



**Fifteenth Annual Report of
the
Baltic Sea Advisory Council
2020-2021
May 2021**



Report from the BSAC Executive Committee chair to the General Assembly

Annual Report for 2020-2021 [1.4.20 – 31.3.21]

Dear members, dear observers,

You find attached the draft Annual Report for the year 2020-2021. It has been drafted by the Secretariat, and I present to you for approval.

This has been a year we will never forget. Already near the end of the preceding year, the COVID pandemic hit us and we had to cancel meetings. We have had to carry out the entire year 2020-2021 under the shadow of the pandemic and the severe restrictions it has imposed on us. Despite that, we have made the best of things. Our activities have continued. And they are reported in full here.

Before continuing, I also want to recall the death 4th October 2020 of Reine J. Johansson, former ExCom Chair of the BSAC. It was a very sad event that occurred during this BSAC year. Reine dedicated much of his life to fishermen and to fisheries, and he strived during his Chairmanship to reach consensus within the BSAC. This report also acknowledges his important contribution to the BSAC.

As you read, you will note that we have achieved a great deal. Thanks to IT and web links, all of our meetings have been web-based. It has also made possible increased attendance. We have averaged 38 participants at each of the 11 meetings that we have held this year (Executive Committees, Working Groups, Workshop on selectivity and the four Sessions on the CFP). I want to give special thanks to the conferencing company BSCAV and the interpreters for setting up and giving us efficient service. The Secretariat arranged our in-house Management Team meetings.

It has been a steep learning curve. It is not the best solution for all meetings, but we can make selective use of virtual meetings in the coming year.

In our coverage of the work programme, we have been able to address our scheduled work programme, and we have raised new issues. We have continued with our short-term and long-term approach.

Short-term

The short-term work has addressed among other things: the annual advice on the Baltic fisheries, a response to the Commission's questionnaire on the functioning of the Technical Measures Regulation, follow-up questions to the EU's Control Regulation, a BSAC contribution to the update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, a reply to a BALTFISH request for input to its Joint Recommendation on mitigation measures for harbour porpoise, and participation in collaboration with other Advisory Councils on the issue of single use plastics. There have been some issues where the BSAC has not been able to make progress, for example: a recovery plan for western Baltic herring, and development of a multiannual management plan for salmon. All the outputs, recommendations and letters are listed in the report.

Stickleback has been one new issue that the BSAC has raised. The BSAC produced a set of guidelines for a trial fishery for stickleback in the Baltic Sea. The Baltic Member States have taken note, and trials are being conducted in several of them. I want to thank the experts who came to make presentations to the Pelagic Working Group which dealt with this issue.

Selectivity in the cod fisheries came under focus in a joint BALTFISH-DTU Aqua-BSAC Workshop on technical solutions to reduce unwanted catches of cod in the Baltic Sea fisheries. The workshop was a good cooperation between the BSAC, Danish National Institute of Aquatic Resources (DTU Aqua) and BALTFISH. I am very thankful to the scientists from Denmark, Germany and Sweden for making presentations and sharing their state-of-the art knowledge. The information given at the workshop proved that a lot of research and trials are being carried out. There is an urgent need to move forward on this issue.

The internal functioning of the BSAC has been under the microscope with an external evaluation carried out by the consultancy Oxford Research. The report was well received by members and it was agreed to follow up on the recommendations made by the consultancy. This work also dovetails with the meetings held with DG Mare on the functioning of the Advisory Councils. I have been able to present some examples of best practices being applied in the BSAC.

Long-term

Our work on reviewing the Common Fisheries Policy had to be shelved until the beginning of 2021. The original intention had been to hold smaller workshop-style meetings to facilitate discussion. Online meetings took over. We can be pleased with the excellent attendance, the reports from the meetings, and the agreement to start working on a white paper to be presented at our planned General Assembly in September 2021.

Information flow

The Secretariat has continued to keep members informed with 12 newsletters during the year. The BSAC Executive Committee has received 28 letters with notifications and consultations.

The BSAC Management Team

There have been nine online meetings, and reports have been sent to the Executive Committee.

External meetings to back up the work of the BSAC and its WGs

These are listed in the report. They highlight how much there is of relevance to the BSAC, how important it is for us to take part, and bring the information back to the BSAC. Virtual meetings have made it possible to take part in many and varied meetings.

Cooperation

I want to express thanks for the continued cooperation with the Commission, Member States, EFCA, HELCOM, the experts in ICES and other institutes, with the PECH Committee and all observers who follow our work. We have very much appreciated your attendance at our meetings, your presentations, updates and the meaningful exchanges in the work and discussions of the BSAC.

Looking forward

I want to thank all the Executive Committee members, and the Honorary chair for agreeing to extend their terms of office to September this year. We plan in September a meeting of the General Assembly and the Executive Committee, so we can hold elections. I have also confirmed my extension as ExCom chair until then.

I hope you will all continue to stay safe. I hope to see you all in the autumn in Copenhagen.

Kind regards,



Esben Sverdrup-Jensen
Chair BSAC Executive Committee

Introduction

The Baltic Sea Advisory Council has now been in operation since 2006. Its main function is to advise the European Commission and Member States on matters relating to the management of the fisheries in the Baltic Sea. Its work and activities are funded by the EU Commission, the Baltic Sea Member States and by its members.

This annual report covers the activities and meetings of the Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BSAC) from 1st April 2020- 31st March 2021.

There have been 40 members of the BSAC during 2020-2021.¹ They have included fisheries associations, producer organisations, processors, market and trade organisations, environmental NGOs, and recreational and sports fishermen. Amongst this membership, all Baltic Member States are represented, and there is no quota system in force.

The structure of the BSAC consists of a General Assembly, an Executive Committee, and three Working Groups: for demersal fisheries, pelagic fisheries and for ecosystem-based management (EBM). The demersal and pelagic working groups have been holding joint working groups when dealing with issues of common interest. The BSAC is assisted by a Secretariat based in Copenhagen and by a Management Team which meets regularly to deal with administrative, management and operational matters. There are terms of reference and rules of procedure for the BSAC and its Working Groups and Management Team.²

Main results/outputs from the BSAC during the year 2020 – 2021

COVID-19 has had a major impact on international organisations which depend greatly on travelling to own meetings and activities. This became immediately apparent towards the end of the BSAC year ending 31st March 2020. Despite the restrictions and uncertainties created by COVID-19, the BSAC remained very active during the year 2020-2021. Modern technology came to the rescue. As the year went on, the BSAC became routinised in using web-based platforms, for its own meetings and to take part in many other meetings arranged from Brussels, across the Baltic, as well as further afield.

