EAFE online workshop series
#01 - On the extinction of *Homo piscatorius Europeus*

Tuesday, June 23, 2026 – 15.00 – 17.00

Presenter: Pavel Salz

Pavel Salz delivered a powerful keynote address on the economic health of European fishing fleets last year at the EAFE conference in Rome. His findings were stark: 80% of the EU fishing fleet is economically unsustainable in the medium to long-term. Without targeted policy interventions, the fleet could shrink to just 25% of its current size in the next 20-30 years.

Agree? Disagree? Intrigued?

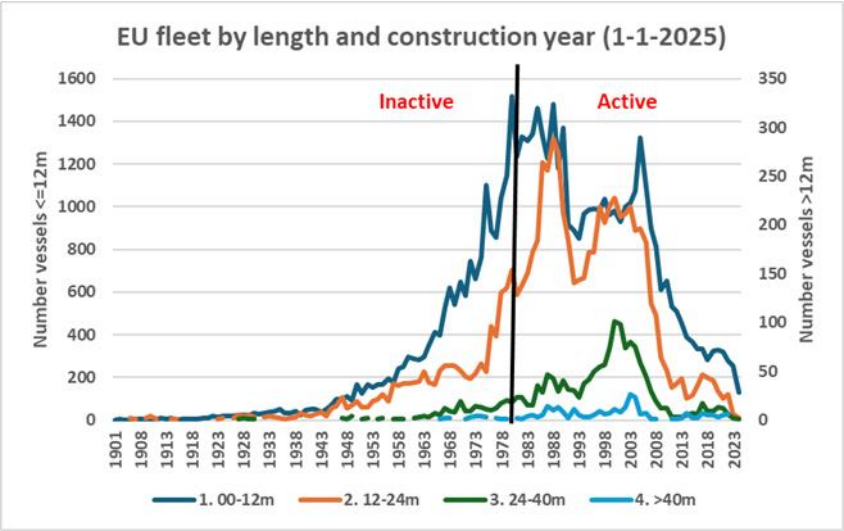
Join us in our first EAFE online workshop to discuss this topic further.

Two options to prepare the workshop:

If you have some time, **the long read**: the research paper Pavel wrote after the keynote: Pavel Salz (2025). Economic situation and outlook of the EU fishing fleets. Link to the research paper.

If you have little time before the workshop, **the short read:** The rest of this document highlights the main messages of Pavel's keynote speech at the EAFE conference, complemented with a few additional findings on non-EU countries.

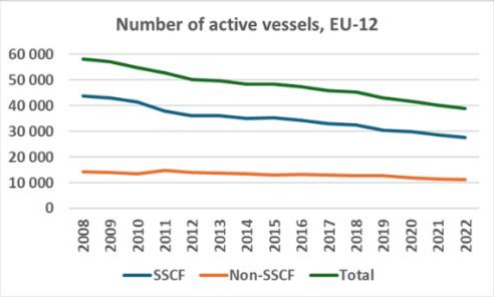
1. Since 2004, the **number of new fishing vessels** constructed in the EU has steadily declined. The current level of renovation will, at best, maintain a fishing fleet of about 25% of its present size in the long run.

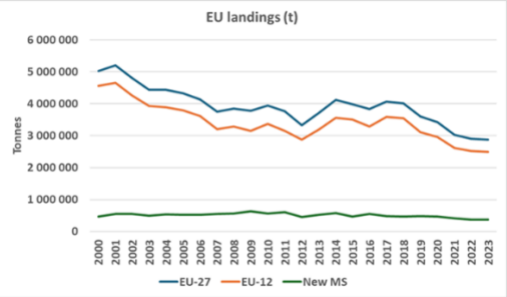


2. **Economic performance has been weak** for most vessels and fisheries. Crews are insufficiently remunerated, profitability is low, and depreciation costs fall short of allowing for regular renovation.

	Segments with GVA[1] < 0	Segments with GVA > 0
Number of segments	249	89
FTEs	55 642	15 518
Number of vessels	43 962	6 197
Average crew	1.3	2.5
GVA shortage / surplus (Million EUR)	-1 881	508
Income from fishing (Million EUR)	3 570	2 592
Needed increase of income	53%	

3. Both the size of the fleet and the landings show **long-term structural decline**.





4. **The profession** is becoming increasingly unattractive, leading to an older average age among crews and owners, greater reliance on foreign crews, and a declining number of students entering fisheries schools. Lack of crews has been a problem for decades.
5. EU **fish processing and trade** rely increasingly on imports. Consequently, the role and power of the EU catching sector in the supply chain is reduced.
6. **Non-EU countries** – Iceland, Norway, the UK and the USA – seem to face similar problems with small- and medium-scale vessels.
7. Only **large companies** operating large vessels (over 50-60m) seem economically sustainable and able to invest in renovation, both in the EU and outside.
8. **Technological innovation**, if it occurs at all, is insufficient to increase productivity to the required level. Most fishing companies are too small to invest in uncertain innovations. The catching sector is too 'atomised' to allow for an R&D programme, even if the ideas exist, and they often do not.
9. **Political priorities** focused on small-scale fisheries, future restrictions on bottom fishing, and various environmental protection measures have also adversely affected the future of the fishing fleets.
10. The changing **geopolitical situation** reduces the political attention which can be given to fisheries and the financial support they may receive. Illustration is the reduction in earmarked funding for fisheries under the next MFF (2028-2034).
11. **'Scientific' recognition of these problems does not offer anything useful for their solution!**

[1] GVA benchmark was calculated with assumptions on needed labour and capital remuneration and adequate depreciation costs. The method is described in the research paper.