

**BSAC Executive Committee ¹
30th – 31st January 2023
Neringa Hotel, Vilnius, Lithuania and online via Zoom**

Report

Session 1: BSAC internal matters

1. Welcome by the BSAC Chair Jarek Zielinski

The BSAC Chair welcomed all ExCom participants, Member States, BSAC members and all other observers, present in the room and on-line. He thanked the Lithuanian BALTFISH Presidency and administration for their assistance in organising the meeting.

a. Apologies and adoption of the agenda

The ExCom Chair thanked the Secretariat for preparing the meeting and introduced Klavs Skovsholm, who works in the BSAC Secretariat on voluntary basis.

Under AOB was noted a point by **Michael Andersen, Danish Fishers PO** on the implementation of the new ROOFLESS gear. He underlined that the BSAC had at several occasions pointed to the need to test the gear in commercial fishery. He drew the attention to the fact that the new ROOFLESS gear will become the only mandatory gear to be used in flatfish fishery on the basis of the BALTFISH Joint Recommendation and following the adoption of a Delegated Act².

The ExCom Chair proposed to discuss the possibility to invite the EU IUU fishing coalition to present a report on compliance of the Baltic Member States.

The agenda was adopted without changes.

The participants list, including the apologies is on the website³. There was a quorum for the meeting.

b. Adoption of the [minutes from the last ExCom meeting](#) (25th October 2022) and review of the action items

The minutes of the ExCom held on 25th October 2022 were adopted.

¹ Background documents are available at:

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

² Delegated Acts are adopted in accordance with Article 18 of the Regulation (EU) 1380/2013: [Regulation \(EU\) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations \(EC\) No 1954/2003 and \(EC\) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations \(EC\) No 2371/2002 and \(EC\) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC \(europa.eu\)](#)

³ [http://www.bsac.dk/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-\(9\)](http://www.bsac.dk/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-(9))

The Executive Secretary presented the action points from the last ExCom and their current state of implementation. He pointed out that several of these actions will be dealt with under the current ExCom agenda⁴.

c. Two ExCom members to check the minutes

Vesa Karttunen (Federation of Finnish Fisheries Associations) and **Matti Ovaska** (World Wide Fund for Nature) agreed to check the minutes.

2. From the Secretariat

a. Brief status on expenditure and admin. for 2022-2023

The Executive Secretary informed the meeting that expenditures were on track and slightly above 50% of the budget had been used until 31st of December 2022. The BSAC could end up the current financial year with a substantial underspend of about 70 thousand €, mainly due to lower than planned reimbursements of travel costs to members. The unspent funds have to be returned to the European Commission. He stated that the new reimbursement rule presented under item 2e is aimed at fostering in-person participation in meetings. The funds available under the current budget could be used for website revision (see item 2d) and an initial scoping study for the GIS map tool (approximate cost 15 thousand €) to understand which data layers are most important to the BSAC members.

The Pelagic WG Chair reminded the BSAC members that the GIS map tool had already been presented by NWWAC to the BSAC ExCom in October. The BSAC Secretary and the Pelagic WG Chair participated in the training organised by NWWAC. The maps visualise useful information for fisheries, such as protected areas, fisheries regulatory measures, present and planned wind farms, cables etc.

The ExCom Chair stated that the GIS map tool provides a user-friendly means to identify the different activities and areas of marine space, such as for example closed areas and would have to be adapted with data and information relevant to the Baltic. The total costs including the licence would amount to approximately 38 thousand €. He proposed to ask DG Mare if such online tool would be considered as eligible for funding and whether additional expenditure for the licence could be included in the BSAC budget for 2023-24.

The EBM WG Chair did not see the immediate need to invest in such interactive tool. In his view, the costs of such investment should be borne by the sea users, such as the offshore wind farm companies. He also referred to a similar platform used by HELCOM, that contains a massive amount of information on the Baltic.

A representative of Danish fisheries agreed that there is no urgent need to buy the interactive tool and stated that more information is needed before taking a decision on such considerable investment. In his view, there should be clarity on who is responsible for delivering data on the Baltic, who will use it and who will update the tool.

A representative of Swedish fisheries referred to the fact that the GIS map could be useful to visualise and locate all activities taking place at sea.

⁴ [BSAC - BSAC Executive Committee meeting](#)

A representative of Polish fisheries underlined that such interactive tool could only be useful for fishers if it contains updated and reliable information. In his view, the Commission or dedicated governmental institutions should be made responsible for providing updated information on regulatory measures, such as closed areas and fishing gears.

A representative of Finnish fishers agreed that the tool is useful for illustrating activities at sea. However, its use in practice should be verified. He referred to the applications used in Finland which display similar information and underlined that, in his opinion, no added value would be provided by the proposed tool in Finland.

A representative of German fisheries agreed that it is up to the governmental institutions to communicate any legislative regulations and measures to stakeholders. Such information needs to be reliable and updated in order not to create any legal consequences to fishers. In his view, in the Baltic, such interactive maps could be useful in some cases, for example if used for security reasons, to map lost gears or wrecks.

A representative of the OIG underlined that there is a need to implement a more holistic approach to assess cumulative impacts on the environment and in this context, the GIS map tool could be considered as a step in the right direction. He pointed to the need for regular updates to the map, which will require additional time-consuming work. In his view, there no urgent need for the BSAC to invest in the map.

The ExCom took note of the status of expenditures presented by the Executive Secretary.

The ExCom decided to gather more information on the interactive tool and to further explore the possibility to join the other Advisory Councils in the development of the GIS tool at a later stage.

b. Updated Privacy Policy⁵

The Secretariat informed on the update of the Privacy Policy as of 1st January 2023 to ensure it is accurate and up to date. The updated policy complies with the GDPR obligation.

The ExCom took note of the updated Privacy Policy.

c. Tendering process for the Rapporteur Information Assistant

The ExCom Chair informed that the contract with the Rapporteur-Information Assistant comes to an end in March. New tender was launched. Three companies had been approached and the BSAC received one tender application. The application is being assessed by the independent committee formed of the Chairs of ExCom, WG, and GA and the Ex Sec. ExCom will be informed of the results of the evaluation against objective criteria and of the recommendation of the Committee on 17th February 2023. Without any objection from the ExCom, the tender application will be accepted.

The ExCom took note.

⁵ [2-b-Information-updated-privacy-statement.pdf.aspx \(bsac.dk\)](https://www.bsac.dk/2-b-Information-updated-privacy-statement.pdf.aspx)

d. Work on a Communication Strategy⁶

The BSAC Secretariat presented the draft Communication strategy. The revision is aimed at increasing the awareness of the BSAC members on discussions taking place and positions adopted by the BSAC, at strengthening the sense of being part of the BSAC and potentially get members to effectively participate in the work of the BSAC. To this end, the strategy proposes to revise the website to make it more user-friendly, to consider the idea to be represented on social media, especially LinkedIn and issue press releases referring to the important meetings or recommendations.