The BSAC organised all its meetings using the Zoom platform. Participation at the meetings was extremely high, as witnessed by the participants lists on the website.

In collaboration with a professional team of interpreters and technicians based in Poland, the BSAC has been able to maximise and add value to the meetings by providing interpreting on request. Several BSAC members have expressed their disappointment at not being able to meet in physical meetings. However, virtual meetings gradually became a necessary but fruitful alternative.

¹ The list members of the BSAC for 2020 - 2021 is at the end of the Annual Report.

² <http://www.bsac.dk/BSAC/About-the-BSAC>

We are looking forward to meeting in person in the autumn 2021! The challenge will be to arrange well-functioning meetings with members present and members joining through IT connections, and with interpreting.

The BSAC work programme 2020-2021 contained a number of focus areas. These are described here, with a few words on the outputs and achievements, where relevant.

The BSAC carried on the approach that it adopted in the previous year of following two-tracks: the long-term approach was to continue to look at and develop a position on the future of the Common Fisheries Policy, whilst the short-term approach focused on specific and relevant issues for Baltic fisheries management.

The long-term approach: future Common Fisheries Policy

Discussion on the future CFP: According to Article 49 of the Basic Regulation, the Commission must report on the functioning of the CFP on 31st December 2022. The BSAC has committed to produce a communication / white paper to the Commission on the implementation and revision of the CFP with a Baltic perspective.

A discussion on the future Common Fisheries Policy began at a BSAC meeting on 3rd September 2019, with a second meeting planned for 17th March 2020. The moderator of the meeting produced a frame document³ based on the discussions held at a CFP Theme meeting on 3rd September 2019. It also included input provided by BSAC members to a focused questionnaire.

The frame document attempted to balance views from the fisheries interests and other interest groups.

Specific topics had already emerged. Further work was unfortunately postponed due to COVID.

Nevertheless, the Secretariat picked up where things had been left off. It worked on the topics and provided drafts for discussion at three dedicated virtual Sessions which were held in January and February 2021. It was felt that members were now comfortable with using the virtual meeting platform to have discussions in smaller, focused groups. These were:

Session 1: the living conditions for fish and address ecosystem-based management

Session 2: scientific advice, landing obligation, MSY, overall management principles

Session 3: decision making, regionalisation, recreational fisheries and subsidies.

The Secretariat produced three reports from the Sessions⁴. A white paper will be drafted by a dedicated drafting group during the spring 2021 and the ambition is to submit this to the General Assembly meeting in 2021.

³ That so-called frame document and all other documentation can be found on the website here:

<http://www.bsac.dk/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/Further-work-on-developing-input-to-the-CFP>

⁴ The three reports are here:

<http://www.bsac.dk/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/Further-work-on-developing-input-to-the-CFP>

The short-term approach: this has covered several work programme areas

- **Cod**

In 2019-2020, the BSAC had made it a priority for the BSAC to address the challenges facing the Baltic cod stocks. It held a specific theme meeting on 29th January 2019.⁵ In 2020-2021 concerns regarding cod were highlighted in the BSAC recommendations for the fishery 2021⁶ and during the Workshop on technical solutions to reduce unwanted catches of cod in the Baltic Sea fisheries, co-hosted BALTFISH/ DTU Aqua/ BSAC.⁷

- **Western Baltic herring**

During the WP year 2019-2020, the BSAC recommended that ICES be asked to advise on a recovery plan for western Baltic herring. The BSAC proposed remedial measures and a solution to the consequences of new proposed reference points for this stock. A focus group was formed to analyse varying strategies that will lead to SSB recovery ($SSB > B_{lim}$). Not much headway has been made on the western Baltic herring. The issue was raised by the BSAC at the MIAC meeting (annual meeting of ICES with the Advisory Councils)⁸, with acknowledgement of the ICES work on rebuilding plans. The BSAC gave a detailed response in its recommendations for the fishery for 2021. After further discussions in the the Pelagic Working Group in December 2020, the ExCom decided that a discussion on how to contribute to an improved assessment, rebuilding and better management of western spring spawning herring should be continued in a Joint EBM/Pelagic Working Group, after receiving an updated scientific advice on the stock. The BSAC Secretariat has not had any dialogue with Member States or Norway on this stock, but the Commission has taken note of the issue and it has been in focus during the annual negotiations on fisheries amongst EU member States and third countries.

- **Ecosystem based management**

In September 2020 the EBM Working Group held a two-day meeting. It dealt with stickleback, the update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, Baltic seals and fisheries, mitigation measures concerning Baltic harbour porpoise populations and salmon management plan. This was a very intense and dense agenda for the meeting. Stickleback was developed by the Pelagic Working Group and culminated in the adoption by ExCom of BSAC recommendations.

HELCOM has continued its work on the update of its Baltic Sea Action Plan, with BSAC representatives following the work and participating where relevant. After the EBM meeting, the BSAC developed a reply to BALTFISH on mitigation measures for harbour porpoise in the Baltic. The Working Group agreed that a salmon management plan is needed in the Baltic. No further EBM meetings have been held during the year.

⁵ [http://www.bsac.dk/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-\(4\)](http://www.bsac.dk/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-(4))

⁶ [BSAC - BSAC recommendations for the Baltic fisheries 2021](#)

⁷ [BSAC - Workshop on Technical solutions to reduce unwanted catches of cod in the Baltic Sea fisheries](#)

⁸ Meeting reports available from Secretariat

- **Selectivity and the landing obligation.**

The BSAC continued a proactive approach with regard to selectivity and to enhancing improved co-operation between fishermen, scientists and net-makers.

Together with BALTFISH and DTU Aqua, the BSAC held a workshop on technical solutions to reduce unwanted catches of cod in the Baltic Sea fisheries. The meeting confirmed cooperation between the BSAC, administration and science. The meeting also confirmed the urgency to find technical solutions to reduce unwanted catches of cod.

The BSAC dealt with the work related to the Technical Measures Regulation 1241/2019.⁹ Article 31 of the Regulation states that the Commission must do an evaluation of the Regulation by 31st December 2020. The Commission had invited all Advisory Councils to reply to a questionnaire. The BSAC technical measures working group met on 18th January 2021 to deal with the Commission questionnaire on the Technical Measures Regulation. It provided a comprehensive reply to the questionnaire.

- **Multiannual multi-species management of the Baltic fish stocks, taking into account ecosystem interactions**

The BSAC provided advice and recommendations on the management of the Baltic fish stocks and these take into account multi-species considerations and interactions.

- **The Directives on single use plastics and port reception facilities**

Several Advisory Councils including the BSAC produced an advice on single use plastics.

