



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/D3/JR

Dear Mr Marzoa Notlevsen,

I would like to thank the Mediterranean Advisory Council for the advice 262/2023 of 13 December 2023 in relation to equal opportunities in the fishery sector.

As you state yourself, the EU has been working actively at integrating the gender perspective into all of its policies, most recently through its Gender Equality Strategy (2020-2025). Regarding fisheries and aquaculture, women make an essential contribution to the generation of wealth and employment in local communities, as well as to the sustainable use and conservation of aquatic resources. Despite this, women's contribution to fisheries and aquaculture is often insufficiently recognised, preventing their full and balanced participation in the sector. In the EU processing industry, the situation is different with more balance between genders. Additionally, women are still largely underrepresented in management and decision-making positions, in professional bodies, trade unions and workers' councils.

As far as **data collection on gender in fisheries** is concerned, we are currently working with the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee on Fisheries (STECF) to further the development of social data in fisheries. A letter consulting all Advisory Councils was sent out on 8 February 2024 on this topic, asking you to identify key aspects that should be looked at as a matter of priority. I encourage you to include gender issues if you think it appropriate. Regarding the matter of data on unpaid labour, it is obviously challenging to gather official data about informal practices but the focus should be on continuous improvement.

The promotion of **training for women** is also a key topic for gender equality as is promoting greater inclusivity and representation in the wider blue economy, thus going beyond fisheries. The Commission launched a specific call for proposals under the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) to support two projects promoting the role of 'Women in the blue economy': Win Blue (Empowering Women and Mainstreaming Gender Equality in the Blue Economy) and Win Big (Women in Blue Economy Intelligence Gathering and Capacity Boosting). With EUR 2.5 million, this call for proposals aims to increase the participation of women in different sectors of the blue economy and contribute to a more gender equal society, including, but not limited to, through capacity building and training. More information about these projects can be

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found online: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/women-blue-economy-projects-ready-start-think-big-go-blue-2023-05-02_en

Concerning the attractiveness of the fishery sector, a number of provisions exist at EU level in various legislation regarding **working conditions** on board for all fishers (Council Directive (EU) 2017/159), as well as Directive 93/103/EC on minimum safety and health requirements for work on board fishing vessels and Directive 92/29/EEC on medical treatment on board vessels. The European Commission is also evaluating whether to implement the International Maritime Organization Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (safety standards) into EU law, to improve safety standards across the EU. All these provisions apply indiscriminately to fishers, regardless of gender: improvement for the whole sector means improvements for women as well.

As for **non-discriminatory salaries**, equal pay for equal work is one of the EU's founding principles enshrined in Article 157 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFUE). EU countries must eliminate discrimination on grounds of sex with regard to all aspects and conditions of remuneration for the same work or for work of equal value. The EU monitors the correct transposition and enforcement of Directive 2006/54/EC on equal pay and supports EU countries to properly implement existing rules. To further strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay, the newly adopted Directive (EU) 2023/970 sets up a range of pay transparency measures and a mechanism to enforce better the right to equal pay. These measures will increase awareness about pay conditions within the company and give more tools to employers and workers to tackle pay discrimination at work. This directive applies to all sectors, including the fisheries sector.

I would also like to highlight the project **Fishers of the Future** which was launched in late October 2023 and is currently looking at the future role of fishers in society up to 2050. In doing so, it is taking into account many different drivers of change, including the potential evolution of gender balance in the catch sector of fisheries. A survey presenting some of the preliminary results and asking for feedback has been shared with a broad range of stakeholders, foremost among which the Advisory Councils. In parallel, the contractor and DG MARE are preparing a further presentation and discussion during a hybrid event on the 19 March 2023 for which all Advisory Councils will receive an invitation shortly.

Finally, let me underline that the Commission acknowledges the need to carefully monitor future developments and to take them into account in any future policy changes.

I look forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

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