With reference to the revision of the BSAC website, **the Executive Secretary** informed that the Secretariat had approached different companies to ask for quotes on the revision of the BSAC website. The quotes received differ in the scope of offered tools and prices. The Management Team had advised on the revision process. One of the offers seems the most appropriate because of the experience in the work with other ACs, quality of the proposal, as well as reasonable price.

The ExCom Chair asked the ExCom whether the members agree to revise the website and proceed with the best offer, which in practice means amending the budget and work programme 2022-2023 to allow for such possibility, and whether they could endorse the new communication strategy for the benefit of the BSAC.

Several fisheries representatives agreed to the need to revise the website to make it more user-friendly. They underlined that the website represents the BSAC in the outside world and should be improved. With reference to the communication strategy, they agreed that LinkedIn is the best candidate among the social media. In their view, the Secretariat should measure the proposed tools against its capacities. In their view, press releases could be used to communicate important decisions to the fisheries sector and the outside world, in order to increase the visibility of the BSAC.

A representative of the OIG agreed to the proposed communication strategy and to the revision of the website. In his view, the information included in the website should also address a wider public and include general information on Baltic fisheries. He stated that he sees no added value for the BSAC to be present in social media.

A representative of German fisheries underlined that in the crisis situation, the BSAC should focus on increasing the quality and impact of its advice. Several producer organisations are facing severe difficulties. The BSAC cannot give the impression that it is business as usual. All communication efforts should aim at improving the performance of the BSAC, for the benefit of the fishers and the Baltic environment.

A representative of an organisation representing small scale fishers agreed that quality and impact of the BSAC advice should be the focus of the communication strategy.

A representative of Swedish fisheries stated that communication objectives should be identified for different target groups. She underlined that the quality of the newsletters depends also on the input from the BSAC members, who rarely have the time to provide information to the Secretariat.

⁶ [2-d-Draft-communication-strategy_v5.pdf.aspx \(bsac.dk\)](#)

The ExCom Chair stated that the communication strategy is aimed at finetuning the existing communication tools. At present, the BSAC newsletter is only distributed to the members and in the future could be used to communicate with a wider audience. A new design of the website is also needed to improve communication.

The ExCom adopted the BSAC communication strategy⁷.

The ExCom agreed to revise the BSAC website and asked the Secretariat to proceed with the offer received from Ben Stone who had prepared the websites for NSAC and PELAC.

The ExCom amended the budget and work programme 2022-2023 to allow for such possibility.

e. Proposal for a revised reimbursement procedure⁸

The Executive Secretary presented a draft revised reimbursement procedure. He informed that the proposed procedure follows the recommended Commission's financial guidelines. It is aimed at encouraging broader in-person participation. It sets limits on hotels, travels and daily allowance. The ExCom and GA Chairs and the Secretariat are not eligible for daily allowance, but receive cost reimbursements based on receipts. The BSAC representatives to external meetings can exceed limits for travel/hotels in justified cases.

Several participants drew attention to the fact that the proposed limits on travel costs and hotels are too low, given the present prices of flight tickets and hotels. Some participants underlined that the fisheries organisations cannot afford to pay any additional costs borne by their representatives when travelling to the BSAC meetings. In their view, higher limits should be set in the proposal.

The Executive Secretary presented the updated proposal for reimbursement procedure, with a 600 EUR cap on flight tickets, and new proposed limits for hotel reimbursements for different countries.

The ExCom approved the amended draft reimbursement procedure for submission to the General Assembly.⁹

f. Draft estimated expenditure and work programme for 2023-2024

The Executive Secretary presented the draft budget and work programme, prepared by the Secretariat in collaboration with the Working Group Chairs and the ExCom Chair. He informed that the work programme follows the same approach as in previous years, but also takes account of recommendations of the external evaluation of the BSAC, and the comments of the members received during the year. The work programme and the draft budget were sent to the BSAC members, Member States and the Commission for comments. The draft estimated budget has increased by 27% as compared to the previous year due to, among others, more in-person meetings planned next year (in total 3 on-line

⁷ [Communication Strategy](#)

⁸ [2-e-Revised-Reimbursement-Guidelines-draftv4.pdf.aspx \(bsac.dk\)](#)

⁹ [reimbursement procedure before amendment](#)

and 10 in person/hybrid meetings), a workshop with BALTFISH and another with EFCA, indexation of the salaries in response to the inflation, new members, increase on demands for interpretation (German and Polish). **The Executive Secretary** presented some measures proposed to reduce the BSAC expenditure as compared to the previous years, among others setting an account in Euro to limit the double conversion losses and allow BSAC to pay in Euro for travel reimbursements, meeting rooms, and others. limiting banking costs, reducing costs by organising on-line meetings of Focus Groups and Management Team.

The BSAC will start with the lumpsum model in the new financial year.

The Work Programme was prepared according to the new layout provided by the Commission. It includes an additional item on planned recommendations which in addition to meetings are the main deliverables under the lumpsum model. 9 recommendations are foreseen at the moment.

A representative of an organisation representing small scale fisheries requested to include a reference to Bothnian and central herring in the Work Programme.

A representative of Polish fisheries asked whether the BSAC could invite scientists to present an alternative advice to the ICES advice on the Baltic stocks and fisheries. He underlined that so far, the scientific advice has not delivered the expected results and an alternative approach should be sought by the BSAC. He referred to the reply received from DG Mare to the letter sent by Polish fisheries organisations in October 2020 to the Council and the European Commission. In its reply the Commission states that it relies exclusively on the ICES advice as the best available one. In some cases is insufficient to take rational decisions. In his view, the ICES advice is in some cases insufficient to take rational decisions and the Commission should take into account the results of scientific research from other sources in their management decisions.

The ExCom Chair stated that the BSAC can invite any scientists to its meetings if there is a need to use other sources of scientific information than ICES. He referred to the example of ICES advice on mixed fisheries in the Baltic. At the last MIACO meeting in January 2023, ICES explained that there was a lack of appropriate data and of expertise to prepare a Baltic mixed fisheries advice and expertise needs to be sought.

A representative of Swedish fisheries asked to include a reference to the impact of the war in Ukraine on Baltic fisheries in the preamble of the Work Programme. She also underlined that the wind power expansion is an overarching issue that should be dealt with by all BSAC Working Groups.

The EBM Working Group Chair informed that the next WG meeting will focus on offshore wind farms and is expected to produce draft recommendations.

A representative of German fisheries stated that there is an urgent need to deal with the management of predators (seals and cormorants) in the Baltic, especially given the critical socio-economic situation and the impact these predators have on the fish stocks. He also referred to the EU Action Plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems which will be published in February 2023 and the need for a BSAC recommendation on this initiative.

The ExCom Chair stated that the BSAC is ready to work on any relevant recommendations in 2023-24. The list of recommendations in the Work Programme is a

required minimum. He referred to the fact that the Work Programme will be adopted by the European Commission and the meetings and recommendations are considered as deliverables under the lump sum financial model. Substantial deviations compared to the planned activities as indicated in the work programme (implementation of the work programme below 50% compared to the planned meetings and recommendations) could result in a decrease of the next year's lump sum by up to 50%.

The Executive Secretary stated that the Work Programme will be amended to include the Bothnian and central herring and a statement on the war in Ukraine in the preamble.

