freshwater aquaculture and animal welfare.
- **Next Inter-AC meeting:** it will take place on 15 and 16 July. No agenda yet.
- **Water Resilience Strategy (WRS) Platform:** the AAC will apply to become a member to support the implementation of the EU WRS.
- **EMD 2026:** the European Maritime Day 2026 will take place in Cyprus on 21 and 22 May. Four Advisory Councils are coordinating a workshop on small-scale fisheries and MSP.

10. Any other business

There were no AOBs.

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 in Dublin on **22 June 2026**.

