

BSAC Executive Committee
Monday 20th January 2020
Address NH Hotel Brussels EU Berlaymont
Boulevard Charlemagne 11-19
1000 Brussels

REPORT

1. Welcome by the BSAC chair

Due to the delayed arrival of the BSAC chair, the Executive Secretary opened the meeting and welcomed Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius on behalf of the BSAC.

Opening address by Mr Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner for Environment and Oceans, European Commission:

"Dear chair,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to the Executive Committee of your Advisory Council. This week is very hectic so I cannot stay for the entire meeting, but I wanted to at least be here at the opening and have this first contact. The Baltic Sea is particularly close to my heart.

Relations with stakeholders

I wanted to be here, because I believe it is very important to work closely with you and the other stakeholders.

You are the ones first in line to feel the impact of our policies, in the short term and in the long term. You know the local situation and the local issues. You are our boots on the ground.

The Advisory Councils play a fundamental role in the development and implementation of the common fisheries policy. The Baltic Sea Advisory Council is highly appreciated by the Commission for its recommendations and contributions to the European policy processes.

I am sure I will benefit from your expertise during my mandate.

As you know, president Von der Leyen has charged me with the environment, oceans and fisheries portfolio.

This obviously includes the common fisheries policy. By the end of 2022, we will prepare a report on the functioning of the CFP. We will assess how our policy is working. But first of all, we have to fully implement the current policy.

Many of the cornerstones of our policy, the MSY objective, the landing obligation, the multiannual plans... are only now really being implemented. We just have a new technical measures regulation and we are still revising our control system. So let the current policy first prove its merits.

And so far it seems that our approach is delivering. We see that where pressure on fish stocks decreases, fishing profits rise, sometimes to record levels.

As stocks rebuild, we can again increase the opportunities. At the last December Council, we could do that for 25 stocks.

What the evaluation should look at too are the new challenges that fisheries is facing. And how we can take these better into account in the Common Fisheries Policy. I am talking about climate change, social standards or marine pollution. And this brings me to the specific case of the Baltic Sea.

Baltic Sea: exceptional measures

Fisheries management in the Baltic Sea has long been a frontrunner and an example for other sea basins. The lion's share of catches has come from sustainable fisheries for years. But now, the situation has deteriorated.

Several fisheries in the Baltic Sea are in a very difficult situation. You know this all too well. Still, the extent and the pace of these developments have taken many by surprise.

Western herring will remain below the dangerous limit level at least until 2022, despite major TAC reductions. We need to rebuild this stock so that our fishermen and women can rely on it as a sustainable source of income for the future.

Eastern cod is in a particularly bad situation. Last year the full extent and the seriousness of the problem became clear.

The emergency measures in 2019, the TAC reduction and the technical measures, are unavoidably hurting our fishermen and women in the short term. I know this and I regret this. But they are indispensable. We have to do everything we can to help the Eastern Baltic cod stock recover. It would be irresponsible to continue business as usual.

This is also why the Commission proposed to amend the Baltic MAP, and why we proposed to fund the scrapping of fishing vessels that depend on Eastern Cod through the EMFF.

Our objective with that measure, which will be paid by the European taxpayer, is to bring the fleet capacity in line with the fishing opportunities, now and in the future. This measure should be part of a more comprehensive set of actions eligible for public support under the current and future EMFF.

The proposal is now in the hands of Parliament and Council. Unfortunately, the prospects of these negotiations do not look good. There is a clear risk that the issue of structural overcapacity will not be solved. I will continue to push for a long-term solution.

Coordination needed among policies

Coming back to the situation in the Baltic Sea, we know that the issue is unfortunately much wider than fisheries alone, and more complex. The Baltic has been a very polluted sea basin for decades, at least since the mid-70s when Baltic States established HELCOM. This situation is not caused by the fishermen. It is caused by pollution from farming, by too low levels of oxygen... But fishermen and women are the ones who pay the price. And this is a particular concern to me as the Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries.

Member States have to address the key environmental pressures in the Baltic in an integrated way, notably in the update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan. We have to work together, agriculture, environment, fisheries... to solve this situation and to restore marine ecosystems, in the Baltic Sea.

Therefore, I call the Member States and the ministers of Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries around the Baltic Sea to work together and to make a real improvement in the Baltic Sea cleanliness. I have an intension of visiting the Baltic Sea region in the near future in order to initiate the cooperation between different sectors for that common purpose.