- **Multiannual management plan for salmon**

The BSAC has longed for the development of such a plan. ICES has delivered its advice on the evaluation of a draft multiannual plan¹⁰. At its September meeting, the EBM Working Group agreed on the need for a plan. The ExCom at its meeting on 27th October 2020 decided to create a Focus Group to proactively deal with this important issue. Since then, there have been no developments. The BSAC still anticipates being consulted on a draft management plan, once this happens.

The issue of illegal fishing for salmon was raised at a Management Team meeting with EFCA on 20th January 2021, and again at the ExCom meeting on 29th January 2021, and representatives of EFCA provided information.

⁹ http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/BSAC-Resources/Documents-section/European-Parliament-and-Council/Techmeasures2019_1241ENG.pdf.aspx?lang=en-GB

¹⁰ https://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2020/Special_Requests/eu.2020.02.pdf

- **Eel**

The Commission published the results of its evaluation of the EU eel management plan in May 2020.¹¹ It concluded that the adoption of the Eel Regulation has been an important milestone in the long process towards the recovery of the European eel and expressed the need for further ambition to implement the Regulation. The BSAC has not dealt with this evaluation. The issue of illegal fishing for eel was raised at a Management Team meeting with EFCA on 20th January 2021, and again at the ExCom meeting on 29th January 2021, and representatives of EFCA provided information.

- **A new fisheries control regulation**

In February 2020 the BSAC sent its recommendations on a revised EU Control Regulation. In May 2020, the BSAC sent a follow-up letter to the European Commission on the proposed provisions in Articles 14 and 15 concerning the completion of the fishing logbook. The BSAC referred to the fact that in the recommendations from the BSAC, several members of the BSAC noted that the proposed measure to have an electronic logbook for all vessels is not fit for purpose. They recommended to delete Article 15.2 obliging the masters of vessels under 12 metres to report in electronic logbooks before entering into port. The BSAC has not received a reply to its request for advice on the practical application of the measures.

- **Producing recommendations on fishing opportunities for 2021**

The BSAC held a virtual Joint Working Group on 9th and 10th June 2020 to discuss the ICES advice for the Baltic for 2021. The BSAC recommendations for the fishery for 2021 were subsequently adopted and sent on 29th June 2020. The BSAC also developed a reply to the Commission's Communication on the fishing opportunities. This was sent to the Commission on 18th August 2020.

- **Other topics and subjects of relevance to the BSAC**

Administration

The BSAC has dealt with its internal administrative and budgetary matters during the year. Due to COVID, relevant documents and material were presented and adopted by means of written procedure. Deadlines were observed and members gave their full support to the relevant reports and documents. Because it has not been possible to arrange physical meetings, the BSAC still lacks a Vice-Chair. It had been decided to this when meetings are again possible.

¹¹ [file:///C:/Users/BSAC/Dropbox/My%20PC%20\(DESKTOP-IKF5VKO\)/Downloads/090166e5cc3248fb.pdf](file:///C:/Users/BSAC/Dropbox/My%20PC%20(DESKTOP-IKF5VKO)/Downloads/090166e5cc3248fb.pdf)

External evaluation of the BSAC

The BSAC work programme for 2020-2021 included an external performance review of the BSAC. The development of the terms of reference, and selection of a consultancy to do the work took place during the summer months. Despite COVID, the evaluation was carried out in the autumn months of 2020, full support given by the Secretariat to the Consultancy and interviews carried out successfully online. The Consultancy presented its report at the Executive Committee on 29th January 2021 and their report was adopted.¹² Further work and follow up is planned for the next BSAC work year.

To this should be added meetings of the Advisory Councils with DG Mare. The Commission has raised the issue of improving the functioning of the Advisory Councils. The BSAC has provided input and examples of best practices applied by the BSAC and referred to its external evaluation. The Commission will continue its focus on this with the Advisory Councils.

The BSAC has been assisted by its Management Team which has met nine times during the year (one of the meetings together with EFCA). This has definitely facilitated planning and evaluation of the BSAC meetings and work. The ExCom has been kept informed.

¹² <http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/BSAC/About-the-BSAC/Evaluation-of-the-BSAC-FINAL-15th-January-2021.pdf.aspx?lang=en-GB>

BSAC Recommendations/advice and letters sent 2020-2021¹³

Title	Sent	Reply	Comment
BSAC statement on the need for a responsible approach to fisheries and fisheries management in the Baltic BSAC - BSAC Statement on fisheries and fisheries management	21 st April 2020	7 th May 2020	On web
Joint letter from BSAC and PELAC on a rebuilding plan for western Baltic herring BSAC - Letter from BSAC and PELAC on rebuilding plan for western Baltic herring	21 st April 2020	14 th May 2020	On web
BSAC reply to BALTFISH on its consultation on a Joint Recommendation on the exemption of salmon from the landing obligation BSAC - BSAC reply to BALTFISH consultation on exemption of salmon from landing obligation	1 st May 2020	No reply	On web
BSAC feedback to the Commission's Farm to Fork Strategy BSAC - Commission's Farm to Fork Strategy	1 st May 2020	8 th October 2020	On web
BSAC follow up on recommendations on Control Regulation BSAC - BSAC follow up on recommendations on Control Regulation	14 th May 2020	No reply	On web
BSAC letter to DG Mare on the bycatch of eastern Baltic cod and its impact on other fisheries (about Regulation 2019/1838) BSAC - BSAC letter to DG Mare about Regulation 2019/1838	29 th May 2020	No reply	On web
Letter to EFCA on cooperation between the ACs and EFCA BSAC - Letter to EFCA on cooperation between the ACs and	29 th May 2020	No reply	On web

¹³ [BSAC - BSAC Statements and recommendations](#)

EFCA			
BSAC recommendations for the Baltic fisheries in 2021 BSAC - BSAC recommendations for the Baltic fisheries 2021	29 th June 2020	31 st August 2020	On web
Multi-AC advice on Single Use Plastics Directive and on Fishing for Litter BSAC - Multi-AC advice on Single Use Plastics Directive and on Fishing for Litter	15 th July 2020	15 th September 2020	On web
BSAC reply to the Commission Communication on fishing opportunities for 2021 BSAC - BSAC reply to Commission Communication on fishing opportunities 2021	18 th August 2020	No reply	On web
Letters to BALTFISH about closed areas (compilation of input from some BSAC members) BSAC - Letters to BALTFISH about closed areas	14 th September 2020	No reply	On web
BSAC letter to DG Mare about harbour porpoise BSAC - Letter to BSAC from DG Mare about harbour porpoise and reply from BSAC	26 th September 2020	No reply	On web
BSAC recommendations concerning mitigation measures for harbour porpoise BSAC - BSAC recommendations concerning mitigation measures for harbour porpoise	5 th October 2020	No reply	On web
BSAC letter on how to improve the functioning of the ACs BSAC - BSAC letter on how to improve the functioning of the ACs	11 th December 2020	1 st February 2021	On web
BSAC recommendation on a trial fishery for stickleback in the Baltic Sea BSAC - BSAC recommendation on a trial fishery for stickleback in the Baltic	1 st February 2021	12 th February 2021	On web
BSAC reply to the Commission questionnaire on the functioning of the EU's Technical Measures Framework Regulation BSAC - BSAC reply to the Commission questionnaire on the functioning of the EU's Technical Measures Framework	15 th February 2021	No reply	On web

The meetings held by the BSAC 2020 - 2021

Note that all meetings have been virtual meetings. We want to thank not only the members, but also Commission, Member States, EFCA, European Parliament, scientists, experts and observers for joining the meetings and taking an active part in the discussions.

