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COMMISSION DECISION

of 5.2.2026

setting up the Commission ‘European Ocean Board’ high-level expert group

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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Whereas:

- (1) In accordance with Article 11(2) of the Treaty on European Union, the institutions are to maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.
- (2) In June 2025, the Commission adopted the European Ocean Pact¹ and announced a new monitoring and governance framework.
- (3) On the basis of the experience gained in the Fisheries and Ocean dialogues and the European Blue Forum, the Commission wishes to foster cross-sector dialogue between stakeholders on ocean-related matters, with the aim of building consensus, and to help implement and monitor the European Ocean Pact, in line with the source-to-sea approach. To this end, the Commission intends to call upon the expertise of a consultative body of stakeholder representatives to assist the Commission by providing advice and expertise, and to foster high-level dialogue and exchange of experience between the body’s members on ocean-related matters. This would complement the specific and sectorial expertise already available, including from the Advisory Councils under the common fisheries policy, the European Blue Forum, the regional sea conventions and other relevant forums.
- (4) It is, therefore, appropriate to set up a high-level expert group composed of experts in ocean-related matters and to define its tasks and structure, in compliance with Commission Decision C(2016) 3301² establishing horizontal rules on the creation and operation of Commission expert groups.
- (5) The group should help sustain a new culture of dialogue, trust and multi-stakeholder participation between relevant stakeholders and the Commission. It should also advise the Commission on the coherence of ocean-related policies and the overall implementation of the European Ocean Pact.
- (6) The group shall be composed of up to approximately 25 members representing the ocean and maritime community, including fisheries and aquaculture, maritime security, ocean research and innovation and civil society (including in areas such as the environment and climate, marine renewable energy, land-sea interactions, transport

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, The European Ocean Pact, COM(2025) 281 final of 5.6.2025.

² Commission Decision C(2016) 3301 of 30 May 2016 establishing horizontal rules on the creation and operation of Commission expert groups.

and tourism, ocean literacy, blue skills, ocean knowledge and coastal and islands communities).

- (7) Experts may be invited to take part in the work of the group on an ad hoc basis for the purpose, inter alia, of providing expertise in specific subject matters on the agenda.
- (8) Rules on the disclosure of information by members of the group should be laid down. Personal data should be processed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council³.
- (9) It is appropriate to set a period for application of this Decision. The Commission should in due time consider the advisability of an extension,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

European Ocean Board

The Commission ‘European Ocean Board’ expert group (‘the group’) is hereby set up.

Article 2

Tasks

The group’s tasks shall be:

- (a) to advise the Commission on the implementation of the European Ocean Pact;
- (b) to deliver an opinion on specific matters relating to the European Ocean Pact upon request by the Commission and within the time limits set in that request;
- (c) to foster dialogue and exchange of experience between its members on ocean-related matters, ensuring that Union policies are coherent, synergistic and consistent with private-sector initiatives.

Article 3

Consultation

The Commission may consult the group on any matter relating to the European Ocean Pact, stating the time frame in which advice is necessary.

Article 4

Composition

- 1. The group shall be composed of up to approximately 25 members.
- 2. The group shall be composed of stakeholder organisations, operating and representing stakeholders at Union level. The organisations shall represent the ocean and maritime community, including civil society. It shall display broad competence

³ Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC (OJ L 295, 21.11.2018, p. 39, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/1725/oj>).

and expertise in areas relevant to ocean, maritime economy and marine and coastal policies at Union level and wide geographical representativeness across Member States.

3. Each member organisation shall nominate one high-level representative who:
 - (a) holds the position of President, Secretary-General, Director-General or equivalent in their organisation; and
 - (b) provides a high level of expertise.
4. Each member organisation may designate an alternative representative who is qualified to substitute for the main representative as needed.
5. Members who are no longer capable of contributing effectively to the group's deliberations, who, in the opinion of the Commission department concerned, do not comply with the conditions set out in Article 339 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union or who resign shall no longer be invited to participate in any meetings of the group and may be replaced for the remainder of their term of office.

Article 5

Selection and appointment of members

6. The group's members shall be selected through a public call for applications, to be published in the register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities ('the register of expert groups') referred to in Decision C(2016) 3301. The call for applications may also be published by other means, including on dedicated websites. The call for applications shall clearly outline the selection criteria, including the required expertise and the interests to be represented in relation to the work to be performed. The minimum period for applications shall be four weeks. Organisations must be entered in the Transparency Register⁴ in order to be appointed.
7. The members of the group shall be appointed by the Director-General of the Commission's Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries ('DG MARE') from applicant organisations who have proven and relevant competence and experience and have responded to the call for applications.
8. Members shall be appointed for a maximum term of office of five years.

Article 6

Chair

9. The group shall be chaired by the Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans.
10. In the event that the Commissioner is unavailable, a senior representative from DG MARE shall assume the role of chair to ensure continuity of the board's activities.