The ExCom agreed to the proposed amendments to the Work Programme.

The ExCom approved the draft estimated budget and the draft work programme for 2023-2024.

g. Proposal for translation of advice from English to Baltic languages

The ExCom Chair informed the meeting that the BSAC Secretariat had asked the members to indicate their interest for translation of the BSAC recommendations on TACs for 2024. Members from Poland, Lithuania, Sweden and Germany had expressed interest and these translations were included in the draft budget for next year. He asked the members whether the BSAC should also translate the ICES advice in order to engage more members in the discussions on the BSAC recommendations on the fishing opportunities. He drew attention to the fact that given the volume of the ICES advice, some Advisory Councils only translate the ACOM vice-chair presentations on advice for the current year.

The representatives of the Finnish, Lithuanian and Swedish fisheries stated that they see no need to translate the ICES advice into their national languages. Some of them indicated that translations of the advice are provided by national administrations. Some fisheries representatives drew attention to the budgetary implications of translation of voluminous documents. **Some representatives of the OIG** drew attention to the costs of translation of voluminous documents and the need for quality assurance.

The ExCom did not express support for translating the ICES advice into national languages. **The ExCom** took note that any other proposals for translation could be raised in future years if needed.

The ExCom agreed to translate the BSAC recommendations on TACs in 4 languages.

3. Relating to the Work Programme 2022-2023

Update on what's planned until 31st March 2022 (end of current year)

a. Ecosystem Based Management Working Group - 17th February 2023

The Executive Secretary informed that the next EBM WG meeting will focus on offshore wind farm development. A presentation of a scientific report commissioned by the European Commission on the consequences on the environment and fish stocks is scheduled along with a presentation of the work undertaken by the MSP forum. The WG will prepare a draft BSAC recommendation on the topic.

a. Pelagic Working Group – 16th March

The Executive Secretary informed that the next Pelagic WG meeting will deal with different topics, among others: follow-up on the main pelagic stocks, the application of the provision on water and ice during pelagic landings¹⁰, exploring interest to further work on Bothnian Bay herring and for a workshop on pelagic fisheries.

a. **Demersal Working Group - 17th March**

The Executive Secretary informed that the next Demersal WG meeting will tackle different topics, among them the issue of cod closure exemptions below 20m depth, update and status on Commission's Implementing Act to Technical Measures Regulation, preparatory work on possible BALTFISH - BSAC workshop on predators.

The ExCom Chair asked the Working Group Chairs to update the work programmes and recommendations for respective WGs and present them to the Management Team.

4. Revision of the Rules of Procedure: Questions from the Focus Group

In the capacity of **the Focus Group Chair, the BSAC Honorary Chair** presented the progress report¹¹. The Focus Group (FG) on the revision of the Rules of Procedure had two meetings aimed at revising the BSAC rules of procedure and made good progress in producing a comprehensive draft document. The Focus Group plans to meet in February to continue the work, following the guidance received from the BSAC members. A draft revised document will be submitted to the ExCom in February for written endorsement. Online presentation of the draft will be offered to the BSAC members. The draft Rules of Procedure will be sent to the General Assembly in March for consideration and possible comments. The Rules of Procedure are to be adopted by the General Assembly in May.

The BSAC Secretariat referred to the issues on which guidance from the Executive Committee is required, as presented in the progress report and the draft¹².

With reference to the balanced representation of stakeholders in the BSAC referred to under several points of the Rules of Procedure, **a representative of Danish fishers** underlined that the division of the fisheries sector into small and large vessels is artificial and should not be applied to the BSAC documents. The BSAC and the working groups should remain open to all stakeholders on the basis of an equality principle. **Some fisheries representatives** supported his statement.

A representative of the OIG stated that more discussion is needed on how to guarantee a balanced representation of stakeholders in the BSAC.

¹⁰Article 74.2. Without prejudice to special rules for pelagic species referred to in Articles 78 – 89 of this Regulation which are landed in bulk for transfer to the point of first marketing, storage or processing, the deduction of water and ice from the total weight shall not exceed 2%.

[Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) No 404/2011 of 8 April 2011 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1224/2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹¹ [Progress report from the Focus Group](#)

¹² [Draft Rules of Procedure for ExCom](#)

A representative of an organisation representing small scale fishers stated that in line with the EU legislation on the functioning of the ACs, the GA and the ExCom shall ensure a balanced and wide representation of all stakeholders, with emphasis on small-scale fleets.

The ExCom Chair underlined that in his view as an impartial Chair of the ExCom, the incentives for small scale fishers to attend the BSAC meetings should be clearly stated in the Rules of Procedure.

Due to the time constraints, **the ExCom did not continue the discussions**. There was no opposition from the ExCom members to include in the Rules of Procedure the other points on which the FG sought ExCom's guidance, notably issues of alignment of terms of chairmen across the various sections of the rules and the proposal for a written procedure for the GA in exceptional circumstances, and the Focus Group was invited to produce a final draft of the Rules of Procedure to be presented to the ExCom for approval. All the ExCom members were invited to take part in the next meeting of the Focus Group to provide specific comments.

Session 2: BSAC internal matters and cooperation

6. Any meetings/activities to report on:

a. Roundtable with the Commissioner on 05/12

The ExCom Chair referred to the Roundtable meeting on 5th December 2022, organised by the Commissioner Sinkevičius in Brussels. The ExCom Chair and the EBM WG Chair attended the meeting. The ExCom Chair presented the BSAC input to the meeting¹³. Written input was also sent to the Commissioner. The BSAC received an answer from DG Mare to this input (discussed under Agenda item 9).

The ExCom took note.

b. Inter-AC coordination meeting 11/01

The Executive Secretary informed that the BSAC Secretariat organised an Inter-AC meeting with Chairs and ACs Secretariats on 11th January 2023 in Copenhagen, before the MIAC/MIACO meeting. The meeting was focused on commonalities between the work programmes and issues shared by different ACs. The next Inter AC meeting with the Commission is scheduled for 9th March 2023 and a link will be provided for all interested AC members to follow it. A small BSAC delegation will be able to intervene. He drew attention to the draft a letter to the Commission regarding support and promotion of the work of the ACs, co-signed by all Advisory Councils and sent the letter to the ExCom members for comments. The ExCom is asked to validate the letter.