- **Joint BSAC Working Group meeting Tuesday, 9th - 10th June 2020**

Colm Lordan, ACOM Vice-Chair, presented the ICES advice and answered questions. He explained the advice by stocks (cod, flatfish, pelagic stocks, sprat, salmon), demonstrated with a power point presentation. After the presentation, including questions and answers, the floor was opened for discussion and the initial development of draft BSAC recommendations for the fishery for 2021. All the views on the advice and the fishing opportunities were noted. Western Baltic herring and the two cod stocks were those stocks that gave rise to most discussion and questions. The Secretariat was asked to produce, after the meeting, draft BSAC recommendations for the fishery in the Baltic Sea in 2021 for adoption by the ExCom. Participants were invited to submit written comments to the BSAC recommendations for 2021 after the meeting. The draft was sent to the Working Group and then the ExCom for comments and adoption through written procedure. The final recommendations will be sent to the Commission at the end of June.

[Link to the report.](#)

- **BSAC Executive Committee, 4th September 2020**

The Executive Secretary gave a very brief overview of the expenditure in the current financial year. It was noteworthy that savings had been made due to COVID-19 and no travelling. More was being spent on on-line meeting technology and interpretation. The main item for the meeting was a discussion of the Commission's proposal on the fishing opportunities in the Baltic for 2021 stock by stock. Again, the discussion focused on the two cod stocks and western herring stock. Several fisheries representatives expressed the view that the Commission's proposal to decrease the TAC for western cod as compared to the 2020 TAC was unacceptable; in their view the proposal was not in line with the actual state of the stock. Several OIG representatives considered the proposed reduction a responsible one. Fisheries representatives expressed deep disappointment that the Commission did not take into account the socio-economic effects of such decisions. The subject of spawning closures was referred to, and members asked to send input on their experience with spawning closures. There were differing opinions on the Commission's proposed TAC for western Baltic herring, but consensus on the concerns of only managing this stock in the Baltic when it straddles through other regulatory areas outside the Baltic. Reactions to the proposals for other stocks were recorded. Stickleback was also referred to: several fisheries representatives referred to the fact that the growing population of stickleback could be a problem, because they eat the same food as commercial fish and therefore should be fished more intensively.

A representative of DG Mare took part at the meeting and entered into the discussions, providing explanations and clarifications. This was appreciated. Interpretation was provided.

[Link to the report](#)

- **EBM Working Group, 20th-21st September 2020**

Nils Höglund, the WG Chair referred to initial discussions on stickleback during the BSAC Joint Working Group on 10th June 2020, and the decision that since growth of the stickleback population is a problem for the Baltic ecosystem, it should be discussed in the EBM Working Group. Ulvi Päädam, Ministry of Environment, Estonia, presented the study on stickleback carried out in Estonia in 2017. Jens Olsson, PhD, Institute for Aquatic Resources, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences presented the latest information available on stickleback, including recent trends in population development. It was decided to discuss how to approach stickleback fishery in a controlled and responsible manner in the next BSAC Pelagic Working Group. Markus Helavuori, Professional Secretary, HELCOM presented an overview of the HELCOM structure and work, including the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) review process. The meeting underlined the important role played by the BSAC in the consultation of the BSAP. The BSAC input provided contained positions of the fisheries sector, as well as NGOs. It was pointed out that fishermen must be consulted and involved before any measures that have an impact on fish and fisheries are implemented. The meeting also discussed the seal conflict with fishing. Some fisheries representatives underlined that the only way to reduce the conflict is to reduce the number of seals, not necessarily by culling. They noted the urgency to take action, due to the fact that the cod stocks in the Baltic are heavily infected by parasites from seals. The meeting discussed mitigation measures concerning Baltic harbour porpoise populations. Henn Ojaveer, ICES ACOM Vice-Chair presented the ICES advice on the mitigation measures concerning Baltic harbour porpoise populations. In relation to both the ICES special request advice and the BALTFISH Presidency revised draft proposal, it was difficult to find common ground in the BSAC. Nevertheless, the Working Group agreed on several consensus points: support for continued monitoring, in order to clearly establish the size of the porpoise population and its development; the use of MPAs as a protective measure for harbour porpoise; any measures taken must include both commercial and recreational fishing; other activities, such as windmills and gravel extraction in or around protected areas must be addressed; full support for the use of acoustic deterrent devices, if this allows for continued use of gillnets; all Member States to support any measures with funding from the EMFF, so as to alleviate the financial burden on fishermen using passive gear. Consolidated advice on this was later developed and sent to BALTFISH and DG Mare.

Finally, the Working Group agreed that a salmon management plan is needed in the Baltic; it took no further action on this.

[Link to the report](#)

- **BSAC Executive Committee, 27th October 2020**

The Executive Secretary gave a very brief overview of the expenditure in the current financial year up to almost 31st October 2020 and the planned external evaluation of the BSAC. The ExCom chair encouraged all BSAC members to take part in the evaluation survey. The Council decisions on Baltic fisheries were an important item on the agenda. The ExCom chair thanked Secretariat for the table summarising the ICES advice, the BSAC positions, the COM proposal, and the final Council decisions. He went through the Council decisions stock by stock and invited comments to specific issues. The Commission's representative was took part and provided help to understand the decisions taken. The ExCom chair referred to the recommendation of the EBM Working Group that further work on stickleback should be done in the Pelagic Working Group or in a dedicated Focus Group. It was decided that the group should meet as soon as possible and discuss how to approach a stickleback fishery in a controlled and responsible manner and to develop a pilot fishery. The chair of the EBM Working Group informed that the EBM Working Group discussed the relevance of the measures related to fish and fisheries, proposed in the HELCOM BSAP update. The ExCom decided to send the report of the EBM Working Group meeting to the planned HELCOM FISH meeting on 11th-12th November 2020 as an information item for Contracting Parties to take note of. The ExCom decided to ask the Commission to provide the BSAC as much information on any emergency measures planned for harbour porpoise, so the fishermen can be informed well in advance, for example with respect to the purchase of acoustic devices. The Commission representative took note. With respect to the salmon management plan, the ExCom decided to create a Focus Group to proactively deal with this important issue. The ExCom decided that the BSAC should contact BALTFISH to underline the interest of the BSAC in a collaborative approach and to ask for feedback on this issue. Finally, the ExCom took note of the Commission first report on the implementation of the Baltic multispecies multiannual management plan published on 14th September 2020.

