

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
ON ENHANCING COOPERATION ON FISHERIES AND OCEAN AFFAIRS
BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ICELAND**

The European Union and Iceland (hereinafter referred to as the Participants), value their close relationship and long-standing cooperation on fisheries and ocean affairs, established notably through the Agreement on Fisheries and the Marine Environment between the European Economic Community and Iceland of 2 July 1993 ⁽¹⁾.

The Participants recall the importance of their cooperation under the EEA Agreement, and in particular Iceland's history of association with the EU Framework Programs for Research and Innovation, culminating with Iceland becoming formally associated to Horizon Europe in September 2021.

The Participants note that on 25 June 2024 the Council of the EU assessed the state of EU relations with Iceland and appreciated the close cooperation between Iceland and the EU on a number of policies, including research, innovation, and environment ⁽²⁾.

The Participants recognize that it is in their mutual interest to establish a cooperative framework to promote a coordinated approach to fisheries and ocean affairs to facilitate a level playing field, mindful that responsible fisheries management is vital to ensure sustainable fishing and therefore lead to positive economic, social and environmental benefits.

Conscious that pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change negatively affect our marine environment and that the sustainable management of oceans activities and aquaculture requires a healthy, resilient and productive ocean and waters, the Participants intend to cooperate to meet these objectives and to ensure that our common work is based on the best available scientific advice.

Our common approach is rooted in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks; as well as the principles established by the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries adopted at the FAO Conference in 1995 and the guidance developed by the FAO to support its implementation.

This cooperation should be without prejudice to all other agreements or arrangements between the European Union and Iceland and should take place taking into due account in particular the 2021 Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic and Iceland's Policy on matters concerning the Arctic Region ⁽³⁾; the European Commission Communication on the EU approach to the Sustainable Blue Economy ⁽⁴⁾, as well as the Joint Communication

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 161, 2.7.1993.

⁽²⁾ Council conclusions on a homogeneous extended single market and EU relations with Non-EU Western European countries and with the Faroe Islands - Consilium (europa.eu).

⁽³⁾ Arctic Policy_WEB.pdf (government.is)

⁽⁴⁾ COM/2021/240 final

to the European Parliament and the Council on the update of the EU Maritime Security Strategy and its Action Plan ⁽⁵⁾.

1. PURPOSE

With a view to the above considerations, this Memorandum of Understanding intends to provide a framework ensuring a strengthened and diversified liaison and cooperation between the Participants in areas of common interest in the fisheries and ocean affairs. The Participants intend to work together to discuss, share information and cooperate on the following areas.

(1) Cooperation on sustainable fisheries

In view of their similar vision regarding the protection of the marine environment and ensuring sustainable fisheries in the North Atlantic and a level playing field, the Participants intend to closely cooperate on the fisheries management of stocks of common interest, including on fisheries control with a view to achieve high and comparable standards. This also includes cooperation at the coastal States level and in the relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (NEAFC, NAFO, and ICCAT), by facilitating the coordination of positions ahead of meetings and considering, where relevant, tabling joint proposals on fisheries management measures.

(2) Research and scientific cooperation

In the area of fisheries and marine ecosystem science, the Participants agree on the importance of research and scientific cooperation as the basis for effective management. In particular the Participants intend to continue and strengthen their productive cooperation in and through the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) on shared stocks and scientific topics of common interest, including on minimising the adverse effects of human activities related pressures on the marine environment. They also intend to explore opportunities for increased collaboration in the context of the Horizon Europe programme, to which Iceland is associated, in particular in the fields of marine knowledge, marine data management (e.g. marine data sharing, common standards), digital applications (e.g. Digital Twins of the Ocean) and ocean literacy, as well as in the context of the Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters”.

(3) Cooperation in international fora

The Participants agree on the importance of close cooperation in international fora on issues of mutual interest regarding fisheries and ocean affairs.

The Participants intend to closely cooperate in support of fisheries cooperation within the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). This includes, *inter alia*, issues such as sustainable fisheries management, port state measures and sustainable aquaculture.

The Participants intend to closely cooperate in promoting discussions on the food from the ocean and waters in different fora through the Aquatic Blue Food Coalition and improve the involvement of developing countries in the blue food area.

⁽⁵⁾ JOIN/2023/8 final

The Participants also note the essential work done under the auspices of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic ('the OSPAR Convention').