Climate change and EU Green Deal

This coordinated way of working will become all the more important with climate change. The challenges for our oceans and seas in the coming years and decades are huge. Sea temperature is warming faster than scientists have so far predicted. The Baltic Sea will not escape the impact of climate change.

That's why the Commission's number one priority is the Green Deal. We have to become a climate-neutral continent by 2050. And even though the EU is not the main emitter of CO₂ in the world, our role as global front-runner will be crucial. Recent events have shown that the world really needs a front-runner.

In the Green Deal, we will protect biodiversity, habitats and fragile ecosystems, on land and under water. This will help us mitigate the impact of climate change and make our environment more resilient.

We will also take further steps to become a truly circular economy.

The Green Deal will lead to a transformation. With the EMFF and other financing instruments, we will make sure that fishing and coastal communities, also in the Baltic, are well equipped to face this transition, and can turn it into opportunities.

As you can see, we will have plenty of topics to discuss over the next years and I look forward to working with you during my mandate.

Again, apologies for not being able to stay for the whole of your meeting, but I wish you a very productive session.

Thank you."

Acting temporarily as chair of the meeting, **Nils Höglund, Chair of the Working Group on ecosystem based management** thanked the Commissioner for coming to the ExCom and expressed the hope for another meeting with the BSAC in the future.

He welcomed all the participants to Brussels.

a) Apologies and adoption of the agenda

The list of participants and apologies is on the website.¹

Under AOB were noted three points from Lindsay Keenan (Fisheries Secretariat): on the misreporting of pelagic catches in the light of available information, an update on the mismanagement of the EMFF funds in Denmark, and by-catch of cod in the flatfish fishery.

¹ [www.bsac.dk/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-\(5\)](http://www.bsac.dk/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-(5))

b) Adoption of minutes from last ExCom/Theme meeting (3rd September 2019)²

There were no comments to the minutes. The minutes from the last ExCom were adopted.

c) Two ExCom members to check the minutes:

Vesa Karttunen (Finnish Fisheries) and Thorsten Wichmann (German anglers) agreed to check the minutes.

2. Nomination and election of a vice chair

The Chair explained that Andrzej Białas, vice-chair of the BSAC had informed the BSAC Management Team that his contract with OCEANA ended at the end of 2019. He had thus stepped down as vice-chair.

No nominations were put forward at the meeting.

An OIG representative proposed to discuss possible financial compensation for the vice-chair under the draft operating budget.

The ExCom decided to return to the election of a vice-chair at the next meeting, on 17th March 2020. The ExCom members were encouraged to put forward nominations.

3. From the Secretariat

a) Status on expenditure and admin for 2019-2020

The Secretary of the BSAC gave ExCom members a spreadsheet showing the expenditure up to 31st December 2019. She informed the ExCom that the expenditure was on track, well within the budget, following more or less the same pattern as the previous year. A little less had been spent on interpreting.

The ExCom took note of the status of expenditure for 2019-2020.

b) Draft estimated operating budget and work programme for 2020-2021

Esben Sverdrup-Jensen, the BSAC Chair referred to the draft operating budget. He proposed to allocate resources to compensate the work of the working group chairs, in terms of preparation and chairing the meetings, so as to guarantee their full engagement. He also proposed to carry out an external performance review focusing on the performance of the membership, the Working Groups and the quality of the advice. Such a review could help to improve the work of the BSAC.

² <http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-meeting-on-future-Common-Fisheries-Policy/ExComCFP0Thememtg30919ReportFINAL.pdf.aspx?lang=en-GB>

Members and external partners would be invited to participate in the review. The ExCom would be asked to draw up and agree the Terms of Reference for this work. He proposed to finance these items from the resources allocated to the meetings (which would imply a budget for three Working Groups in 2020-2021 instead of four).

Some OIG representatives supported the proposal to carry out a performance review.

The representative of the European Commission strongly encouraged the BSAC to carry out a performance review.

The Secretary of the BSAC looked forward to receiving the Commission's guidance on the performance review. Referring to the draft budget, she noted that full funding of 42 members and 8 Member States had been assumed in drafting the budget. However, the final number of members could go down. She also informed the ExCom on the negative interest imposed by the banks in Denmark, which cannot be avoided. The Secretary has asked the Commission whether this can be considered as an eligible cost.

Referring to the draft work programme, **the Chair** noted that it is almost a rollover of the current year. The BSAC will be taking a long-term and a short-term approach and plans to hold 3 working group meetings. The Chair referred to the external meetings, in particular the BALTFISH meeting under the Finnish residency, planned for June.

