



BLACK SEA ADVISORY COUNCIL/BISAC/  
CONSILIUL CONSULTATIV PENTRU MAREA  
NEAGRA

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## MINUTES

**From a meeting of Working Group 6 of BISAC**

**February 23, 2022**

**Topic: "Working conditions in fisheries "**

On February 23, 2022 a meeting was held via video link in ZOOM of BISAC Working Group 6 on "Working conditions in fisheries".

The meeting was attended by Mrs. Pinelipi Belecku from the EC, Mrs. Yordanka Chobanova from the EC, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Violin Raykov from the Institute of Oceanology Varna, Mr. Mihail Leonov State Secretary Ministry of Agriculture in the field of Fisheries, Romania, Mr. Gheorghe Vacaru Director-General in the Managing Authority of the Operational Program for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs - DGP AMPOPAM, Mr. Eduard Diaconeasa- DGP AMPOPAM, Mrs. Andreea Ionascu – Romanian National HUB for Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea; Mr. Gabriel Popescu Director of the National Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture / NAFA / Constanta, Mr. Madar Ciprian labor inspector from the Directorate for Labor and Employment, Tulcea District.

The meeting was opened by the Chairman of the BISAC, Mr. Daniel Buhai. Greetings from the participants and the guests follow.

Mrs. Pinelipi Belecku welcomed the newly elected Chairman of the BISAC, Mr. Daniel Buhai, and noted the progress of the work of the BISAC.

Mr. Daniel Buhai: Working conditions in fisheries in both Bulgaria and Romania are very difficult. Small-scale fisheries (SSF) uses very outdated and poorly equipped vessels that are dangerous to work with. Fishing conditions in the Black Sea are difficult, fishermen are at risk for their lives, and in the last three years there have been many unfortunate incidents in Romania with a fatal end. First of all, ways must be found to improve the vessels. Fishing facilities for small-scale fishermen also need improvement as well as providing them with

more modern radars and means of localization. Also, many of them are not well prepared for this profession, with the exception of experienced fishermen, there are many young ones who sometimes do not comply with the worse conditions at sea, and this is a prerequisite for accidents. In Romania, a huge challenge for the whole sector is the lack of unloading sites. From the island of St. George to the port of Midia there are no ports for unloading. These are many kilometers of sea, where fishing takes place, but the landing takes place on the beaches. The port construction program has not been implemented in Romania. One of the reasons for this is the insufficiently attractive conditions for co-financing, which started from 40 to 100. On the other hand, the conditions for applying for these programs were also difficult to achieve. Small-scale fishermen could not meet the condition of a certain power of the boats' engines, which excluded them from the very beginning as potential beneficiaries of these funds. It is also necessary to create vocational training programs for training and retraining of workers in the fisheries sector, as well as those for improving job security.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: Bulgaria has a larger number of small-scale fishermen, based on the 370 km of coastline. Of the total fishing fleet of 1 846 vessels, about 600 of them rarely fish - these are the smallest boats, which are usually family-run and have no interest in undergoing any training because, according to them, fishing skills are hereditary and are passed down from generation to generation. Excluding the vessels, about 1000 boats fish commercially, some of them only seasonally, but there are also those that fish all year round and they represent a significant part of the catch in Bulgaria. The fisheries program is separated from the agricultural program and the policies pursued by the Ministry of Social Affairs and they are very rarely focused on the fisheries sector. In Bulgaria, a question was asked whether the fisheries sector could not use the program to deliver workers to the working environment, and the answer was that there is a separate program "Maritime Affairs and Fisheries" in which to see indicators and prescribe measures that to be able to support fisheries. The fisheries program needs to include more measures to improve working conditions and support the training of young fishermen, protect health and fisheries staff. Unfortunately, in Bulgaria a very small part of small-scale fishing is registered on employment or civil contracts to ensure the security of a worker. This is a common practice. As for the vessels - there things are more regulated, there is a well-written legal framework, what rights, responsibilities and obligations fishermen have. It is very difficult for Bulgaria and Romania to catch up with other EU member states, and not only in the social sphere to ensure the rights and opportunities of staff. It has already been mentioned that we are working with a morally and physically obsolete fleet, which is a great risk to human health and life. There are very few newly built fishing vessels to replace the old ones. There are also accidents in Bulgaria, the profession is difficult and the Member States really need to review the regulatory framework and pay more attention to this sector of the economy, which extracts raw material from the wild nature in very difficult conditions, and provides food that is extremely valuable, with high quality and safe for consumption.

Mr. Gabriel Popescu: 80% of fishermen in Romania are small-scale with boats and vessels up to 12 m long that do not use towing equipment. Many of them are engaged in collecting mussels and rapans with divers. Another category of vessels are those associated with

pound net facilities located along the entire Romanian coast from Sulina to Duranculak. There are larger vessels among them. The third category of the Romanian fleet are fishermen with boats that use fishing rods and nets with a smaller mesh size for goby, horse mackerel, Danube mackerel. Safety is the biggest concern for this sector, especially when unloading, because ports would provide better veterinary and sanitary conditions for the reception, distribution and packaging of goods. It is necessary to invest in the fisheries sector and to leave only at the level of revitalization of the respective economic entity.