[Link to report.](#)

- **Technical solutions to reduce unwanted catches of cod in the Baltic Sea fisheries, hosted by BALTFISH/ DTU Aqua/ BSAC, 30th November 2020**

Nis Christensen from the Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries chaired the meeting. Kaire Martin representing the BALTFISH Presidency noted that the workshop is a sign of good cooperation between the Baltic Sea Advisory Council, Danish National Institute of Aquatic Resources (DTU Aqua) and BALTFISH. Marie Storr-Paulsen, DTU Aqua, Denmark presented the state of the Baltic cod and measures taken to ensure its sustainability.

Jordan Feekings, DTU Aqua, Denmark, presented the gear based technical solutions¹⁴ developed to reduce the capture of cod. Daniel Stepputtis, Thünen Institute, Germany presented the work carried out during the past 18 months by the Thünen Institute on gear based technical solutions to reduce the capture of cod. Hans Nilsson from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU Aqua) presented the work carried out by the Swedish University in cooperation with fishermen to improve selectivity in the cod trawl fishery. The meeting took note of the fact that an impressive amount work on technical solutions to reduce unwanted catches of cod has been going on, the results of which should be taken to a higher political level through the BALTFISH presidency.

The meeting discussed whether some measures can be directly applied by the industry, and what needs to be further developed, possibly under research exemptions. The meeting Chair noted that everybody around the Baltic understands the urgency to find technical solutions to reduce unwanted catches of cod. The information given at the workshop proved that a lot of research and trials are being carried out in the Member States around the Baltic. The Danish authorities, BALTFISH and the BSAC are aware of the urgent need to move forward and that is why they co-organised the workshop. He underlined that further trials on commercial vessels are needed, and it is too early to select the right solution. He informed that the Swedish authorities had volunteered to organise a technical working group meeting as follow up to the workshop under BALTFISH. The European Commission would be informed on the outcome of the workshop.

[Link to report](#)

- **Pelagic Working Group, 7th December 2020**

The task of the Working Group meeting was to clarify outstanding issues and for the BSAC to develop guidelines for a trial fishery for stickleback as a first step. The Pelagic Working Group took note of the information provided by fisheries representatives of some Member States on their proactive approach in solving the problem with stickleback. Observer programmes are planned in 2021, and the results of these trials are expected to provide more knowledge on the risks connected to the stickleback fishery. The BSAC Secretariat was asked to prepare a final version of the background paper, including guidelines for a trial fishery and present it to the ExCom for adoption. With reference to the western Baltic herring, the Working Group decided to recommend to the ExCom that the BSAC further discusses how to contribute to an improved assessment, rebuilding and better management of western spring spawning herring in a Joint EBM/Pelagic Working Group, after receiving an updated scientific advice on the stock.

[Link to report](#)

¹⁴ Presentation <http://www.bsac.dk/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/Workshop-on-Technical-solutions-to-reduce-unwanted>

- **BSAC Technical Measures Working Group To deal with the Commission questionnaire on the Technical Measures Regulation Monday 18th January 2021**

The BSAC technical measures working group met to deal with a questionnaire from the Commission to all Advisory Councils on the implementation of the Technical Measures Regulation. Fisheries representatives pointed out that most of the statements and amendments to the previous Baltic Technical Measures Regulation 2005/2187, presented in the BSAC recommendations from 2015 and 2017 are still valid and should be implemented. It was pointed out that more flexibility should be given to fishermen in choosing the gear and deciding on gear modifications. In its reply to the questionnaire, the BSAC recommended to make all possible efforts to speed up the legislative procedures applied when dealing with the technical measures, so they can be adapted to the changing circumstances at sea, and it asked the Commission to consider the possibility to take decisions on technical measures at regional level. In the view of the BSAC, the existing Regulation is too detailed. The BSAC provided comments to all 21 questions in the questionnaire.

In its reply to the questionnaire, the BSAC expressed widespread disappointment that all efforts to produce a Framework Technical Measures Regulation have resulted in the same mistakes of the past, such as detailed technical specifications of the gears and their use. The BSAC recommended removing these counterproductive elements from a future or amended Regulation in order to make it more workable. The BSAC underlined that the core purpose of technical measures is to regulate the fisheries, whilst at the same time having as little impact as possible on the environment. The main problem is the lack of flexibility in the Annex VIII for the Baltic. Designing a faster way to adapt the rules in order to avoid unwanted effects in fisheries should be prioritised. No was provided report from this meeting.

[Link to report](#)

- **Implementation and revision of the CFP with a Baltic perspective BSAC Session 1, 19th January 2021. How to improve the living conditions for fish and address ecosystem based management**

Nils Höglund chaired the meeting. The discussion was held under the Chatham House Rule. A draft BSAC white paper was distributed to the participants in advance. It contained questions in order to facilitate discussions and shape an understanding of what ecosystem based management means. The group discussed the definition of the ecosystem based management and agreed that ecosystem based fisheries management is about balancing human activities and environmental stewardship in a multiple use context, and about ensuring fish for the future. The group agreed that it is important to have an adaptive and fast decision-making process at regional level. Fisheries management should follow rapid changes in the ecosystem. The interactions between sea uses should be taken into account in the fisheries management.

Moreover, decisions need to be brought together: this means TACs and quotas, technical measures, as well as environmental and other interactions (mammals, birds, fish, energy etc). The group concluded that there is still not enough information on the climate change, and its impact must be investigated and included in the decision making as soon as possible. It was agreed that a clear signal should be sent to the decision-makers that modern, more environment-friendly engines should be introduced in fisheries. Management and decision-making should be more progressive and innovative and include the ecosystem impact in the management.

A report was produced from the meeting.

[Link to report](#)

- **BSAC Executive Committee, 29th January 2021**

The ExCom approved the draft estimated budget and the draft work programme for 2021-2022. The ExCom took note and approved the results of the evaluation presented by Oxford Research. The ExCom decided to establish a Working Group to look into the external evaluation report. The first task of the Working Group should be to draft the terms of reference. It was decided that the Working Group will be chaired by the BSAC Chair.