The ExCom Chair proposed to hold an ExCom meeting in Vigo in order to get a better understanding of the work of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and to discuss the common priorities in the Baltic.

Some OIG representatives supported the idea to hold an ExCom meeting in Vigo, but drew attention to the need to find the right date for such a meeting, taking into account long travel time.

The representative of EFCA informed that EFCA would be glad to host the BSAC in Vigo and offered a meeting room at the EFCA Headquarters free of charge. He informed the participants that there are alternative travel options by using the other airports in the area (i.e. Porto and Santiago) close to Vigo.

The Secretary referred to the information on the reimbursement system in the BSAC and the per diem for the small scale which had been included in the work programme. She added that the Member States had been invited to comment on the draft work programme and draft estimated budget.

The ExCom approved the draft estimated budget and the draft work programme 2020-2021.

4. Follow up actions from the discussion on the future Common Fisheries Policy: What should the future CFP contain? ExCom Theme meeting 3rd September 2019, Helsinki

The ExCom Chair referred to the follow up actions from the discussions on the future CFP during the Theme Meeting held on 3rd September 2019 in Helsinki. He drew attention to the mission letter of the Commission President Mme von der Leyen's to the Commissioner Sinkevičius, stating that: *"You should evaluate the Common Fisheries Policy by 2022 to identify how to address issues not sufficiently covered in the current policy, such as the social dimension, climate adaptation and clean oceans"*. **The Chair** noted that this is an encouragement to take a close look at the CFP. The BSAC will continue the discussions at its ExCom on 17th March in Copenhagen. They will focus on the issues identified during the Theme Meeting in Helsinki, as well as some issues raised at today's ExCom meeting such as subsidies and recreational fisheries. The ExCom needs to be precise on what outputs are planned.

A small-scale fisheries representative remarked that new ideas are needed.

The ExCom Chair welcomed the comment and stated that this is an opportunity for the BSAC to propose some changes.

The ExCom took note.

5. The main problems and issues concerning the Baltic fisheries: information and discussions. With invited experts:

Dr Lotte Worsøe Clausen, Head of Advisory Support at ICES presented the Baltic fisheries and ecosystem overviews³. She noted that the ecosystem overview provides a description of the ecosystems, identifies the main human pressures, and explains how these affect key ecosystem components. The fisheries overview summarises the fishing activities at ICES ecoregions, including which countries are catching what species, the various fishing methods being used, and how stocks are managed. ICES produce these overviews in line with the ecosystem approach to management in order to facilitate informed decisions by managers. Measures to provide evidence for an ecosystem approach include the influence of a dynamic ecosystem on fisheries, such as the effects of changes in productivity and distribution on assessment, evaluations of management plans, and mixed fisheries interactions. The evidence for ecosystem approach must also include an evaluation of the impact of fisheries on the ecosystem (such as by-catch, vulnerable marine ecosystems, seabed impact and services, regional synthesis of status of fish stocks). The impact of fisheries should also be put into the context of other maritime activities and pressures.

³ [http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-\(5\)/Lotte200120THISONEEO-and-FO_LWC-BSAC-Jan-2020PDFFORWEB.pdf.aspx?lang=en-GB](http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-(5)/Lotte200120THISONEEO-and-FO_LWC-BSAC-Jan-2020PDFFORWEB.pdf.aspx?lang=en-GB)

ICES determines the priority anthropogenic pressures in an ecoregion, develops metrics and reports on trends in species biodiversity and ecosystem structure, provides information and methods for the designation of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs), contributes to assessments of threatened/endangered species and habitats, and monitors and reports on the occurrence of invasive species. Dr Lotte Worsøe Clausen mentioned the tools for trade-offs between management objectives and underlined the need for stakeholder engagement.

The overviews are aimed at facilitating the ecosystem based approach. They refer in particular to the state of the mixed fisheries. The Marine Stewardship Council uses them extensively in their assessments

Managers use them primarily in relation to the application of multiannual management plans. It would be useful if the overviews could facilitate a coordination of the CFP and the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (eutrophication etc.) and other management tools. She referred to the five most important pressures on the Baltic Sea: nutrient and organic enrichment, selective extraction of species, introduction of contaminating compounds, introduction of non-indigenous species, abrasion and substrate loss. The Overviews must be adaptable and agile. There is a lack of knowledge on mixed fisheries - for all mixed fisheries in the Baltic, spatio-temporal features, spatial structure - including migration pathways and patterns, food webs; seals, inter-intra species dependence of all species in the ecosystem, and the environmental drivers which can interrupt known balances.