¹³ [http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-\(9\)/5-a-BSAC-Report-Roundtable-Commissioner-vf.pdf.aspx?lang=en-GB](http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-(9)/5-a-BSAC-Report-Roundtable-Commissioner-vf.pdf.aspx?lang=en-GB) answer from COM
[http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-\(9\)/5-a-2022-12-16-Reply-to-BSAC.pdf.aspx?lang=en-GB](http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-(9)/5-a-2022-12-16-Reply-to-BSAC.pdf.aspx?lang=en-GB)

The ExCom took note of the information and validated the draft ACs letter calling the Commission to support ACs.

c. MIAC-MIACO meetings 12th – 13th January 2023¹⁴

The Executive Secretary referred to the MIAC and MIACO meetings held on 12th and 13th January 2023 in the ICES Headquarters in Copenhagen. The ExCom Chair and the Executive Secretary attended the meetings. The BSAC received precise answers on the questions provided before the meeting, provided by the ACOM Vice Chair Henn Ojaveer (attached to the latest newsletter). These answers will be discussed during the upcoming WG meetings. With relevance to the BSAC, ICES referred to the shortage of scientific expertise and scientists working on the Baltic mixed fisheries assessment and the impact of predators on fish stocks.

d. EFCA invitation to patrol vessel launching on 17th January 2023

The ExCom Chair informed that he attended the launching of the EFCA chartered patrol vessels in Vigo on the 17th January 2023. In a letter thanking EFCA for the invitation, the Chair highlighted the importance of control and its impact on the management of the Baltic. EFCA has accepted his request to organise study trips visit of the BSAC members onboard these patrol vessels during a port call in the Baltic.

e. PECH Hearing on Baltic MAP 23/01

The Executive Secretary informed that the ExCom Chair presented the BSAC position on the state of play of the implementation of the Baltic Sea Multiannual Plan during a PECH committee hearing on the 23rd January 2023. His presentation was to large extent based on the BSAC answer to the Commission's evaluation of the MAP in 2019 and on the White Paper on the CFP. During the validation process of the BSAC presentation by the ExCom, some members raised interest for revising the BSAC position on the MAP.

The ExCom agreed to open up the discussion on the BSAC position on the MAP during the ExCom in May and invite the MEPs to take part in this open discussion.

6. STECF [AER report](#) follow-up on the consequences of the economic collapse of the Baltic SSF

The ExCom Chair referred to the presentation of the STECF Annual Economic Report (AER) on the EU Fishing Fleet to the ExCom meeting in October 2022. According to AER, small scale fishery in the Baltic presents a continuously deteriorating picture. In some parts of the Baltic small scale sector is at the verge of collapse. He invited the BSAC members to reflect on the steps that could be taken by the Commission and Member States to meet this

¹⁴ BSAC Reports MIAC <http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/BSAC-Resources/Documents-section/BSAC-Newsletter-latest/MIAC12012023reportBSAC-REV2.pdf.aspx?lang=en-GB> ; and MIACO <http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/BSAC-Resources/Documents-section/BSAC-Newsletter-latest/MIACO12-13012023draftBSACreport-Rev.pdf.aspx?lang=en-GB>

challenge. He asked the members whether the BSAC should prepare a recommendation on the consequences of the economic collapse of Baltic small scale fleet.

A representative of Polish fisheries referred to the questions on the AER asked during the last ExCom, whether the STECF had calculated the break-even point for the pelagic fleet¹⁵, to estimate how much fish need to be caught by different fleet segments. He also asked whether the STECF had carried out a sensitivity analysis to estimate the minimum price, maximum costs and the volume of the catch of a given species. The answers to these questions are needed to assess the profitability of Baltic fisheries.

The ExCom Chair proposed to address these questions to STECF.

A representative of an organisation representing small scale fishers underlined that according to AER the situation of the Baltic small scale fleet differs, depending on the target species. Small scale fisheries targeting cod and herring are in crisis. Small scale vessels targeting small pelagic fish are in better situation and note an increase in revenues.

The BALTFISH Lithuanian Presidency informed that BALTFISH had not discussed the STECF AER. She informed that the discussion on the economic performance of the Baltic fleets will be carried out at the level of the working parties in the European Council.

A representative of Danish fisheries pointed out that the economic crisis refers in reality to the entire local Baltic fleet, not only to vessels below 12 metres. Regardless the gear used, the Baltic fleet cannot move the effort to another area and has no access to the sufficient resources.

A representative of Polish small scale fisheries stated that the performance of the fleet depends on the targeted fish and not solely on the vessel size.

Input from Member States

A representative of the Finnish administration stated that the Finnish coastal fleet is not in crisis. Herring stocks are stable in the Finnish waters. However, the impact of growing seal and cormorant populations is serious and should be addressed to decrease the damages.

A representative of the Lithuanian administration informed that the economic performance of the Lithuanian small scale fleet is not good. Larger vessels targeting pelagic fish are in a relatively good situation. In their opinion, the methodology used by STECF in the AER should be revised, although the quality of data used in the latest reports has improved.

A representative of the Polish administration noted that the Polish small scale vessels face very big problems, related to the restricted fishing opportunities, as well as predation by seals and cormorants. He underlined that STECF should not only make economic performance assessments, but should also show the measures to improve the situation.

¹⁵ The break-even point is the level of production at which the costs of production equal the revenues for a product.

This crisis situation of the fleet will not improve in the short term. Permanent cessation of fishing activities is one of the solutions offered to fishers.

A representative of the German administration referred to the deep crisis in Baltic fisheries. The German administration, in cooperation with the fisheries sector has taken the first steps to address the crisis. Discussions are carried out in the framework of a roundtable. The sector will be much smaller in the future to ensure economically viable fisheries. EMFAF will be used to support the fishers.

A representative of the Swedish administration commented that the number of small scale fishing vessels in Sweden has gone down.

A representative of Polish fisheries stated that the STECF report should provide solutions to the problem. In his view, an analysis of profitability thresholds for different fleet segments should be carried out to draw detailed scenarios and measures to improve the situation. He proposed to ask the BALTFISH Member States to carry out such economic analysis for different fleet segments. Decommissioning should not be the only solution to the problem.

A representative of German fisheries referred to the roundtable discussions carried out in Germany, which include representatives of all fleet segments and the processing industry. The entire fisheries sector is at the danger of collapse. In his view, discussions on the way forward should be held at regional level. In drafting the recommendation, the BSAC should not limit itself to academic discussion, but attempt to create a toolkit for the fisheries sector, including all possible options such as diversification of fishing activities.

A representative of an organisation representing small scale fishers stated that the AER shows that the performance of the small scale fleet depends on the access to resources and therefore the BSAC recommendation should contain measures aimed at improving the Baltic cod and herring stocks.

A representative of Danish fisheries underlined that the demersal fishing fleet could be profitable on the condition that it has access to resources. The current crisis in the fisheries sector results from the lack of fish resources and bad management decisions. In this context, he referred to the 2023 TAC for western Baltic cod, set by the Council below scientific advice.

A representative of Swedish fisheries underlined that the current crisis is not directly related to the vessel size. He proposed to ask the BSAC members from the fisheries sector to provide detailed information describing the economic situation of small and large vessels, in connection to the STECF report. This information could be used to formulate the BSAC recommendation on the economic crisis of Baltic fisheries. Referring to the economic situation of the Swedish small scale fisheries, he underlined that despite good herring fishery in the south of Sweden, the market for herring is limited, and the fact that there are only two plants processing herring in Sweden makes landing of high quality fish for consumption difficult. Nature is limiting the use of static gears to one or two months, when herring is close enough to the shore. Fishing with static gears cannot be carried out during the rest of the year.

A representative of small-scale fisheries submitted¹⁶ processing statistics from the Swedish Agency for Water and Marine Management to the BSAC which stated that there are additional 5 processing factories for herring in Sweden which supply surströmming. He noted that the market for herring is very strong, the problem is that demand far outstrips the supply of large adult herring. Coastal fishermen operating static gears have in fact not been able to meet demand despite longer fishing seasons.

