



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,  
MARE/D1/SK

Dear Mr Marzoa Notlevsen,

I would like to thank you for the MEDAC advice in relation to the GFCM SRC-Eastern Mediterranean - MAPs and NIS (Ref.:113/2025), and for your presentations during the Subcommittee.

We appreciate MEDAC's continued attention to the operationalisation of the Non-Indigenous Species (NIS) Observatory and the Pilot Study on NIS in the Eastern Mediterranean (PS-NIS-EM). Both these actions were included in the SAC 26 workplan. The EU strongly supports the operationalisation of the NIS Observatory due to the particular importance NIS have in the eastern Mediterranean, as per the guidelines endorsed at the 2024 GFCM Annual Session. We also support the continuation of the implementation of the GFCM PS-NIS-EM. GFCM CPCs need to frontload their efforts and contribute collectively to the effective implementation of the study, as the reality of NIS in the region is evolving quickly.

The EU supports stakeholder engagement, and we aim to ensure effective inclusion of diverse stakeholder groups, including small-scale fishers, women in fisheries, youth, NGOs, industry, and others, in the design, implementation, as well as the evaluation of MAP measures.

For the deep-water red shrimp (DWRS) fisheries in the Levant Sea the 2022 MAP should enter in its long-term phase in 2026. The fact remains that the stock assessment for these species is not quantitative, due to lack of data, which undermines the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process. Additionally, given most of the related work has not been possible across the Mediterranean due to funding limitations and lack of expertise in this field, the work in GFCM should be prioritised. It is key to continue the work to annually assess the status of the stock, to finalise the scientific advice and the planned benchmarks, and hopefully reach a quantitative advice. This also includes expanding the coverage of surveys at sea in the whole subregion, finalising the work to fill the information gaps on the spatial extent of fishing effort and the identification of essential

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fish habitats and the overlap with VMEs. All of these actions are also included in the agreed workplan.

On the European hake in the Eastern Mediterranean, we acknowledge the importance of a differentiated gear selectivity to protect adult hake while minimising impacts on juvenile. We should continue the identification of the relevant data gaps for the stock assessment and continue enhancing data collection for this stock in this subregion, including from small-scale fisheries (SSF). This will allow to start better assessing the status of this stock. We agree with the outcome of the SRC and SAC 26 workplan to continue implementing the roadmap suggested by the WGHKE (11-13 March 2025) with reference to assessing the status of hake stocks in the eastern Mediterranean using data limited approaches. Additionally, promoting consumer awareness and advocating for sustainable consumption align with our commitment to fostering a "deck-to-plate" seafood culture.

The EU appreciates MEDAC's emphasis on the two-pronged approach to SSF, focusing on better data and stakeholder inclusion. We support initiatives for SSF value chain assessments, eco-labelling schemes, and boosting market value for sustainable practices. The integration of recreational fisheries into data collection reflects our commitment to comprehensive monitoring of NIS interactions. This is in line with the revised fisheries control regulation, where electronic catch recording and data collection from recreational fisheries will become mandatory in the coming years, as well as in line with Recommendation GFCM/45/2022/12 which promotes pilot studies on voluntary catch declarations for recreational fisheries. The EU recognises the urgency of addressing fleet ageing in the SSF sector and encourages the entry of young fishers to ensure sector viability, reinforcing our dedication to sustainable fisheries management.

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](mailto:MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu).

Yours sincerely,

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