The BALTFISH representative gave an update on the status of the Joint Recommendation on mitigation measures for harbour porpoise. The Joint Recommendation should be ready in late spring.

With respect to western spring spawning herring, the ExCom decided that the discussion on how to contribute to an improved assessment, rebuilding and better management of western spring spawning herring should be continued in a Joint EBM/Pelagic Working Group, after receiving an updated scientific advice on the stock. The ExCom approved the output of the working group on technical measures replying to the questionnaire from the Commission. Representatives of EFCA gave a short presentation on the general risk pattern and highlights from its Joint Deployment Programme in 2020 with a focus on control measures for eel and salmon. It was agreed to arrange a meeting with EFCA during the ExCom in May 2021. A report was produced from the meeting.

[Link to report](#)

- **Implementation and revision of the CFP with a Baltic perspective, Session 2, 2nd February 2021. Scientific advice, landing obligation, MSY, overall management principles**

Mart Unrest, the Chair of the Pelagic Working Group chaired the meeting and proposed to discuss the issues topic by topic. The meeting observed the Chatham House Rule. On scientific advice, the Focus Group agreed that the current system of scientific advice should include more options and include an explanation of the consequences of each option. The advice should reflect the changes in the ecosystem.

The Focus Group agreed that the data collection programme in its current form is very valuable and should continue to be an integral part of the CFP.

On the landing obligation, the group agreed that the conditions needed for the fishermen to observe the landing obligations must be in place, and that there are solutions available to improve implementation. It was agreed that a more flexible approach to the implementation of the landing obligation is needed. Control and implementation can be improved through a revision of the Control Regulation and the Technical Measures Framework, whereby gear changes and developments can be more swiftly implemented. There was no agreement on the use of REM/CCTV as a means to control the LO. The Focus Group agreed that the MSY principle needs to be better adapted to the current situation in the Baltic and provide more flexibility. With respect to the social dimension, the Focus Group agreed that it needs to be better documented than reported on. Rules that apply in the social context need to be coherent and easy to understand. A forward-looking approach in assisting the sector to meet new strategies and targets is required. There needs to be a clear narrative of fisheries related activities in a social context. A report was produced from the meeting.

[Link to report](#)

- **Implementation and revision of the CFP with a Baltic perspective, Session 3, 9th February 2021. Decision making + regionalisation, recreational fisheries and subsidies**

Mart Unrest, the Chair of the Pelagic Working Group chaired the meeting to address the implementation and revision of the CFP with a Baltic perspective, in particular decision making and regionalisation, recreational fisheries and subsidies. The meeting followed the Chatham House Rule. With reference to decision-making and regionalisation, the Focus Group agreed that regionalisation in the Baltic region has so far not given the expected effects, in particular with regard to the revision of the technical rules for the Baltic fisheries. The Focus Group agreed on a more adaptive fisheries management, with a faster decision-making process. The Focus Group supported more management decisions being taken at regional level, even under the present legislative framework, as well as stronger cooperation of the BSAC with the regional bodies BALTFISH or HELCOM. The Focus Group was aware of the limitations of the current legal and institutional structure and called for a change to the Lisbon Treaty to bring about true regionalisation. The majority of the Focus Group agreed that recreational fisheries should be part of the CFP, as an important part of the catching sector. In view of some participants, the recreational sector should have the same obligations and rights as the commercial sector. Some participants supported the creation of a recreational fisheries working group in the BSAC, in order to develop the work. The Focus Group agreed that subsidies for a specific purpose (such as environmental goals and targets) or situation (such as emergency measures in the fishery) can be justified. It agreed that further discussion is needed on subsidies in the context of fishing capacity, engines and selectivity. This should take place with knowledgeable experts invited. The Focus Group agreed that socio-economic dimension should be included in the fisheries management.

A representative of DG Mare, explained the aims of the planned Commission 2022 report on the functioning of the CFP. She underlined that discussions in the BSAC Focus Group and the BSAC conclusions will be much appreciated as input. A report was produced from the meeting.

[Link to report](#)

- **BSAC concluding Session on the CFP Wednesday 24th March 2021**

The task of the meeting was to sum up what has been done so far and to pave the way ahead. The BSAC chair underlined that the ambition, as agreed with ExCom, is to provide a white paper from the BSAC. The deadline for the work is the General Assembly, postponed to 22nd September 2021 in Copenhagen. MEP Niclas Herbst from the European Parliament PECH Committee thanked the BSAC for its work and the advice it provided. It was really important that all stakeholders work together and communicate with each other. The BSAC has recently been tackling quite important topics, with the CFP at the heart of the discussions. He referred to the ongoing work with the Control Regulation which has generated over 1,000 amendments. He also referred to the future EMFAF (European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund), on which there is informal agreement, with funding over the next 7-year period. The BSAC members expressed their views on the CFP and EMFAF.

Mr Herbst took note of the comments and statements and underlined that was important for all to communicate with each other. The WG chairs of the three Sessions that had been held gave a short account of the Sessions. The Chair summed up and explained that the plan is to develop a white paper from the BSAC to be finally adopted in September 2021 and to be forwarded to the Commission and Member States as part of the CFP review. The input from the BSAC can influence the level of ambition of the Commission and the Member States. He encouraged the meeting to have ambitious goals with this exercise and the final product. He wanted the BSAC white paper to focus on consensus, and he had a clear vision of the direction to take. Where consensus cannot be reached, the BSAC should stimulate reflection in the Commission and Member States, rather than describing different positions in the BSAC. It was decided to create a drafting group to prepare the BSAC white paper. A report was produced from the meeting.

[Link to report](#)

Outside the BSAC during the year

Again, it has not been possible to travel. This has not stopped the BSAC. There has been a wealth of meetings and activities which the BSAC – its members and in particular the Secretariat – have taken part in. All meetings have been reported on and reports sent regularly to the ExCom, members and referred to in the newsletter. Below is the overview.