Vessel size has played a significant role in the lack of biomass growth we have seen in the Baltic in recent years. It is noticeable that the Gulf of Riga herring fishery, which caps vessel size and engine power, is the exception to this rule and has seen a significant increase in quotas.

The ExCom Chair noted that there is a general support of the BSAC members for preparing a BSAC recommendation on the STECF AER, addressed to the European Commission and Member States. Discussions should be continued in the framework of the Demersal WG.

The ExCom decided that a proposal for a BSAC recommendation on the conclusion of the STECF AER will be further discussed during the Demersal WG meeting in March.

7. Cooperation with BALTFISH

- [Lithuanian Presidency Workplan](#) and the [BSAC comments](#)
- [BSAC questionnaire](#) to the Member States to ask how the exemptions provided for in Article 7 of the Council Regulation 2021/1888 are interpreted
- Joint expert group on predators (seals, cormorants)
- Technical Measures Regulation 2019/1241: Implementing and Delegated Acts to avoid cod by-catch; western Baltic Herring to next Presidency

The Executive Secretary informed that the BSAC continues good cooperation with BALTFISH Presidency through regular virtual coffee meetings. The BSAC input to the BALTFISH work plan was to a large extent incorporated in the plan. The BSAC provided a questionnaire to the BALTFISH Member States asking how the exemptions provided for in Article 7 of the Council Regulation 2021/1888 are implemented. The BSAC included a joint BALTFISH – BSAC workshop on predators in its work programme 2023-24.

The ExCom Chair appreciated the cooperation with the Lithuanian Presidency and expressed hope that close cooperation between BALTFISH and BSAC will continue in the future, under next Presidencies.

The Lithuanian BALTFISH Presidency thanked the BSAC for regular meetings and exchange of information. She proposed to hold a joint online BALTFISH – BSAC workshop on predators (seal, cormorants) in spring 2023 and asked the BSAC to take a leadership. BALTFISH could co-chair the meeting. She proposed to postpone the discussions on western Baltic herring management and the Implementing Act to Technical Measures Regulation until the next (Polish) Presidency due to the lack of expertise and resources.

The ExCom Chair decided to organise a joint BALTFISH - BSAC workshop on predators in the spring 2023 (date TBD).

¹⁶ The statistics were sent by the representative of Low Impact Fishers of Europe after the meeting

Interpretation of Article 7 of the Council Regulation 2021/1888:

The Lithuanian BALTFISH Presidency presented the replies¹⁷ received from Member States on interpretation of Article 7 of the Council Regulation 2021/1888¹⁸.

A representative of Polish fisheries commented that the Polish administration is the only administration among the Baltic Member States which applies the law in different way. In consequence, fishers are obliged to sort the catch at sea. In September 2022, the representative of DG Mare explained that *with reference to Article 7, the provision does not specify if sorting of catches should take place onboard or on land. The exemption should only be applied to the fishery for human consumption.* He asked the Polish administration to consider the above-mentioned statement. **Another representative of Polish fisheries** stated that some vessels are not able to sort the catches onboard and in consequence are excluded from the exemption.

A representative of the Polish administration stated that they will address the problem of implementation of Article 7 and reply in written form.

After some further discussion, the ExCom decided that any further actions referring to the implementation of Article 7 the Council Regulation 2021/1888 should be discussed in the Pelagic WG.

Eel

The Lithuanian BALTFISH Presidency informed that the Council Regulation fixing the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks, including the European eel was adopted on 27th January 2023. The Regulation sets an extended closure of commercial fisheries and a total closure of recreational fisheries for eel in the EU waters. The Regulation will enter into force in March. Several Member States signed a declaration to strengthen the protection of the stock of European Eel. Several Baltic Member States did not agree to the adopted measures and called for a more holistic and long-term approach such as revision of the European eel Regulation.

The EBM WG Chair stated that the BSAC should further engage with the BALTFISH Member States to promote coordination in the implementation of the measures, in particular on the flexible closures. He noted that eel will probably be on the agenda of the informal consultation of the HELCOM Expert Group on migratory fish species on 24th February 2023. He underlined that the discussion on eel management should be fully coordinated with the actions planned in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan. The BSAC should continue to recall its recommendation of May 2022 calling for the implementation of national measures, with respect to anthropogenic, non-fisheries-related sources of mortality, a catch documentation system, measures against IUU fishing and an EU ban on exports outside the EU.

A representative of an organisation representing small scale fishers stated that the economic effect of prolonged closures of eel fishery should be subject to STECF analysis.

¹⁷ [http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-\(9\)/BSAC-Questionnaire-regarding-the-interpretation-of-Article-7.docx.aspx?lang=en-GB](http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-(9)/BSAC-Questionnaire-regarding-the-interpretation-of-Article-7.docx.aspx?lang=en-GB)

¹⁸ [EUR-Lex - 32021R1888 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/lexUri.do?uri=CELEX:32021R1888:EN:EUR-Lex)

He proposed to ask BALTFISH to join the BSAC in the discussion on the revision of the Baltic MAP and include a cod recovery plan as part of the Baltic MAP.

The ExCom decided to come back to the matter of eel management at one of the next meetings.

8. Issues with permanent cessation schemes (minimum days at sea,...)

A representative of Polish small-scale fisheries referred to the provisions referring to permanent cessation of fishing activities, that he had already raised during the ExCom meeting in October 2022. He underlined that the rules that oblige the fishermen to spend 120 days at sea during two years in order to comply with the conditions set by the EU rules for granting support for temporary cessation of fishing activities should be amended¹⁹. Additional 90 days at sea during 2 years are required to get the support for permanent cessation of fishing activities. In his view, the limited fishing opportunities in the Baltic, including fisheries closures, should be taken into account by the European Commission in the implementation of these rules. These provisions force fishermen to spend the required number of days at sea without any chance to get a positive economic result from fishing. He asked the BSAC to consider preparing a recommendation addressed to the European Commission to amend the provisions on permanent cessation. He stated that a special approach is needed to the Baltic fisheries under the economic situation.

Several fisheries representatives supported the proposal to amend the provisions on permanent cessation, but at the same time recognised that the revision process of a Council Regulation requires consent of all BALTFISH Member States and a long legislative process by the European Parliament and the Council.

A representative of DG Mare explained that the provision referring to the obligation to spend 90 days at sea had existed in continues to exist the EMFF Regulation²⁰ and is included in the EMFAF Regulation²¹. He further explained that under EMFF, permanent cessation had been possible until 2017, and was re-introduced following a collapse of the eastern cod stock. 90 days at sea apply to 2018 and 2019. The EMFF can still be used until the end of 2023, provided there is still funding available under national Operational Programmes. Under Article 20 of the EMFAF Regulation, EMFAF may support compensations for permanent cessation the *fishing vessel which has carried out fishing activities at sea for at least 90 days per year during the last two calendar years preceding the date of submission of the application for support*. He underlined that any revision of the EMFAF Regulation requires a long legislative procedure, including the adoption by the European Parliament and the Council.

