Consultation strategy for the Mid-term evaluation of the Open Method of Coordination for EU aquaculture

1. Background information
The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) for aquaculture is the process through which the European Commission and the Member States collaborate to support and encourage the sustainable development of aquaculture in the EU. When the OMC was established for aquaculture (as part of the Common Fisheries Policy of 2014), Member States developed Multiannual National Aquaculture Plans on the basis of Strategic Guidelines from the Commission. These plans outline their targets for development until 2020. To help achieve these goals, and as part of the OMC, the Commission holds regular best practice workshops for national authorities to share knowledge and exchange information on simplification and effective regulation to promote growth in the sector. The EU has also produced guidance, provides funding to help Member States achieve their goals, and regularly checks on progress and actions implemented by the Member States.

Each of the Member State aquaculture plans, guidance documents, information exchanged between Member States, and information on available funds are available on EU Aquaculture Online.

2. Scope and objectives
This consultation will gather input from all relevant sources to evaluate the OMC as a process to promote and guide the sustainable development of aquaculture in EU Member States. The main elements are a public consultation of 12 weeks, and a targeted consultation of the Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC), which is the representative group of the main aquaculture stakeholders across the EU. There will also be a written consultation addressed to the national authority in each of the Member States. Each set of questions will be tailored to address unique aspects from the national aquaculture plan of the Member State. Finally, five case studies will be conducted in selected member states, consisting of interviews with the national authorities, industry and NGOs. This approach targets the main stakeholders to provide information (data) while also giving citizens and organisations the opportunity to contribute an opinion. The work will be conducted with the help of an external consultant.

The main objectives of the consultation are:
- To gather information on perception and involvement of the stakeholders in and affected by the OMC process.
- To receive views of stakeholders on EU Aquaculture policy to ensure it continues to address the main priorities.
- To identify weaknesses and potential improvements in OMC.
- To highlight and explain success stories achieved through the OMC.
3. Stakeholder map
The objective of the OMC is to support the sustainable growth of EU aquaculture. This requires the participation of the national authorities responsible for aquaculture. It affects (potential) producers by helping farms to establish and grow. It supports employment and economic growth in rural and coastal communities, can help to reduce fishing pressure by providing an alternative source of fish and offers high quality, locally grown seafood for the food supply chain as far as the consumer (including processing, catering and retail). At the same time, environmental and sanitary conditions must be ensured, and space must be allocated to allow development, which may reduce space for other sectors such as tourism. Each of these aspects represents the stakeholder in the Stakeholder map below. The Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC) representative stakeholders cover all of these aspects with industry and NGO representatives. DG MARE also coordinates with the relevant Commission DGs (ENV, SANTE, AGRI, RTD, DEVCO, TRADE, GROW) and agencies such as EFSA and EMA as well as providing support to Member States' administrations to facilitate the development of aquaculture.

![Stakeholder map](image)

Figure: Stakeholder map of actors involved in the OMC for EU aquaculture

4. Consultation method
- Public consultation: A structured questionnaire published online and publicised on the Commission and DG MARE websites, social media networks, and with national authorities. The questions will be translated in all 24 official languages of the EU to be readily accessible to all citizens during the 12 weeks of public consultation.
- Targeted written consultation of the Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC).
- Targeted consultations of Member State authorities. Written consultation in English and in the national language of the administration
- Five wider case studies in selected Member States targeting relevant stakeholders pre-identified by DG MARE. These range from National authorities, to producer and NGO representatives
These activities will be conducted with the assistance of an external consultant as part of an evaluation study. The final report will be published on the EU Aquaculture Online website.

5. Website and Communication activities

- The public consultation will be available online from the 23 of April 2018.
- The opening of the public consultation will be notified in writing to the Member States through the good practice network and to the Aquaculture Advisory Council.
- Information relevant to the consultation will also be available on the dedicated EU Aquaculture Online website.
- As with other Public Consultations conducted by DG MARE, it will be published on a dedicated consultations website.
- This will also be tweeted by EU_MARE, put on our Facebook page and notified to the Maritime Forum.

\footnote{All Member States with the exception of Luxembourg developed Multiannual National Aquaculture Plans and programmed the spending of EU money under Union Priority 2 of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). This evaluation concerns the progress of all Member States with the exception of Luxembourg.}