

## FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN AQUACULTURE PRODUCERS

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## Press Release

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### FEAP strengthens NextGen initiative with second “Deep Dive” training for young aquaculture professionals

The Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) successfully organised the second edition of its **NextGen “Deep Dive into EU Institutions” training** on 17–18 March 2026 in Brussels, bringing together a selected group of young aquaculture professionals from across Europe.

Following the successful launch of the initiative in 2025, the FEAP NextGen programme continues to support generational renewal in the sector by strengthening young professionals’ understanding of European policymaking and encouraging their active engagement in shaping the future of aquaculture in Europe.

The FEAP NextGen Class of 2026 included participants from Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Türkiye, reflecting the diversity of the European aquaculture sector and its wide range of production systems.

#### **Two days of brainstorming and *behind-the-scene* exploration of EU policy making.**

Over two days, participants were guided through the functioning of European institutions and the evolving policy framework governing aquaculture. The programme combined presentations, interactive networking sessions and study visits, offering a unique opportunity to connect theoretical knowledge with practical insights.

The training opened with an introduction to FEAP and the European aquaculture policy landscape by **Javier Ojeda, Secretary General of FEAP**, setting the scene for discussions on key sector priorities, including sustainability, competitiveness, climate resilience and the role of aquaculture in ensuring Europe’s food security.

Contributions were delivered by high-level experts including **Nikos Zampoukas (DG RTD)** and **Julien Peris (CINEA)**, highlighting EU support mechanisms and funding opportunities for aquaculture, **Alexander Döring (FEFAC)**, **Mieke Eggermont (EATiP)**, **Cynthia Benites (Aquaculture Advisory Council)**, **Pedro Reis Santos (Market Advisory Council)** and **Katarina Sipic (Seafood Europe)**, providing participants with a fully comprehensive overview of the policy and stakeholder landscape.

A central element of the training was the visit to the European Commission (DG MARE), where participants met with representatives of the aquaculture unit, including **Lorella De La Cruz Iglesias** and **Julian Garcia Baena** as well as **Antonio Basanta from the cabinet of European commissioner Kostas Kadis**. This unique opportunity allowed participants to engage in an open exchange on current policy priorities, implementation challenges and future developments for the sector.

These discussions also touched upon ongoing reflections at EU level, including the development of the **Vision for Fisheries and Aquaculture 2040**, underlining the importance of ensuring that the perspectives of aquaculture professionals are well reflected in future policy frameworks.

### **Creating a network of better informed, curious and connected Young European Aquaculture professionals.**

Interactive group sessions allowed participants to reflect on the main challenges facing the sector, develop their vision for the future of European aquaculture, and explore how young professionals can contribute more actively to policy discussions and sector representation.

*"Without this training, I would have probably not heard of nor explored all the online resources made available by organisations such as the European Aquaculture Assistance Mechanism" Nagyné Biró Janka, Hungary*

The NextGen initiative is part of FEAP's broader efforts to strengthen the sector's capacity, improve understanding of EU processes, and ensure that the voices of aquaculture professionals are effectively reflected in policymaking. Beyond institutional insights, the training placed strong emphasis on peer learning and networking. Participants exchanged experiences from different national contexts, production systems and market conditions, building connections that will support future collaboration across Europe.

*"European affairs seem far away from my daily routine in southern Spain, this Deep Dive has brought Europe closer to the fish farm" Sergi León Bernabeu, Spain*

*"It takes time to make change happen, but with FEAP NextGen I found a community to help me learn, grow and make change happen at home" Aprajita Singh, Sweden*

The 2026 edition of the programme was made possible with the continued support of **AquaSorgal – Soja de Portugal**, whose contribution plays a key role in enabling this initiative and supporting the next generation of aquaculture professionals.

*"At AquaSorgal – Soja de Portugal, we are proud to support the NextGen programme by FEAP, an initiative that reflects our commitment to innovation, sustainability, and talent development in the aquaculture sector. We believe that empowering the next generation of professionals is essential to drive a more competitive, resilient, and globally aligned European aquaculture. Continuing to support this programme is, for us, a concrete way of investing in the future of the industry, António Isidoro, CEO of SOJA DE PORTUGAL Group."*

FEAP will continue to develop and expand the NextGen initiative in the coming years, with the objective of strengthening engagement between young professionals and European policy processes, and contributing to a more resilient, innovative and competitive aquaculture sector in Europe.

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#### **About the Federation of European Aquaculture Producers**

The Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) represents the aquaculture sector in Europe and promotes the sustainable development of aquatic food production, contributing to food security, economic growth and environmental responsibility.

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#### **About AquaSorgal / Soja de Portugal**

AquaSorgal, part of the Soja de Portugal Group, is a provider of aquaculture feed solutions designed to support sustainable and efficient fish production. Drawing on over 80 years

of experience in the agri-food sector, the Group integrates innovation, circularity and resource efficiency into its operations. AquaSorgal's approach combines technical expertise with tailored nutritional solutions, contributing to improved performance, resilience and sustainability of aquaculture systems in Europe and beyond.

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### *The 2026 FEAP NextGen trainees*

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