Dr Lotte Worsøe Clausen underlined that the Baltic fisheries are not an island: management of the Baltic is a complex system with many different handles to be turned. Informed trade-offs are needed to find out which handles can be used. She invited the BSAC members to the Workshop on the Ecosystem Based Management of the Baltic Sea on 25th-26th February 2020 (WKBALTIC⁴) in order to identify issues that they think need to be considered and would represent broadly inclusive management needs for the major Baltic fish species in the context of EBM.

The Chair thanked Dr Lotte Worsøe Clausen for her presentation and opened the floor for discussion and questions.

A fisheries representative asked whether ICES is aware of the socio-economic consequences of the advice to close down the eastern cod fishery and drastically reduce the western cod TAC. He referred to the severe consequences of such management measures and expressed regret that there is no strategy to protect the fish stocks, whilst at the same time enable the fishery to survive. Dr Lotte Worsøe Clausen replied that ICES has not been asked to advise on the socio-economic consequences of the zero catch. STECF is a body with the necessary competence and expertise to deal with this. She underlined that ICES is trying to better integrate social science into its advice.

An OIG representative found the ecosystem overview very useful. In his view, it contains sufficient warnings for the managers to take the right decisions on quota reduction. He asked whether ICES will put more effort into updating the overviews.

⁴ <http://www.bsac.dk/Meetings/External-events/WKBALTIC>

Dr Lotte Worsøe Clausen underlined that ICES is trying to better integrate the ecosystem overview into the advice. The overviews are integrated in all agreements with ICES' clients. These overviews are produced according to the ecosystem approach to management, taking into account, among other things, the mixed fisheries interactions.

Another fisheries representative referred to the selectivity measures mentioned in the overviews. In his view, cod which has reached its maximum age at the size of 20-25 cm should be fished. Mesh size limits should be removed.

Dr Lotte Worsøe Clausen replied that ICES is aware of and looking at the catch-selectivity interactions. There is only small cod left in the eastern part of the Baltic. A reduction in the fishing pressure cannot stand alone. Whether selectivity is relevant needs to be discussed. ICES is looking into this problem. ICES is clear in advising a zero catch.

An OIG representative referred to the ecosystem overview and the decrease of the overall nutrient load in the Baltic due to improved management. Moreover, anoxic levels have been stable since 1995.

Dr Lotte Worsøe Clausen commented that although the environment is stable, it still has an impact.

Responding to a question on expert availability, Dr Lotte Worsøe Clausen said that experts come from national institutes and their availability depends on the Member States. Each institute has its own priorities. The ExCom Chair commented that a message from the BSAC could be the need to have more national experts.

Responding to a question on fishing gear disturbances put forward by an OIG representative, Dr Lotte Worsøe Clausen stated that ICES is working on a mechanistic, quantitative assessment procedure of gear induced impacts based on biological principles. She also confirmed to a small scale fisheries representative that climate change, which is more than changes in sea level, has an impact on the ecosystem.

A representative of the Danish government asked whether ICES has quantified which factor has the biggest impact on the fish stocks. Dr Lotte Worsøe Clausen noted that if natural mortality increases, the TAC management becomes less optimal, but more research is needed in order to give a clear advice on that.

An OIG representative underlined that the present situation in the Baltic is due to the previous 20 years of bad management. Dr Lotte Worsøe Clausen stated that overfishing might have contributed to the present situation, but there are many other complex factors and interactions.

A fisheries representative asked about an instrument permitting fishermen to survive under the situation of zero catch. He asked whether fishermen could be paid for participating in scientific surveys. Dr Lotte Worsøe Clausen said that national institutes are responsible for data collection involving commercial fishing vessels. ICES supports this idea. She recalled the ICES Workshop WKSCINDI on Science with Industry Initiatives⁵, 24th -26th June 2019 and which was a clear signal of the wish to apply this approach.

5

<http://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Expert%20Group%20Report/Fisheries%20Resources%20Steering%20Group/2019/WKSCINDI/WKSCINDI%20Report%202019.pdf>

An OIG representative noted that at present, under the zero TAC for eastern cod, there are almost no trawling operations in this part of the Baltic. This creates a unique opportunity for the Member States to investigate what happens to the sea bed if there is no impact from trawling.

The ExCom Chair thanked Dr Lotte Worsøe Clausen for answering all the questions. He repeated the potential for the BSAC to send a message to Member States to engage in this work, in order to ensure that the effects of fisheries closures are monitored.

