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A Wide Net? New report exposes who really sits on the EU's Fisheries Advisory Councils

Pia Engelbrecht-Bogdanov · Tuesday, November 3rd, 2026

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Transparency International EU has today published new research on a lesser-known channel of policy influence: Advisory Councils (ACs) on EU fisheries policy. These eleven councils provide the Commission with advice, but their membership raises severe concerns on fair stakeholder access. Indeed, we find:

- Fisheries ACs are disproportionately skewed towards large industry interests. These voices dominate: **70% of all AC seats are allocated to large industry players**. One Advisory Committee, the North Western Waters AC, allocates 83 % of seats to industry players.

- **Small-scale fisheries**, which make up 77% of the EU fishing fleet, **only take up 8% of all seats** and are not represented at all on two ACs (Aquaculture and Long Distance AC).

- Despite an obligation for these Councils to maintain a 60-40 split between "industry" and "other interest groups", NGOs are consistently underrepresented. **NGOs represent only 12% of all AC seats.**

- **In general, 78% of all AC seats are occupied by industry representatives, substantially exceeding the 60% quota stipulated by the rules, while other interest groups account for only 22% of seats**, falling short of the required 40%.

Shari Hinds, Senior Policy Officer at Transparency International EU, said

> “When it comes to advising the EU on fisheries policy, industry is already given a larger share of seats by the rules. Yet our findings show that in practice small-scale fishers and civil society organisations are even more under-represented. Bodies that have a say in how we manage vital resources cannot say they reflect all affected interests when their memberships are this unbalanced. Fairer fishing laws start with fair representation.”

It is vital the EU ensures all voices are heard – not just those who have the most seats at the table. Read the whole report here.

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