External meetings during the year where BSAC members took part:

Subject	Date	Name	Reported
COM webex Farm to Fork	16.4.20	Matti Ovaska, WWF	The Markets AC supplied one
ICES Advice Drafting Working Group Baltic	12-15.5.20	Michael Andersen and BSAC Secretariat	Reports are not produced from these meetings
STECF evaluation of Joint Recommendations of landing obligation	27.5.20	Michael Andersen and BSAC Secretariat	Yes
COM Seminar with ACs on financial issues	12.6.20	BSAC Secretariat	Yes
NWWAC Focus Group on plastics and port reception directive	18.6.20	BSAC Secretariat	Yes
Commission Round Table on harbour porpoises and dolphins	26.6.20	Nils Höglund on behalf of the BSAC and BSAC Secretariat	Yes
HELCOM workshop on marine litter	25.8.20	BSAC Secretariat	Yes
BALTFISH Forum	07.09.20	BSAC ExCom Chair and Secretariat	Yes
Our Baltic conference	28.09.20	BSAC Secretariat	Yes
EFCA Advisory Board	09.10.20	BSAC ExCom Chair, BSAC Secretariat	Yes
Chair and secretariat Mtg with Vitcheva	5.10.20	BSAC ExCom Chair and Secretary	Yes
Blue Economy with other ACs	5.11.20	BSAC Secretariat	Yes
DK Ministry on NK2	5.11.20	BSAC Secretary	Yes

The Twelfth Meeting of HELCOM Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (FISH 12-2020)	11 – 13.11.20	BSAC Secretariat	Yes
Meeting of NGOs: How to bring the EU Control Regulation into the digital age and deliver on the European Green deal	18.11.20	BSAC Secretariat	Yes
Meeting with Danish Association for Low Impact Coastal Fishery PO about their proposal to limit trawling	18.11.20	BSAC Secretary	Yes
All ACs and chairs	25.11.20	BSAC Chair, ExCom Secretariat, BSAC	Yes
MSC DK annual commercial meeting	1.12.20	BSAC Secretary	Yes
Recreational meeting with COM Webinar on recreational fisheries monitoring and control	4.12.20	BSAC Secretariat	Yes
HELCOM HOD	7 th – 8 th December 2020	BSAC Secretariat	HELCOM Report

MIAC meeting	14 th January 2021	BSAC ExCom Chair, Demersal WG chair Michael Andersen, EBM WG chair Nils Höglund, BSAC Secretariat	Yes
MIACO meeting	14 th January 2021	BSAC ExCom Chair, Esben Sverdrup-Jensen, Demersal WG chair Michael Andersen, EBM WG chair Nils Höglund, Krzysztof Stanuch	Yes, from Krzysztof Stanuch
Inter ACs mtg	18 th January 2021	BSAC Chair, BSAC Secretariat	Yes
Mtg with EFCA	20 th January 2021	BSAC Chair, BSAC Secretary, Demersal WG chair Michael Andersen, EBM WG chair Nils Höglund,	Yes
EFARO webinar	22 nd January 2021	BSAC Secretariat	Yes
PhD Defence at DTU Aqua on seal worm	28 th January 2021	BSAC Secretariat	Yes
Conference on Shipwrecks	28 th January 2021	BSAC Secretariat	Yes
COM organised meeting on Brexit	22 nd Feb 2021	BSAC Secretariat	Yes
HELCOM FISH 12 A (on the BSAP update)	2 nd and 4 th March 2021	BSAC Secretariat and EBM WG Chair Nils Höglund	Yes
Jordan Feekings DTU Aqua on selectivity	9 th March 2021	BSAC Secretariat, K Stanuch and S Karnicki	Yes

HELCOM Stakeholder conference	11 th March 2021	Wolfgang Albrecht, Katarzyna Stepanowska, BSAC Secretariat	Yes
PELAC on Climate	17 th March 2021	BSAC Secretariat	

Scientific experts and special guests invited to BSAC meetings during the year.

Joint Working Group meeting, 9th – 10th June 2020

- Colm Lordan, ACOM vice chair

EBM Working Group meeting, 21st-22nd September 2020

- Ulvi Päädam, Ministry of Environment, Estonia
- Jens Olsson, PhD, Institute for Aquatic Resources, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
- Markus Helavuori, Professional Secretary, HELCOM
- Henn Ovajeer, ICES ACOM vice-chair on mitigation measures concerning Baltic harbour porpoise populations

Workshop on technical solutions to reduce unwanted catches of cod in the Baltic Sea fisheries Hosted by BALTFISH/ DTU Aqua/ BSAC, 30th November 2020

- Marie Storr-Paulsen, DTU Aqua, Denmark
- Jordan Feekings, DTU Aqua, Denmark
- Daniel Stepputtis, Thünen Institute, Germany
- Hans Nilsson, SLU Aqua, Sweden

Projects supported by the BSAC

The BSAC supports research and projects that further the understanding of the Baltic ecosystem. It is not in a position to participate in or provide support to every project application. There are two projects that the BSAC has engaged in:

The SAMBAH II LIFE project

The SAMBAH II LIFE project targets the lack of information and understanding necessary for evaluation and reporting on the Critically Endangered (IUCN, HELCOM) Baltic Proper harbour porpoise's current conservation status and habitat quality. This includes understanding the impact and high-risk areas of known threats (e.g. bycatch, underwater noise, reduced prey quality) which will assist with implementation of mitigation measures to secure its survival.

The project area corresponds to the entire known distribution range of the Baltic Proper population within EU waters (excl. LV). Critical gaps in understanding of the abundance, distribution, and status of the population under current threats will be addressed within the SAMBAH II LIFE project.

The BSAC has sent a letter of support for the project, without committing further for the time being.

International project on bycatch in small scale fisheries

BSAC fisheries organisations were invited by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality invited fisheries organisations to join an international project on bycatch in small scale fisheries. The focus is on: Experimental design, economic aspects and stakeholder participation; Trialing different monitoring and mitigation methods in small scale fisheries and 3. Implementation of concrete conservation measures, e.g. structural monitoring programmes within the Regional Coordination Groups and successful mitigation measures by Joint Recommendations.

Wolfgang Albrecht, Association of Fisheries Protection and Benjamin Schmöde, Union of German Cutter Fishery have signed their organisations up for this project. The project held a kick-off meeting on 4th March 2021.

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Keeping the BSAC members informed

BSAC members have received regular newsletters from the BSAC Secretariat. There has been a total of 12 during the year. These have also been made available to observers and put on the BSAC website.

The BSAC Executive Committee has received regular letters with updates, notifications and consultations: 28 during the year.