Professor Clara Ulrich, chair of the STECF presented the economic situation of the Baltic fisheries.⁶ She explained how the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) works. The Commission may consult the STECF on any matter relating to marine and fisheries biology, fisheries economics and governance, ecosystem effects and similar disciplines. This means that decisions on which subjects STECF must work on are made by DG Mare. STECF has 30 members chosen by the European Commission. It meets 3 times a year. Plenary sessions are not open to observers. There are around 20 Expert Working Groups per year. They have no fixed participation, are open to observers and report to the plenary sessions.

Professor Clara Ulrich explained that her presentation is based to a large extent on the presentation made by Ralf Döring (vice chair STECF) and colleague Jorg Berkenhagen (Thünen Institute) in November 2019 in Stralsund. She noted that the annual economic STECF report is based on annual data collection carried out by the national institutes. The basic indicators cover fleet structure and size, landings, TAC usage, profit and revenue. The latest data used is two-years old. Data are thus available up to 2017, but it is likely that the economic situation has worsened since then in the Baltic. The Baltic fisheries are among the least profitable fisheries in Europe, and largely out of balance. The economic situation of the small-scale fleet is deteriorating. There are also big differences in the cost structure between countries. According to an analysis made by the Thünen Institute, the German fleet has very high fixed costs which drive net profits down. The report contains standardised national and regional chapters presenting data and trends. The BSAC could request more in-depth data, but would have to do so well in advance of forthcoming meetings. Requests for additional specific analyses by STECF must be addressed to DG Mare.

Professor Ulrich referred to the STECF report on the assessment of balance indicators for key fleet segments and review of national reports on Member States efforts to achieve a balance between fleet capacity and fishing opportunities. Most of the Baltic fleet segments are considered not in balance with the fishing opportunities. The Member States have the opportunity to use EMFF money for promoting young fishermen if the fleet is in balance and use decommissioning only if there is an imbalance.

⁶ [www.bsac.dk/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-\(5\)](http://www.bsac.dk/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-(5))

The ExCom Chair opened the floor for discussions and questions. He reminded the meeting that the BSAC was invited to provide questions ahead of the STECF meeting in May. Input would have to be received by mid-March.

A fisheries representative asked how the STECF is able to assess whether the fleet size is in line with the fishing opportunities. Professor Ulrich replied that the STECF reports assess the past and does not make projections for the future. She noted that social data is now collected to explain resilience of fishing communities to change.

A fisheries representative noted that average profitability does not necessarily describe the actual situation in fisheries. In his member state, there are a lot of registered commercial fishermen who fish part-time or for household consumption only. However, full-time coastal fishermen still have good profits at the same time. Clara Ulrich explained that STECF refers to the average profitability of the fleet. It is difficult to give detailed information.

Responding to a question on the way in which profitability is calculated, Professor Ulrich noted that all reports are public and the working groups are open to observers.

An OIG representative referred to the report on fleet capacity published by the Fisheries Secretariat in 2018. The report reviewed compliance by the Member States with the provisions on submission of capacity balance reports and action plans to the European Commission. It was discovered that the Member States do not provide adequate information on fleet capacity. Some Member States only identify overcapacity in the small scale fleet. More investigation into fleet capacity is needed. It was agreed to distribute the report among the participants through the BSAC Secretariat.

A fisheries representative sought clarification in order to know how the Fisheries Secretariat had calculated fishing effort in their report.⁷

Professor Ulrich stated that the indicators cannot be changed in the middle of the EMFF period. None of these indicators is good enough to be considered alone. Often, the Member States calculate their own indicators, and the results do not match. STECF maintains the request to the Member States to provide data. The procedure is complicated because there are many fleets and stocks. It is also difficult to assess the socio-economic data in terms of green and red colour coding and determine what is the acceptable impact.

An OIG representative commented that the reason behind the lack of socio-economic data should be found.

Replying to a question from a small scale fisheries representative on the subsidies and loss of profitability in connection with subsidies, Professor Ulrich stated that subsidies are part of a political strategy and no doubt, if they were removed, the profitability would further decrease. A lot of prominent scientists have expressed opinions against subsidies, since subsidies maintain overcapacity. This is more a political rather than scientific matter.

A fisheries representative asked about the carbon footprint of one tonne of fish as compared to other branches of animal consumption.

⁷ https://www.fishsec.org/app/uploads/2018/10/Fishsec_capacity_report_2018_final.pdf

Professor Clara Ulrich replied that capture fish probably are among the lowest carbon footprint for animal-derived food.