(4) Cooperation on Sustainable Blue Economy

In view of their similar vision regarding sustainable and resilient blue economy, the Participants intend to explore the exchange of good practices, knowledge, and cooperation in related areas, such as energy transition, smart specialisation, blue bioeconomy, and science and innovation in the relevant Sea Basins.

(5) Cooperation on Arctic matters

The Participants agree on the high importance of the Arctic, Iceland as an Arctic state, and the European Union with an active involvement in Arctic Affairs in light of its strategic and day to day interests. The Participants intend to build on their active collaboration in the region.

The Participants note in this regard the essential work carried out by the Arctic Council. Cooperation and collaboration between the Participants may also contribute to activities of the Arctic Council and its Working Groups.

The Participants also intend to cooperate on increasing the knowledge of Central Arctic Ocean, its potential for sustainable fisheries, as well as environmental protection, in line with the precautionary approach, and to foster the effective implementation of the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement.

(6) Cooperation on marine biodiversity

The Participants intend to cooperate on aspects pertaining to conservation and protection of marine biodiversity including for instance marine science and assessment of populations and to support relevant international conventions. The Participants recognize that sustainable use of marine resources are conducted in accordance with best available scientific advice and intend to cooperate on finding ways to discourage measures that work against sustainable use. The Participants take account of the work undertaken under relevant international agreements and commitments on conservation, management, welfare, and sustainable use of cetaceans as well as on research on these matters.

In particular, the Participants intend to cooperate on implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and relevant conventions, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the OSPAR Convention, as well as the Agreement on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ).

(7) Cooperation in the field of maritime monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS)

The Participants recognize the importance of maritime monitoring, control and surveillance and intend to explore ways to enhance cooperation on MCS. The Participants aim to work cooperatively within regional fisheries management organizations to promote the goals and objectives set forth therein on MCS, inter alia to improve data collection and catch records. Coastguard cooperation and exchange of best practices could also be considered.

(8) Cooperation in the field of aquaculture

The Participants intend to explore ways to promote the development of sustainable aquaculture in line with the principles and aquaculture-related provisions of the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the FAO, with special attention to the guidance provided by the FAO Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture. As such, this cooperation would support the visibility, recognition, and enhancement of the important role of aquaculture in contributing to sustainable food systems.

(9) Cooperation on energy transition of the fisheries and aquaculture sector

The participants intend to cooperate in the field of the energy transition of the fisheries and aquaculture sector in particular by exchanging in domains such as research, innovation, skills, market technologies and good practices for achieving in the short-mid-term an energy-efficient sector and in the mid- to long term, its decarbonisation. Such exchanges could take place under the auspices of the Energy Transition Partnership for EU fisheries and aquaculture.

(10) Stakeholders' engagement

The Participants support economic, sustainable, and responsible long-term marine and fisheries policies that promote profitable and sustainable fishing industries. To support this objective the Participants intend to exchange fisheries information and other relevant related information, including trade statistics, as well as promote interaction between the Participants' respective industries and organisations in the area of capture fisheries, aquaculture, and processing.

2. HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE

The Participants intend to hold their high-level dialogue through meetings where representatives of Iceland, on the one hand, and representatives of the European Union on the other hand, participate as appropriate. The meetings should be co-chaired by the Participants and organised on a rotation basis.

These meetings should assess, inter alia, the overall progress of the EU and Iceland cooperation and discuss matters covered under this MoU.

Meetings between the Participants should take place at least once a year and should be:

- Held in person, virtually or in hybrid format. The Participants should decide on the time, place, and format of these meetings. Agendas should be circulated at least 10 working days before the meeting;
- Minutes of meetings, summarizing the agenda items should be prepared and could be published on the websites of the Participants, as appropriate.

3. POINTS OF CONTACT

A point of contact should be set up for each Participant and should be communicated to the other Participant, ensuring that the following are dealt with appropriately and on time:

- arranging annual meetings of high-level dialogue, established under this MoU; and
- questions on technical matters.

4. NATURE OF THE MOU

This Memorandum of Understanding expresses a political intention of the Participants and is not intended to create legal rights or obligations under international or domestic law and does not have any financial implications on either side. The previous represents the understandings reached by the Participants on the matters referred to in this Memorandum of Understanding.

Signed in Brussels on 15 July 2025,

For the European Union:

For Iceland:

Costas Kadis
Commissioner for fisheries and Oceans

Hanna Katrín Friðriksson
Minister of Industries