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European Small-Scale Fishers Deliver United Call to EU Commissioner Costas Kadis: “Time is up - Make Fishing Fair Now”

Over 40 small-scale fishers from 16 countries join forces in Brussels to ask for a Plan for Small-Scale Fisheries in Europe by 2026

Brussels, 17 November 2025 - The Make Fishing Fair Forum brought together small-scale fishers from across Europe, marking a historic gathering and a striking demonstration of unity among Europe’s small-scale fishing communities.

Representatives from the Baltic, North, Atlantic, Mediterranean and Black Seas presented a collective Roadmap to achieve fair fisheries to the EU Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans Costas Kadis, Members of the European Parliament, and key stakeholders. Their message is clear: Europe’s future fisheries must place small-scale, low-impact fishers at the centre of decision-making — recognising them as key actors of change capable of leading the transition toward fair, sustainable, and resilient seas. This requires urgent and concrete measures by the European Institutions and Member States, grounded in a Plan for Small-Scale Fisheries in Europe by 2026 that recognises the diversity, specific needs and shared responsibilities of both small- and large-scale fisheries.

A Turning Point for European Fisheries

The forum, that brought together fishers, policymakers, scientists, and NGOs at a pivotal time for EU fisheries, takes place against a critical policy backdrop, a week before the Small-Scale Fisheries Implementation Dialogue organised by the EU Commission, and right after the release of the Vademecum on Friday 14th, an acknowledgment from the Commission that time has come to tackle the unfair allocation of fishing opportunities. Together, these developments mark decisive moments that will shape the future of European fisheries management.

“Small-scale fishers are the beating heart of Europe’s coastal communities,” said Gwen Pennarun, President of the Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE). “We are not asking for special treatment — we are asking for fairness. If the EU is serious about protecting our

seas and the people who depend on them, it must give small-scale, low-impact fishers the space and management tools to lead the way.”

For over two decades, small-scale, low-impact fisheries have been recognised internationally and across Europe for their essential contributions to food security, coastal livelihoods, and ocean stewardship. Yet, despite these milestones and recent commitments under the Ocean Pact, policy and financial support remain poorly aligned with their needs, preventing the sector from achieving viable livelihoods and fulfilling its potential to Europe’s ailing seas and food security

Luke Ming Flanagan, Member of the European Parliament from The Left group, added: *“If we lose small-scale fishers, we lose not only jobs but a way of life. Europe’s fisheries policy must finally reward those who protect our seas, not those who exploit them.”*

“When listening to small-scale, low impact fisheries, and when looking at the health of our marine waters - there is no doubt: We need urgent action now. The tools are out there - from the Common Fisheries Policy to other environmental legislation - let’s not waste any time any longer and make full use of them.” added Bellinda Bartolucci, Senior Legal Expert at ClientEarth.

[A Roadmap for Fair and Sustainable Fisheries](#)

Participants presented their asks in the form of a Make Fishing Fair Roadmap calling on European institutions to adopt by 2026 a Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in Europe, guided by the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Small-Scale Fisheries and on a differentiated approach to SSF and larger-scale fisheries (LSF).

Signed by 38 small-scale fisher organisations, the roadmap sets out key priorities for a fair and sustainable fisheries sector, including:

- Restore fish stocks using better science and traditional knowledge to rebuild ecosystem health
- Protect SSF from competing impactful blue economy sectors by securing preferential access within the territorial waters, extending out to the 6-mile and 12-nautical mile limit where appropriate
- Apply adaptive co-management systems across all coastal areas
- Ensure fair allocation of fishing opportunities based on social, economic and environmental criteria
- Foster generational renewal by removing barriers and providing incentives, offering training, mentorship and decent livelihoods for young fishers
- Build resilient communities able to adapt to climate change
- Guarantee fair access to sectoral support and markets
- Achieve Gender Equity in Fisheries

Without adequate policy support and effective implementation, small-scale fisheries — and the economic, social, cultural, and environmental value they bring — will continue to erode, with lasting consequences for Europe’s coasts and future generations.

About the Make Fishing Fair Campaign

The [Make Fishing Fair campaign](#), led by 33 small-scale fishers organisations and supported by 20 NGOs, advocates for fair access, fair treatment, and inclusive policies for small-scale fishers. Coordinated by the Low Impact Fishers of Europe and Blue Ventures, the campaign aims to address the imbalance between the low-impact, small-scale fishing sector and the high-impact, large-scale fishing sector through a just transition.

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