A fisheries representative pointed out that fishing effort and fleet size and segments need to be considered in relation to fishing area and the distribution of the fish. Professor Clara Ulrich commented that the fact that other fleets can reach and catch fish does not mean that a stock is healthy.

The ExCom Chair thanked Professor Clara Ulrich for her interesting and relevant presentation. The presentation and discussions provide the BSAC with work to do in formulating questions to STECF.

6. Information from Member States on what plans they have to implement the Commission proposal on the introduction of capacity limits for Eastern Baltic cod, data collection and control measures in the Baltic Sea

The ExCom Chair asked the Member States for information on what plans they have to implement the Commission proposal on the introduction of capacity limits for eastern Baltic cod, data collection and control measures. He reminded participants that the PECH Committee will be looking at the Commission proposal on 20th January 2020 in the afternoon.

A representative of the Danish government noted that the Danish administration is still exploring how to give temporary aid for fishermen and develop a scrapping model. So far, there is no feedback from decision-makers.

A representative of the Lithuanian government informed that recreational fishermen and boat owners had asked for compensation. She asked whether such requests had also been put forward in other Member States and what legal possibilities there are to pay compensation to recreational fishermen.

A representative of the Polish government informed that the Polish administration had also received requests for compensation from recreational fishermen and boat owners. They await help in the light of a catastrophic situation caused by the ban on the cod fishery. The administration is waiting for the decision of the European Commission. Referring to the compensation for permanent cessation of fishing activities through scrapping, he stated that Polish commercial fishermen are interested in scrapping their vessels.

However, Regulation 508/2014⁸, Article 25.5 contains a provision stipulating that if the support for temporary cessation had already been granted under the current EMFF, this support would be deducted from the support for permanent cessation through scrapping. If this provision is applied, Polish fishermen will not be willing to scrap their vessels.

The representative of the European Commission explained that some legal issues related to the conditions of providing support are still being discussed. The eligibility depends on whether recreational vessels can be regarded as commercial fishing vessels. The Commission will inform the Member States on the final decisions with respect to the regulation on capacity limits.

A fisheries representative asked whether net makers and processors, who are also severely affected by the closure of the eastern cod fishery, could benefit from EMFF support. Equal treatment is guaranteed by the Constitution.

A representative of the anglers noted that recreational angling should be included in the CFP and also benefit from financial support for cessation of activities.

The ExCom Chair proposed to include subsidies in the discussion on the future CFP.

A fisheries representative pointed out that recreational angling vessels belong to another sector of the economy - tourism - and have other funding opportunities, which depend on national regulations. The severe reduction of the western cod TAC and closure of the eastern cod fishery have a severe impact on fishermen exploiting these stocks and they call for support. He noted that the temporal cessation should not be calculated against permanent cessation.

The representative of the European Commission informed that the proposal on the introduction of the support for the permanent cessation of fishing activities through scrapping should be strictly conditional and linked to the achievement of the target to maintain a balance between the fleet capacity and the fishing opportunities. It is directed at fleets fishing eastern cod. The Council also wants to cover western Baltic cod and western Baltic herring. He drew attention that to the fact that the re-introduction of permanent cessation can be easily justified for eastern cod because of the very specific situation. However, broadening the scope of operations eligible for financial support carries certain political risks, as other sea basins may claim that the same provisions should be applied there as well. Capacity limits were proposed to avoid misuse of funding and to ensure an actual permanent capacity reduction of the relevant fleets. The European Parliament's PECH Committee will clarify the situation.

⁸ Regulation 508/2014 Article 25.5: Support to vessel owners granted under Article 33 shall be deducted from support granted to vessel owners under Article 34 for the same vessel. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32014R0508&from=PL>

Referring to the deduction of support for temporary cessation from the support for scrapping, he explained that double funding is not allowed according to the EU Financial Regulations.

A representative of small scale fisheries expressed the opinion that early retirement for fishermen should also be made possible.

Two OIG representatives raised concerns about the use of EMFF money for scrapping. Member States ask for support through scrapping and at the same time ask for money for restructuring the fleet, which is perverse and not the right solution to the problem. The fisheries sector was profitable for over 20 years and did not follow the scientific advice. The cod stocks were overfished. The science was clear on this fact. The fisheries sector should not be surprised to face the closure of the cod fishery. Other solutions should be sought to secure income for fishermen, for example employment in fisheries control operations.