Mr. Mihail Leonov: he comes from a fishing community in the Danube Delta and knows the problems of fishermen. He took part in the evaluation meeting of the old Operational Program for Fisheries, in which there were support measures that were not attractive to fishermen, so the new operational program was adapted so that it could be used by fishermen and be more -constructive for them.

Mr. Daniel Buhai: In general, the Fisheries Program, as drafted in other countries, does not have our specifics for large fleets. What can be seen in the SSF in other countries - similar to our SSF is the one in the Baltic countries. Perhaps in the next programming period the conditions for applying for support will be more attractive for SSF as well.

Mr. Gheorghe Vacaru: In EU Regulation 508 the conditions for application for all activities in fisheries and aquaculture under the old operational program are determined. For the next programming period, the current financial assistance regulation is much better for SSF. Leaders of fisheries associations need to be more active and more involved in debates with the Fisheries Administration, especially those from the SSF. The BISAC should also include small-scale fishermen in the coastal fishing debate. The main task of the Directorate of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries at the Ministry of Agriculture is to work in the interest of fishermen, and the Managing Authority will always pay great attention to the problems of fishermen and will facilitate their application for financial support.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: BISAC monitors closely SSF, unfortunately people do not want to associate, or SSF associations in Bulgaria do not have administration and finances and in their requests reach most to the mayor of the municipality. BISAC has invited many such organizations to become its members, they are hampered not only by financial conditions, but also by administrative capacity and time, and so they remain at the level of a settlement. Therefore, it is necessary to allocate more funds for association and cooperation under the Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Program.

Mr. Eduard Diaconeasa: Under the new program in Romania investments are planned to improve working conditions, as well as infrastructure. Following is a presentation on "Project for the Aquaculture and Fisheries Program 2021-2027". The following measures are foreseen in the new program:

- modernization of fishing equipment and fishing vessels;
- improvement of the fishing infrastructure - modernization of the port of Midia; provided funds for the construction of unloading sites and fishing shelters for storage and warehousing of fishing equipment. It is necessary to

identify exactly where these places are and who the owners are, and the investment must be justified in places accessible to fishermen.

- Financial compensation in case of temporary cessation of fishing activities: - for turbot fishing (compensation for fishermen during the period of non-fishing); situation with COVID 19;
- Marine waste collection;
- Local development strategies.

In the new programming period, investments to the vessel for which there are less than 60 days at sea for the previous year are not allowed to be made. It should also be noted that there are many problems that cannot be solved financially.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: asks the question - the presentation showed that the new program provides support for fishermen fishing for turbot during the ban on turbot fishing and if possible to be given a little more details about this measure.

Mr. Eduard Diaconeasa: this measure is included in Article 21 of the Regulation of the Fisheries Agency (NAFA) and was made on the proposal of the EC. Prohibition periods may be financed subject to the provisions of the Regulation.

Mrs. Pinelipi Belecku: The EC is working closely with the two Member States on new operational programs to meet the specific needs arising from the Common Fisheries Policy.

Mr. Madar Ciprian: Romania has special legislation to ensure and improve working conditions in sea fishing - Law 2026/2021. Labor inspectors address two main aspects - the legal side of labor relations, as well as physical safety, ie what are the working conditions. The first thing that is checked by the control authorities is how the workers are hired by the fishing vessel, keeping an eye on the undeclared employment relationship. The maximum duration of work for a 7-day week is 72 working hours, but not consecutive. The law regulates and introduces norms for work and life at the workplace - because the workers' rest is also carried out on the ships. This law has many additional clarifications, with more emphasis on workplace safety. Another novelty is the time interval, which is considered night work - it is between 9 pm and 6 am, unlike the labor code, which defines night work from 10 pm to 6 am. There are employers who hire their workers both on board the ship and on land, that is why this distinction is made in the hours. Much of the responsibility for the staff lies with the owner and the captain of the ship, and it starts from the signing of the contract with the fisherman. In conclusion, it can be said that many more qualification and training courses need to be implemented for both: for the workers and for the employers.

Mr. Daniel Buhai: asks a question to Mr. Madar Ciprian - for large ships, can it be said that someone works illegally if his work is more than 8 hours a day? Because some of the workers there work on the principle of replacement after certain hours.

Mr. Madar Ciprian: of course, the employment contract stipulates 8 hours per day, but there are exceptions set out in the law - for example, in special cases you can work 14 hours from 24 hours. For example, if the master determines a longer period of working hours, he must respectively determine the corresponding rest hours, and in the employment contract

it can be written that the working hours are unevenly distributed. The law also stipulates that the fisherman is entitled to 10 hours of rest every 24 hours.

Mr. Eduard Diaconeasa: additional training courses for fishermen may be included, but in strategies for the development of local fishing communities. Where there are local initiative fishing groups /LIFG/, they can use these funds to further train fishermen.

Next: closing the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting were kept by: Mrs. Elena Peneva

Chairman of BISAC: Mr. Daniel Buhai