The ExCom took note of the explanation provided by the representative of DG Mare.

9. Commission answer to roundtable input on western Baltic herring & eel

¹⁹ [EUR-Lex - 32021R1139 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#) Regulation of the Parliament and Council 2021/1139 Article 20

²⁰ [EUR-Lex - 32014R0508 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

²¹ [EUR-Lex - 32021R1139 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

The Executive Secretary referred to the draft letter²² prepared by the Executive Secretary and WG Chairs, addressed DG Mare in reply to the letter received from Fabrizio Donatella, Director of Mare C, following the BSAC sent after the Commissioner’s Roundtable on the 5th December in Brussels. The letter focuses on western Baltic herring and eel, but also the other priorities of BSAC.

The ExCom adopted the letter in the form presented to the meeting.

A representative of an organisation representing small scale fishers drew attention to the fact that some Polish fishers, members of his organisation do not have access to western herring quota and cannot fish in SD 22-24.

A representative of DG Mare explained that one TAC is set for western herring in SDs 22-24. The TAC is allocated to the relevant Member States according to the existing allocation key and then distributed at national level. Referring to the BSAC request to ICES to put the EU MAP advice as its headline advice for 2024, he commented that ICES will not accept to use the MAP for the headline advice, because this plan has not been adopted by Norway and is thus not used as the basis of the advice for this stock which is shared between the North Sea and the Baltic.

10. Date and venue of next meetings

The Executive Secretary informed the ExCom on the tentative dates of the next BSAC meetings planned in the first half of 2023:

Name	Date	Location
Ecosystem-Based-Management WG	17 FEBRUARY	Online
Pelagic WG	16 MARCH	Online
Demersal WG	17 MARCH	Online
Executive Committee	16 MAY	Brussels, and online
General Assembly	17 MAY	Brussels, and online
Joint Working Group	13-14 JUNE	Copenhagen, and online
Executive Committee	29-30 JUNE	Vigo, EFCA HQ, and online

The ExCom took note of the dates of the upcoming BSAC meetings as well as potential changes to the dates of the General Assembly and ExCom meetings in May (to be confirmed by mid-February, depending on the availability of the Commissioner who had been invited by the BSAC to take part)

²² [Draft letter follow up on western Baltic herring and eel](#)

11. AOB

EU IUU Coalition tabled by the ExCom Chair

Following a proposal by the ExCom Chair, **the ExCom** decided that the report of EU IUU fishing coalition²³ on IUU landings in the Baltic should be presented to the next BSAC ExCom meeting in May.

Delegated Act referring to the implementation of the ROOFLESS gear

A representative of Danish fishers referred to the Commission's new draft Delegated Act, containing the specification of the ROOFLESS gear. He underlined that the BSAC had at several occasions pointed to the need for the correct interpretation of the rules on technical measures concerning gear designs and the need to consult the Implementing Act to Technical Measures Regulation 2019/1241 with the fisheries sector, as well as to the need to test the proposed solutions in commercial fisheries in different fishing grounds. The BSAC had also called for a transition period before implementing the gear in the Baltic fisheries, in order for fishers to test the proposed solutions before they become compulsory. 90 days after the adoption of the Delegated Act the ROOFLESS gear will become the only mandatory gear in flatfish fishery. He stated that fishers want to see new and more selective gears in place in the Baltic, and by means of a faster process of approval. However, they find it difficult to accept a new gear introduced on a compulsory basis, with no alternative gears allowed in flatfish fishery. The implementation of the gear with prior testing by commercial fishers and without consulting the BSAC on the Delegated and Implementing Acts will be counterproductive. Moreover, according to the specification the gear is too big to be used on small vessels. He proposed to send a letter to the Commission asking to halt the compulsory use of this gear and requesting a longer implementation period, as well as the possibility to include other technical solutions with the same selectivity parameters in the Technical Measures Regulation.

A representative of German fisheries supported the need a transition period for fishers to test the proposed solutions before they become compulsory. He also supported the proposal to implement alternative solutions.

A representative of DG Mare stated that the entry into force of the new legislation was deferred to allow the use of the EMFAF funds to finance it. He also informed that the Member States were informed in July 2021 that they could allow testing the new gear designs.

A representative of Polish fisheries underlined that the decision-makers should take responsibility for any new gears introduced into the Baltic fishery on a compulsory basis. The BSAC had always called for the possibility to use other alternative technical solutions. Such solutions were proposed by the Polish scientists. He referred to the 125 mm mesh size in the new gear and underlined that 120 mm mesh size proposed in the first design of the ROOFLESS gear had a satisfactory size selectivity. He asked the Commission to

²³ <https://www.iuuwatch.eu/> **The EU IUU Fishing Coalition** — The Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), Oceana, The Nature Conservancy, The Pew Charitable Trusts and WWF — are working together to promote EU leadership in improving global fisheries transparency and governance to end illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

explain why the 120 mm mesh size recommended by the BSAC had not been used in the final design of the gear.

A representative of Danish fisheries drew attention to the fact that the ROOFLESS gear was only tested by in German waters, whereas specific conditions exist in other parts of the Baltic, such as for example in SD 22. The Danish fishers had also asked for the possibility of eliminating the bycatch rules for cod, as they found them controversial, in view of the fact that there is no targeted cod fishery in the Baltic.

A representative of the OIG agreed that a transition period for fishers to test the proposed solutions before they become compulsory should be provided.

A representative of DG Mare²⁴ referred to the letter sent by the BSAC to BALTFISH in September 2021²⁵ supporting the rationale behind the BALTFISH proposal for new selective gears and devices. She underlined that the BSAC was consulted on the proposal of the draft BALTFISH Joint Recommendation (JR) during the BALTFISH – BSAC technical meeting organised in October 2021²⁶. She informed the meeting that a technical Annex to the JR contains gear specification adapted to smaller vessels. **Another representative of DG Mare** explained that the transposition into law of this BALTFISH JR requires a Delegated Act (for the principles of the gears and devices) and an Implementing Act (for the related technical details). The European Commission had consulted the STECF on technical matters related to the new gear.

A representative of an organisation representing small scale fishers stated that the existing selective solutions should be used instead of investing public funds into new gears. In his view, the use of best practice solutions related to more selective gears should be rewarded with TAC allocations. He expressed the opinion that the allocation of the fishing opportunities should take into account the use of selective gears.

²⁴ Written input from the chat from Maria Aira Martin Unit C1 of DG MARE: Changes on the new technical annex can be consulted in the STECF report https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/plenary/-/asset_publisher/oS6k/document/id/46958216?inheritRedirect=false&redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fstecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu%2Freports%2Fplenary%3Fp_p_id%3D101_INSTANCE_oS6k%26p_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_stat%3Dnormal%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26p_p_col_id%3Dcolumn-2%26p_p_col_pos%3D1%26p_p_col_count%3D2

Explanation on the adoption procedure of the Delegated Act and Implementing Act received from a representative of DG Mare after the meeting:

The Delegated Act is already with Council and the EP for a 4-month scrutiny, which ends mid-Feb. If none of the two institutions objects, the Commission is allowed to adopt the Delegated Act. The Delegated Act corresponds to the content of the joint recommendation on which BSAC was consulted by BALTFISH and which was assessed by the STECF. The Commission will however wait with its adoption until the Implementing Act will be ready so as to adopt both acts at the same time. One without the other doesn't make sense. The Implementing Act is still being prepared internally. Its current content differs a bit from the joint recommendation as some Member States asked for some technical modifications. Once the Commission has a stable draft and after having consulted the other Commission services, the stakeholders will be consulted for 4 weeks via the "have your say" website ([Published initiatives \(europa.eu\)](https://publishedinitiatives.europa.eu)).