A fisheries representative underlined that fishermen had been faced with a sudden decision to stop the eastern cod fishery and their income went down to zero from one day to the next. **A representative of fish processors** expressed regret that the decision to close the eastern Baltic cod fishery was introduced without warning. The sector should be given time to prepare for such a severe decision.

A representative of the Polish government noted that the entire fisheries sector is heavily impacted by the closure of the targeted cod fishery. The processing sector can benefit from EMFF funds for investments only, but are not eligible for support during the cod ban.

The representative of the European Commission noted that the conditions and criteria for granting support are now under discussion in the European Parliament. The draft report prepared by the rapporteur of the PECH Committee will be discussed in March. The proposal had been prepared in record short time and could still be improved. The trilogue meetings will start after the plenary vote in the Parliament in mid-March.

He drew attention to the fact that the decision to close the eastern Baltic cod fishery was not taken from one day to the next. The problem had been known for months. In January 2019 the scientists informed of the extremely serious situation during the BSAC theme meeting on 29th January 2019⁹. The European Commission sent a letter to the BSAC and BALTFISH in February 2019, and again to the Member States in May 2019 to ask them to take action. The proposal for emergency measures was adopted in July.

The ExCom Chair thanked the participants for a fruitful debate.

⁹ [http://www.bsac.dk/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-\(4\)](http://www.bsac.dk/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-(4))

7. Output from WGs:

a) Ecosystem Based Management WG 18th-19th September 2019

Nils Höglund, Chair of the sub-group on ecosystem based management referred to the meeting of the Ecosystem Based Management Working Group 18th and 19th September 2019 in Copenhagen. This meeting dealt with the planned update and revision of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, as well as information on marine strategies and fisheries management measures developed by Member States. Experts from DG ENV, DG Mare and HELCOM took part, as well as representatives from some of the Member States.

The aim of the meeting was not to develop an opinion from the BSAC, rather to consider how the BSAC can contribute to updating the HELCOM BSAP by means of proposing new actions/initiatives. HELCOM was informed on the BSAC input to the BSAP at its meeting in Warsaw in November¹⁰. He underlined that co-operation between environmental and fisheries administrations is needed. The EBM Working Group will meet in the next BSAC financial year, starting 1st April 2020.

b) Joint WG 29th October 2019

The ExCom Chair informed that Michael Andersen, the Chair of the Demersal Working Group sent his apologies. The BSAC has had three attempts to deal with the Commission's proposal for a control regulation amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 and the BSAC has produced a synopsis paper with all the different views expressed. It was circulated among the BSAC members who took part in the Working Group meetings. After the last meeting of the Working Group, the draft recommendation was prepared by the Secretariat and distributed. There are still some outstanding issues highlighted by the Secretariat, and they need to be further explained and clarified.

An OIG representative expressed concerns over the work on the proposal for a control regulation in the BSAC. The work was stretched over a long period of time and was not very constructive. In his view, the process did not promote the relevance of the BSAC as an advisory body. After receiving feedback from the OIG member present at the last Working Group meeting, he also expressed criticism about the tone of the Working Group meeting and the way in which it was chaired.

The ExCom Chair agreed that the process had not been ideal. He noted that the draft BSAC recommendation should be ready for adoption by the ExCom. He invited the BSAC members to provide input to the draft document.

¹⁰ HELCOM Workshop on the analyses of Sufficiency of Measures (SOM) for Fish, 4th – 6th November 2019 Warsaw. [http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-\(5\)/ChairletterHELCOMBSAPtoWGchairs301019signed.pdf.aspx?lang=en-GB](http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-(5)/ChairletterHELCOMBSAPtoWGchairs301019signed.pdf.aspx?lang=en-GB)

The ExCom decided that there is no need to hold another meeting of the Working Group. A suitable deadline for comments to the draft recommendation will be fixed by the Secretariat.

8. Reports or outcomes from relevant external meetings

The ExCom Chair stated that the reports of the relevant external meetings were sent to the BSAC members. He attended the European Fisheries Control Agency meetings held on 21st and 22nd October 2019. EFCA has intensified Joint Deployment Plan activities in the Baltic. In relation to the Baltic, the issue of misreporting of herring/sprat was highlighted. Joint Deployment Plans in the Baltic will be intensified in 2020. EFCA intends to improve co-operation with the Advisory Councils. EFCA invited the BSAC to hold a meeting in Vigo. There was also a discussion on how to secure continuity in the AC presence in the Administrative Board where AC membership currently rotates annually.

