



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels
MARE.D.3/MM

Subject: Long-Distance Advisory Council (LDAC) advice on protocols for the prevention and eradication of harassment in fishing vessels

Dear Mr López,

Thank you for your advice of 13 March 2026 on protocols for the prevention and eradication of harassment in fishing vessels. We appreciate the time and effort taken by the Long-Distance Advisory Council to draft an example of a model on board anti-harassment protocol.

The Commission fully supports the need to prevent and eradicate harassment in all working environments, including fishing vessels. To this end, a number of provisions under EU employment law already exist:

Directive 89/391/EEC on occupational safety and health has general wording about “avoiding risks” linked to safety and health protection of workers and “combating the risks at source” and covers working conditions (Article 6). Since the Directive's provisions are general, the European Commission issued an [interpretative document](#) making this explicit: the assessment of all risks, including psychosocial risks, must also be performed by employers, with Directive 89/391/EEC being the reference legal instrument for mental health in the workplace whenever risk assessment is being carried out.

Directive 2000/78/EC prohibits direct and indirect discrimination, including harassment and instructions to discriminate, based on religion or belief, age, disability and sexual orientation in employment and occupation. It applies to all individuals working in the public or private sectors, which would cover crew on an EU-flagged fishing vessel just as it covers any other workplace. Harassment that creates a hostile environment is deemed to be discrimination under this directive.

Directive 2006/54/EC gives legal definitions for "harassment" and "sexual harassment" and covers equal treatment of men and women in employment, occupation, and working conditions.

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In addition, the Commission has launched an initiative ⁽¹⁾ to assess the best way to bring into EU law existing international **standards for the training and certification of fishers** (STCW-F) which include mandatory training elements on social awareness.

The Commission is also actively encouraging Member States to ratify relevant ILO Conventions, namely:

Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment: in 2020, the Commission presented a proposal for a Council decision inviting Member States to ratify the parts of the convention concerning the improvement of the working environment to protect workers' health and safety and safeguard equality between men and women. This proposal was adopted in March 2024.

Convention 188 on Work in Fishing (C188): this Convention was partially implemented in EU law through Directive (EU) 2017/159. In parallel, the Commission is still actively encouraging Member States to ratify the full Convention. In March 2026, the Commission co-organised, alongside the ILO, a two-day capacity-building workshop for governments and social partners from eight targeted countries to advance ratification and implementation of C188.

Given the EU's shared competence in this area, action is taken primarily through directives, which set the common framework while leaving Member States to transpose and implement them at national level.

That said, the Commission recognises the practical difficulties of enforcing these general frameworks at sea. Most complaint mechanisms were designed with land-based workplaces in mind and can struggle to reflect the remoteness and limited accessibility that characterise life aboard fishing vessels. We will continue to work with the social partners and fisheries advisory councils to reflect on the best way forward.

I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

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⁽¹⁾ [EU fishers – training and certification standards](#)