



Charlina Vitcheva
Director General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
European Commission
Jozef II-straat 99
1000 Brussels
Belgium

Dun Laoghaire, 26 March 2026

Dear Director General Charlina Vitcheva,

Subject: NWWAC concerns on rising fuel prices linked to the Middle East crisis and request to activate EMFAF emergency measures

In recent weeks, global geopolitical instability has intensified due to the escalation of conflict involving Iran and the broader Middle East region. As previously experienced during the post COVID-19 pandemic and following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, such crises have significant socio-economic repercussions within the European Union, notably through sharp increases in energy and fuel prices.

The EU fishing sector is already facing renewed pressure as fuel prices are increasing exponentially. Given that fuel costs represent a substantial proportion of operational expenditure for fishing vessels, even moderate increases can severely undermine economic viability. This situation raises serious concerns among NWWAC members, who fear a return to the crises experienced in 2020–2022.

NWWAC members report growing risks, including the potential forced exit from professional fishing activities, significant loss of income, reduced ability to supply the market with fishery products, and broader negative impacts on coastal communities. At a time when the European Union is striving to strengthen both food and energy security and sovereignty, safeguarding the viability of its primary producers must remain a priority.

In the context of previous crises experienced following from the conflict in Ukraine, the NWWAC addressed the European Commission to highlight the urgent need for economic support of the fishing industry affected by loss of activity and rising fuel costs¹. The NWWAC positively acknowledged the measures subsequently adopted by the Commission, notably:

- the activation of exceptional measures under the EMFAF Regulation (Article 26), allowing compensation for additional costs and income foregone due to exceptional events causing a significant disruption of markets;

¹ [NWWAC/NSAC letter on Fuel provisioning affecting fisheries in the North Western Waters, North Sea and beyond](#) (14 March 2022);

[NWWAC letter to the Commission addressing aid to the fishing sector to tackle the current crisis](#) (16 March 2022)





- the introduction of a Temporary Crisis Framework for State aid, enabling Member States to provide targeted and flexible financial support to operators.

These instruments proved essential in stabilising the sector during a period of acute crisis.

The NWWAC notes that the current situation presents comparable characteristics, with clear indications of emerging market disturbance linked to fuel price volatility. The existing EMFAF framework already provides the legal basis for the activation of extraordinary measures in such circumstances.

In this context, the NWWAC calls on the European Commission to:

- formally recognise the current Middle East crisis as an exceptional event causing significant market disturbance, thereby enabling the activation of relevant EMFAF provisions for compensation;
- facilitate the rapid mobilisation of financial support to the fisheries sector, including compensation for increased fuel costs and income losses;
- consider the reactivation or adaptation of a Temporary Crisis Framework for State aid, allowing Member States to implement targeted measures such as fuel tax relief, direct support, and liquidity assistance.

Additionally, the NWWAC acknowledges ongoing work and reflections within the European Commission regarding the inclusion of crisis-response mechanisms under the future Multiannual Financial Framework. In this regard, the NWWAC encourages the Commission, and in particular DG MARE, to ensure sufficient flexibility and responsiveness in the design and implementation of such instruments, so that they can be swiftly deployed in future crises.

The NWWAC remains fully committed to supporting the resilience, sustainability, and long-term viability of the EU fisheries sector, and stands ready to contribute constructively to further discussions on this matter.

We thank you for your urgent attention on this matter and look forward to the Commission's response and concrete actions.

Yours sincerely,

Alexandra Philippe
NWWAC Chair