The representative of EFCA noted that in 2020 EFCA will continue to focus on assisting the Member States in the monitoring and enforcement of the landing obligation. There is an intention to strengthen co-operation with the Advisory Councils. Notwithstanding limited human resources, EFCA tries to be present at relevant AC meetings.

Glenn Douglas (European Anglers Alliance) referred to the ICES Workshop on salmon held on 4th - 5th November 2019 (WKBaltSalIMP Scoping Workshop). This was the first workshop arranged by ICES for scientists and managers to meet and discuss what is required and what questions to ask in order to evaluate the draft multiannual management plan for Baltic salmon. The results from WKBALTSAL will be presented in May. Problems with misreporting of salmon and a new virus/bacteria were also raised.

A representative of the Danish government informed that BALTFISH will continue its work on the salmon management plan during the meeting in March.

The ExCom Chair encouraged BSAC members to participate in the Workshop on the Ecosystem Based Management of the Baltic Sea (WKBALTIC) in February to discuss the issues related to the management of different species in the Baltic, including salmon.

9. Date and venue of next meeting

The ExCom decided to hold the next ExCom meeting on 17th March in Copenhagen. It will be followed by a BSAC Theme meeting on the CFP.

The General Assembly and ExCom will be held on 19th May 2020 in Riga.

10. AOB

1. Misreporting of sprat and herring in the Baltic (put forward by the Fisheries Secretariat)

Lindsay Keenan (Fisheries Secretariat) referred to the misreporting of herring and sprat in the Baltic. EFCA highlighted this problem during its last meeting and plans to take action. He asked the ICES representative whether the misreporting will have an implication on the advice on the TAC setting next year.

Dr Lotte Worsøe Clausen noted that the more correct the data provided to ICES, the better the advice. Any case of misreporting is unfortunate. The impact of this misreporting has not been assessed. However, ICES is aware of it. Sensitivity analysis should be carried out to assess the impact of misreporting.

The ExCom Chair informed that a new control scheme has been introduced in Denmark to avoid misreporting, including a new method of sampling the catches. The control is carried out by an independent third party.

The representative of EFCA confirmed that EFCA is aware of the problem and that there are dedicated specific actions in the Baltic Sea JDP to address this issue. EFCA, in cooperation with Member States, have also developed a compliance indicator of expected catch composition in these fisheries.

2. Mismanagement of funds in Denmark (put forward by the Fisheries Secretariat)

Lindsay Keenan (Fisheries Secretariat) referred to the mismanagement of EMFF in Denmark in 2014-2017. He asked for an update on this issue.

The representative of the Danish government stated that this case is still being dealt with. There is no new information.

3. By-catches of cod in flatfish fishery (put forward by the Fisheries Secretariat)

Lindsay Keenan (Fisheries Secretariat) referred to the fact that in October 2019 the Council decided to set a TAC for Eastern Baltic Cod of 2.000 tonnes as bycatch only. He noted that ICES recommended a bycatch TAC of 426 – 1.733 tonnes. In his view, this bycatch TAC should be decreased. More selective gears could be used in the flatfish fishery to minimise the bycatch. The ICES report on the EU request for further information on the distribution and unavoidable bycatches of eastern Baltic cod¹¹ refers to the technical strategies to avoid cod bycatches in the trawl fishery. There are opportunities to fast track selective gears. This could be a recommendation from the BSAC.

¹¹ http://ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2019/Special_Requests/eu.2019.24.pdf

He underlined the political urgency of such a recommendation. He also referred to the fact that according to ICES, Subdivision 26 has been of relatively little importance in recent years in terms of flatfish fishery. A substantial part of the eastern Baltic cod stock is distributed in Subdivision 26. A potential closure of Subdivision 26 for demersal fisheries would thus protect a substantial part of the eastern Baltic cod stock, while having limited implications for EU flatfish fisheries. The BSAC could recommend the closure of SD 26 for demersal fisheries.

The ExCom Chair noted that this issue should be dealt with by the Demersal Working Group. He will discuss how to deal with this issue with the Chair of the Working Group. He proposed to come back to the issue at the ExCom on 17th March 2020.

The ExCom Chair thanked the outgoing Vice-Chair for his help and engagement during his term of office. He wished him all the best for the future.

Andrzej Białas, the outgoing Vice-Chair thanked the management team, especially the Secretariat for being such a great help during his term of office as vice chair. He said he was going to remember the good times.

There was applause to thank the outgoing Vice-Chair for his work for the BSAC.

The ExCom Chair thanked all participants for good debates.