²⁵ <http://www.bsac.dk/BSAC-Resources/BSAC-Statements-and-recommendations/BSAC-letter-to-BALTFISH-about-technical-measures-f>

²⁶ [BSAC - BSAC-BALTFISH Technical meeting on technical measures](#)

A representative of DG Mare stated that the allocation of fishing opportunities according to selectivity criteria can only be done at national level when allocating the TAC among fishers. Referring to the 125 mm mesh size, he informed that such minimum mesh size had been proposed in the BALTFISH JR.

A representative of Danish fisheries took note of the fact that the Delegated Act takes account of the need to adapt the new gear to small vessels. He reiterated his request to postpone the implementation of the new gear in order to conduct trials in commercial fishery and asked for true dialogue with fishers, who have the practical knowledge, scientists and managers.

The ExCom Chair reiterated the proposal to discuss the Implementing Act to the Technical Measures Regulation in a dedicated Focus Group with delegated experts from BALTFISH and the BSAC.

The BSAC Secretariat referred to Article 44.1 of the Basic Regulation²⁷ which states when applying the Basic Regulation, the Commission shall, where relevant, consult the Advisory Councils.

A representative of DG Mare informed that the Commission will consult the Implementing Act related to the BALTFISH Joint recommendation with the BSAC once the informal consultation with the Member States and within the Commission is concluded²⁸.

The ExCom decided to ask the Commission to inform on the foreseen consultation with the BSAC on the draft Implementing Act to the Technical Measures Regulation. Regarding the Implementing Act for the Technical Measures Regulation, there is still no stable draft on which the other Commission services could be consulted.

Session 3: Theme Session on Climate Change in the Baltic

The Executive Secretary stated that climate change and its consequences in the Baltic are high on the political agenda. In November the European Commission asked Advisory Councils to provide input to the Commission's work on a strategy for the energy transition in the fisheries sector.

12. Baltic Earth/HELCOM fact sheet on climate change in the Baltic Sea [I]

Presentation by Örjan Östman, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Sweden. Both worked on the fact sheet report compiled by HELCOM and Baltic Earth.

²⁷ [Regulation \(EU\) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations \(EC\) No 1954/2003 and \(EC\) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations \(EC\) No 2371/2002 and \(EC\) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC \(europa.eu\)](#)

²⁸ After the meeting, the representative of DG Mare confirmed that the BSAC will be consulted on the Implementing Act as soon as interservice consultations in the Commission are completed. He drew attention to the fact that the work on transposing the BALTFISH JR had taken longer than expected, due to new and difficult legal considerations (necessity of a delegated act and an implementing act). He underlined that the Commission takes into account BSAC's and the sector's perspective and that this is a very important matter for the concerned sector on which the BSAC had not been further consulted since September 2021 (BALTFISH consultation on the draft Joint Recommendation).

Örjan Östman presented the impact of climate change in the Baltic Sea²⁹. HELCOM ENCLIME is a network on climate change, focusing on direct effects, ecosystem effects and human use. Fact sheets contain a consensus view by the region climate experts (See HELCOM Climate change Fact Sheet³⁰). He presented direct effects of climate change on abiotic environment, among others increase in water temperature, uncertainty in salinity forecasts, decrease in ice cover, decrease of bottom oxygen concentrations. He underlined that reductions in nutrient loads will lead to an improved state of the sea independent of climate change. Referring to changes in pH (ocean acidification) he mentioned that future scenarios predict lowered pH due to lower salinity. Environmental variables impacting fish are temperature, salinity, oxygen, ice cover, acidification, river run-off. With reference to demersal fish, the effects may include decreased body growth and foraging condition, increase in species which adapt to warm water, such as flounder, reduced extent of spawning ground. This may lead to higher species diversity of demersal fish, but lower production of traditional commercial species. With reference to pelagic species, he stated climate change may result in increased body weight with temperature and salinity of some species. However, warmer and less saline water causes poor feeding conditions for herring. Sprat and stickleback are more favoured by climate change effects than herring. For coastal fish, such as pike, perch pike climate change may result in more but smaller fish. For migratory species, the effects may include increased body growth of some salmonid fish with temperature and earlier return to spawning grounds. Higher water temperatures and possible lowered salinity levels may have favoured recruitment, body growth and the spatial distribution of the invasive round goby. He presented indirect effects of climate change on management. He concluded that the implications of climate change for fisheries include productivity, abundance and reduced distribution of demersal fish, and increased recruitment and abundance of small pelagic fish. He underlined that both fisheries and management need to consider climate change.

In reply to a question asked by a representative of the OIG, **Örjan Östman** drew attention to inflows of marine species from other seas to the southern part of the Baltic.

A representative of German fisheries referred to the impact of predators on fish stocks and underlined that, with reference to western cod, the fish mortality caused by seals and cormorants is higher than the fishing mortality. In his view, there is an urgent need to implement proper management of predators for the benefit of the Baltic fish stocks.

The ExCom Chair thanked joint Örjan Östman for the presentation. He invited him to take part in the BALTFISH – BSAC workshop on predators in the spring.

13. The Commission's strategy for energy transition of the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector – [call for evidence](#)

The ExCom Chair welcomed Frangiscos NIKOLIAN, Head of Unit in DG MARE UNIT A4, invited to present the Commission's strategy for energy transition of the EU fisheries and

²⁹ [BSAC - BSAC Executive Committee meeting](#)

³⁰ [Baltic-Sea-Climate-Change-Fact-Sheet-2021.pdf \(helcom.fi\)](#)

aquaculture sector. **The Chair** referred to the fact that the BSAC will start the discussion on this topic, with a view to providing a recommendation to the Commission.

Frangiscos NIKOLIAN, Head of Unit in DG MARE UNIT A4 informed that the Commission had launched a call for evidence for the strategy for energy transition of the EU fisheries and aquaculture in November 2022. He appreciated the input provided by stakeholders, including the NSAC. He underlined that the current circumstances, including sector's heavy dependence on fossil fuels, call for an urgent need for a long-term strategy in the fisheries sector for energy transition, with the goal of reaching carbon neutrality by 2050. The sector is heavily affected by high fuel prices.. The EU fishing fleet, for the first time after 2008, might ended up in 2022, in a loss making position with a projection of EUR 41 million of gross losses. The Commission is in the process of preparing the Communication, which is expected to be published together with the Commission's CFP report and Action Plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems on 21st February 2023. Initiative will be built around strong multistakeholder engagement. He informed that the Commission is planning to set-up a multi-stakeholder partnership focused on energy transition in the fisheries sector, to which the Advisory Councils will be invited and will contribute to the objectives of the EU Green Deal. He underlined that input to the strategy can still be provided.

