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Dear Representatives of the Advisory Councils,

Thank you for your letter of 3 March 2026, seeking clarification on the call for applications for the European Ocean Board (hereby ‘Board’) and its relationship with the Advisory Councils (hereby ‘ACs’). We appreciate your engagement on this matter and recognise the importance of ensuring transparency, coherence, and complementarity in ocean governance structures.

Your questions regarding the eligibility of ACs for membership, the division of roles between the Board and the ACs system, and stakeholder representation are both timely and relevant.

In the meantime, the first meeting of the Board took place just before Easter on 31 March and several ACs who responded to the call took part as observers.

This decision on the selection of Board members was based on three key considerations:

- A wide range of stakeholders related to fisheries and aquaculture sectors are already well represented among the Board’s selected members through organisations such as the Association of National Organizations of Fishing Enterprises in the European Union (Europêche) and Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP), Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE) and environmental non-governmental organisations such as OCEANA, Seas at Risk and WWF.
- The Commission Decision establishing the Board allows for the ad-hoc invitation of experts, ensuring ACs can contribute with sector-specific insights on fisheries and aquaculture when relevant, without requiring formal membership or observers positions.

- Inviting a wide range of EU-level organisations as members ensures a balanced stakeholder representation across various stakeholder groups, sea basins and the sustainable blue economy. This approach is in line with the Commission's horizontal rules on expert groups.

In my introductory speech during the first meeting of the Board, I clarified how the European Ocean Board fits into the existing landscape of stakeholder representation. Regarding the division of roles between the Board and the ACs, these two bodies serve distinct but complementary functions within the EU's marine governance framework:

- The Board acts as a high-level, cross-sectoral expert group, advising the Commission on a list of broad priorities under the European Ocean Pact, including regarding fisheries and aquaculture.
- The ACs remain the primary consultative bodies for fisheries and aquaculture management under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Their role in providing detailed, sector-specific advice on CFP implementation remains essential and unchanged.

In order to ensure on the one hand a continued balanced representation among the ACs and on the other hand to avoid a "sectoral imbalance" of the European Ocean Board, the Commission proposes that the observer status for the ACs could be reviewed in a way that for future meetings of the Board the six observer seats could be filled on a rotating basis.

In closing, let me reiterate our appreciation for the Advisory Councils' proactive engagement. We fully recognise the unique and indispensable role of ACs under Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 and remain committed to ensuring their continued and meaningful engagement in the Ocean Board's work.

Yours sincerely,



Costas Kadis