Article 7

Operation

1. DG MARE shall provide secretarial services.

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https://transparency-register.europa.eu/index_en.

2. The group shall act:
at the request of the chair in consultation with other relevant Commission departments, in compliance with the horizontal rules;
and meet:
 - (i) at the request of DG MARE in consultation with other relevant Commission departments, in compliance with the horizontal rules;
 - (ii) between one and two times a year; the chair may, however, convene the group for additional meetings when urgent advice is necessary;
 - (iii) in principle on Commission premises or virtually, depending on the circumstances.
3. Commission officials from other Commission departments with an interest in the proceedings may attend meetings of the group or its sub-groups.
4. Meetings of the group shall, in principle, be held on Commission premises or virtually, depending on the circumstances.
5. In agreement with DG MARE, the group may decide, by simple majority of its members, that deliberations be made public.
6. Minutes on the discussion of each point on the agenda and on the opinions delivered by the group shall be:
 - (a) meaningful and complete;
 - (b) drafted by the secretariat under the responsibility of the chair.
7. As far as possible, the group shall adopt its opinions, recommendations or reports by consensus.
8. In the event of a vote, the outcome of the vote shall be decided by simple majority of the members. Members who have voted against or abstained shall have the right to have a document summarising the reasons for their position annexed to the opinions, recommendations or reports.

Article 8

Sub-groups

1. DG MARE may set up sub-groups within the group to examine specific questions on the basis of terms of reference laid down by DG MARE in consultation with other relevant Commission departments.
2. Sub-groups shall operate in compliance with the horizontal rules and shall report to the group. They shall be dissolved as soon as their mandate has been fulfilled.
3. Members of sub-groups who are not members of the group shall be selected through a public call for applications, in compliance with Article 5 and the horizontal rules.

Article 9

Invited experts

4. DG MARE may, in consultation with other relevant Commission departments, invite experts with specific knowledge of a subject matter on the agenda to contribute to the work of the group or its sub-groups on an ad hoc basis.

5. Invited experts shall not have voting rights and shall not participate in the formulation of recommendations or advice of the group.

Article 10

Observers

1. Relevant organisations and public entities other than Member State authorities may be granted observer status ('observers'), in compliance with the horizontal rules, by direct invitation.
2. Observers shall nominate their representatives.
3. Observer representatives may be permitted by the chair to take part in the discussions of the group, or its sub-groups, and to provide expertise. However, they shall not have voting rights and shall not participate in the formulation of recommendations or advice of the group.

Article 11

Rules of procedure

On a proposal by and in agreement with DG MARE, in consultation with other relevant Commission departments, the group shall adopt its rules of procedure by simple majority of its members, on the basis of the standard rules of procedure for expert groups set out in Annex 3 to Decision C(2016) 3301, in compliance with the horizontal rules. Sub-groups shall operate in compliance with the group's rules of procedure.

Article 12

Professional secrecy and handling of classified information

The members of the group and their representatives, as well as invited experts and observers, shall be subject to the obligation of professional secrecy, in accordance with the Treaties, the rules implementing them and the Commission's rules on security regarding the protection of Union classified information, laid down in Commission Decisions (EU, Euratom) 2015/443⁵ and (EU, Euratom) 2015/444⁶.

Should those members of the group or their representatives fail to comply with these obligations, the Commission may take all appropriate measures.

Article 13

Transparency

1. The group and its sub-groups shall be entered in the register of expert groups in accordance with Article 22 of Decision C(2016) 3301.
2. As regards the group's and sub-groups' composition, the following data shall be published in the register of expert groups:

⁵ Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/443 of 13 March 2015 on Security in the Commission (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 41, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2015/443/oj>).

⁶ Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/444 of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2015/444/oj>).

the name of member organisations; the interest represented shall be disclosed;
the name of observers.

3. All relevant documents, including agendas, minutes and participants' submissions, shall be made available either in the register of expert groups or via a link from that register to a dedicated website where this information can be found. Access to dedicated websites shall not be subject to user registration or any other restriction. In particular, agendas and other relevant background documents shall be published in due time before meetings, and minutes shall be published promptly after them. Exceptions to publication shall be possible only where it is deemed that disclosure of a document would undermine the protection of a public or private interest as laid down in Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council⁷.

Article 14

Meeting expenses

1. Participants in the activities of the group or sub-groups shall not be remunerated for the services they offer.
2. Travel and subsistence expenses incurred by participants in the activities of the group or sub-groups shall be reimbursed by the Commission. Reimbursement shall be made in accordance with the provisions in force within the Commission and within the limits of the available appropriations allocated to the Commission departments under the annual procedure for allocating resources.

Article 15

Applicability

This Decision shall apply until 31 December 2030.

Done at Brussels, 5.2.2026

For the Commission

Costas KADIS

Member of the Commission

⁷ Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents (OJ L 145, 31.5.2001, p. 43, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2001/1049/oj>).