Members of the Baltic Sea Advisory Council 2020-2021

Fisheries Interests (28)	
The Fishermen's Association of Bornholm and Christiansø	Danish Fishermen Producer Organisation
Danish Pelagic Producers Organisation	Marine Ingredients Denmark
Association for Low Impact Coastal Fishery	Estonian Fishermen's Association
Federation of Finnish Fisheries Associations	Finnish Fishermen's Association (Sumonen Ammattikalastajaliitto)
Bundesverband der Deutschen Fishindustrie und des Fischgrosshandels E.V.	German Cutter-and Coastal-Fishermen's Association
Union of German Cutter Fishery	Association of Fisheries Protection (Fischereischutzverband)
Latvian Fisheries Association	Lithuanian Fisheries Producers' Association
The Confederation of Fishermen and Fish Processors of West Lithuania	Association of Fishermen's of Sea- PO
National Chamber of Fish Producers	Kołobrzeg Group of Producers Fish
Polish Association of Fish Processors	Darłowska Group of Fish Producers and Shipowners
The Fishermen Fish Producers Organisation ORL-PR	Fish Producers' Organisation Bałtyk
Sweden Pelagic Federation PO (SPF)	The Swedish Fishermen Producer Organisation
Swedish Fishermen Federation	Fishermen's Federation for Small-Scale Fishery in Sweden
Åland Islands Fishermen's Association	EU Fish Processors and Traders Association - Federation of National Organisations of Importers and Exporters of Fish
Other Interest Groups (12)	
Danish Recreational Fishermen	Association of Recreational Fishing Ships SAJKS
The Fisheries Secretariat	Fisheries Management Gotland, regional co-management of fisheries
Swedish Society for Nature and Conservation	Coalition Clean Baltic
Finnish Association for Nature Conservation	German Angling Association
European Anglers Alliance	CIPS International Confederation for Sport Fishing
World Wide Fund for Nature	Polish Ecological Club

Changes to membership during the year

Applications/New members in 2020-2021

The Association of Recreational Fishing Ships, SAJKS joined in September 2020. This organisation, based in Kołobrzeg, has 30 members. The aim of SAJKS is to represent the interests of its organisation. They operate from the following ports in Poland: Kołobrzeg, Darłowo, Ustka, Łeba and Władysławowo.

Who left at the end of the year

The BSAC said goodbye to the Fisheries Management Gotland, regional co-management of fisheries. They decided to leave due to difficulties to contribute to the work of the BSAC, because they are linked to the County Administrative Board of Gotland. The pelagic fishermen and the recreational anglers in the Fisheries Management Gotland are already represented by participation in their central organisations (Sweden Pelagic Federation PO and European Anglers Alliance). However, the small-scale fishermen are not part of a producer organisation.

Note: Members are always encouraged to check the website and make sure the details are correct.

<http://www.bsac.dk/BSAC-Members/General-Assembly>

The BSAC chairs and Secretariat

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Currently no vice-chair

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Annual report of activities in the Demersal Working Group of the BSAC

May 2021

The covid pandemic has had an impact on the activities in the Demersal Working Group, as it has impacted almost every aspect of normal life over the latest year. The most important outcomes of the activities of the working group, as I see it, are the discussions we have at the meetings. These I find much more interesting than the actual recommendations, which are usually totally ignored by those they are made for. I learn from talking to people I disagree with, and I hope the same is the case for other people. Nevertheless, to have good discussions, we need to sit together, look each other in the eyes, point, gesticulate and perhaps also laugh a bit.

This is not possible when meetings are held via web, and activities have therefore been restricted to a minimum: a joint meeting with the Pelagic Working Group in June to discuss the scientific advice and prepare our recommendations to the Commission, and a meeting in January to provide input in response to Commission's questionnaire on the technical regulation. Thanks to a well-functioning Secretariat which has organised meetings, coordinated with interpreters, members and "outsiders" and ensured a steady flow of relevant papers, I hope we have managed to cover what I would call the bare necessities and offered advice where appropriate.

The two meetings do not cover all activities in the realm of demersal fishing, however. An important and potentially influential meeting on technical solutions to some of the problems encountered in the Baltic, jointly organised by the BSAC, BALTFISH and DTU Aqua, was a good occasion to meet in November. Again unfortunately via web, but it allowed us to discuss how to combine the wishes from various stakeholders and to explore some possible solutions. This work is ongoing, but I hope it will offer solutions for some of the demersal fishers in the Baltic. The future for cod does not look good and it will be a huge challenge to provide advice on how to conduct the fishery for the demersal species that grow, whilst not doing too much harm to those that diminish.

Thank you to all for your contributions under the strange circumstances. Let us hope for better times to come. I am not looking forward to an easy year, but I am hoping for some good physical meetings and perhaps a few laughs, despite the dire outlooks.

All the best,



Michael Wall Andersen
Chair of Demersal WG

Annual report of activities in the Ecosystem Based Working Group of the BSAC May 2021

The two-day long meeting of the Ecosystem Based Working Group on 20th -21st September 2020 covered a lot of ground, and is well reported on in the Annual Report. Two of the issues dealt with – stickleback and harbour porpoise - led to recommendations from the BSAC. Unfortunately, the harbour porpoise discussion did not lead to consensus agreement on to how to make use of pingers in the wider Baltic Sea or inside protected areas if fishing is allowed there. However, the BSAC is unified in the call for continued monitoring of porpoise abundance. During 2020, both eel and salmon were discussed in the EBM Working Group, but unfortunately no new progress or proposals on either have been presented.

Besides that, the CFP Focus Groups took a lot of effort. As Chair of the first Session on how to improve the living conditions for fish and address ecosystem based management, I was satisfied with the open and engaged discussions. The group agreed that ecosystem based fisheries management is about balancing human activities and environmental stewardship in a multiple use context, and about ensuring fish for the future. I look forward to taking some of the conclusions from the work into the drafting of the BSAC White Paper.

Discussions on topics partly outside the traditional CFP boundaries have continued. Concrete suggestions and reactions to e.g. HELCOM's updated Baltic Sea Action Plan have been shared with the Contracting Parties in HELCOM, and the BSAC has participated in several HELCOM meetings dealing with fish or fisheries related topics on the agenda.



Nils Höglund
Chair of EBM WG

Annual report of activities in the Pelagic Working Group of the BSAC May 2021

The BSAC held a virtual joint working group on 9th and 10th June 2020 to discuss the ICES advice for the Baltic for 2021. Although a joint WG as on previous years, we held the demersal and pelagic parts separate, to make it easier for the members to follow.

Stickleback has been an issue of increasing concern for the BSAC members. It was raised by fisheries representatives and has been dealt in pelagic working group in December. It led to recommendations by the BSAC to initiative a trial fishery in the Baltic. Since then some good progress has been made by several Member States, who have initiated trials in the Baltic following the principles described by the BSAC.

Not much progress has been made on the western Baltic herring. The issue was raised by the BSAC at the annual meeting of ICES with the Advisory Councils; the BSAC acknowledged the ICES work on rebuilding plans (WKREBUILD). The BSAC gave a detailed response on western Baltic herring in its recommendations for the fishery for 2021. After further discussions in the Pelagic Working Group on 7th December 2020, the ExCom decided that a discussion on how to contribute to an improved assessment, rebuilding and better management of western spring spawning herring should be continued in a Joint EBM/Pelagic Working Group, after receiving an updated scientific advice on the stock.



Mart Undrest
Chair of Pelagic WG