The ExCom Chair underlined that the fisheries sector is concerned about the financing opportunities related to energy transition.

F. Nikolian stated that the Commission's Communication will put in place a guidance and a toolkit on the financing opportunities and possible investments, from EMFAF and other tools.

A representative of an organisation representing small scale fishers asked about the possibilities to finance engine replacement.

F. Nikolian stated that EMFAF³¹ is available to support engine replacement in vessels up to 24 metres in overall length, if such investment results in better sustainability of the new engine. Therefore, EMFAF is the right tool but not the only one for investments related to energy transition. The Member States have to include measures for energy transition in the national Operational Programmes.

Another issue was raised by **a Polish fisher** with regard to the legal context of engine replacement. In Poland the fishing quota is allocated to vessels divided into fleet segments according to the vessel length. Investments which aim to improve energy efficiency often result in a decrease of the vessel length. In consequence, fishers lose part of the quota.

F. Nikolian stated that EMFAF support cannot be granted to increase the fishing capacity of an individual vessel, except if the increase results from an increase in gross tonnage, necessary for improving safety, working conditions and energy efficiency. In order to comply with sustainability objectives, such increase of capacity of the individual vessel should be done within the limits of national capacity levels, in order not to lead to any increase in fishing capacity at fleet level. He further stated that EMFAF will not be revised until 2024. Referring to vessels above 24 metres in length, he stated that other investment

³¹ [EUR-Lex - 32021R1139 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\) Article 18 of the EMFAF Regulation](#)

possibilities than vessel replacement, such as gear replacement are offered by EMFAF to this fleet segment to improve the energy efficiency.

A representative of Swedish fisheries drew attention to the fact that the Swedish Operational Programme does not include measures related to engine replacement.

F. Nikolian stated that the EMFAF programmes are under shared management and Member States have their own strategic priorities however the funding opportunities for engine replacement should be included in every national Operational Programme (OP). He informed that following the publication of the Communication on energy transition, the Commission will call the Member States to consider including measures aimed at energy transition in the OPs at the earliest possible occasion.

A representative of German fisheries appreciated the Commission's active approach to the high priority issue of energy transition, including a guidance on the financing opportunities related to this initiative.

F. Nikolian underlined that the Commission calls on all stakeholders, including the Advisory Councils to work together to achieve the goals of the energy transition initiative and invited the BSAC to actively participate in the stakeholder 's consultations.

The ExCom Chair stated that the BSAC is committed to participate in the consultations during the implementation of the energy transition initiative.

14. Climate change and the Common Fisheries Policy: Adaptation and building resilience to the effects of climate change on fisheries and reducing emissions of greenhouse gases from fishing:³² final report

François Bastardie, Senior Researcher, Section for Ecosystem based Marine Management, DTU Aqua, presented the relevant conclusions of the Commission's report on Climate change and the CFP³³. Below is a summary of his presentation:

F. Bastardie referred to the fact that fishing has variable and uncertain outcomes by nature. Climate change affects marine ecosystems and oceans in terms of productivity, timing, spatial distributions, trophic interactions, and badly interacts with management (for example, the landing obligation and choke species). He presented some measures to face the problem: society (including fishers) needs to follow a precautionary approach: this translates into saving some fish as insurance against short-term shocks and long-term productivity change, and uncertain science or compliance. He underlined that fishing should be conducted in the lower range of the **FMSY range of MAPs**. **He presented the fishing strategies in which fishing effort** deployed corresponds to MSY targets and the CFP objectives, including employing less fuel consuming fishing techniques, selective gears etc. In consequence, higher catch is obtained, less fuel is used to catch fish, and the fishery has a higher resistance and resilience to shock factors to face climate-induced

³² [http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-\(9\)/13-Climate-change-and-the-common-fisheries-policy-HZ0422057ENN.pdf.aspx?lang=en-GB](http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Executive-Committee-meeting-(9)/13-Climate-change-and-the-common-fisheries-policy-HZ0422057ENN.pdf.aspx?lang=en-GB)

³³ Presentation at [BSAC - BSAC Executive Committee meeting](#)

stresses. He went on to present the decarbonisation win-wins: fishing less to earn more, using larger meshes to consume less fuel, respecting sensitive species and habitats, support an ecosystem approach. It is time to phase out the fishing techniques that are not the best available techniques. The effects of fishing on blue-carbon habitats should be limited. He referred to different simulation case studies on impact and resilience, conducted in different sea basins. The presentation also included the drivers for stock productivity in the Baltic Sea. F. Bastardie stated that: cod recruitment depends on salinity (>11psu), oxygen (2ml/L), temperature, hydrographic conditions (inflow of oxygenated, saline water from the North Sea), SSB; cod growth and maturation on hypoxia, density and food limitation including prey quality; cod natural mortality on oxygen conditions spatial distribution of prey, predation of seals, liver nematodes, clupeid predating cod eggs, cannibalism; central Baltic herring growth depends on the competition for the zooplankton with the sprat stock and its recruitment is influenced by predation by seals and cod. He referred to sprat: sprat recruitment is influenced by ice cover, NAO index, sea surface temperature (a warming is beneficial for eggs, + reduced cod predation), sprat growth on the competition for the zooplankton with the herring stock and sprat mortality on predation on eggs (less pronounced if freshwater discharge), cannibalism. He went on to present the projected changes in the Baltic Sea environment. The Baltic Sea is a shallow, brackish semi-enclosed sea (freshwater discharge from rivers), with a strong water column stratification, sometime mixed by inflows of saline, oxygen rich water from the North Sea. A plausible short-term shock induced by climate change could result from the mortality affecting fish and other demersal animals. This may be caused by the combined effects of warmer temperature and water oxygen content. Marine populations are susceptible to low oxygen events that may increase in frequency and severity with the anticipated warming waters. F. Bastardie underlined that healthy and well-assessed and well-managed stocks are highly resilient to short term stress. In his view, there is a need for more flexible fisheries management for resilience to long-term changes, including using FMSY Lower and revising the biological reference points regularly. A high resource resilience does not necessarily lead to financial resilience, nor to the use of less fuel. Hence, the effect of climate change stresses is highly dependent on the initial economic situation of the fleets. In the Baltic Sea, following the FMSY strategy increases future fishing opportunities. The report presents an inventory of technical means of improving energy efficiency and alternatives for a low carbon sector, within four overarching categories: 1) vessel structure and equipment, 2) strategies for optimising vessel activity, 3) gear developments to reduce drag and increase catch efficiency (modifications of otter trawls with new lighter materials or efforts to raise the doors from the seabed saves up to 40% of energy and possibly gives increased catches), 4) regulatory and management measures. The conclusions were presented on a roadmap: there should be caution about the "rebound" effect (saving fish, saving fuel might sometimes lead some vessels to spend more time at sea instead of less) and therefore effort should be reduced; a bottom-up approach should be promoted by informing consumers/retailers with a scoring of fisheries depending on criteria for sustainability, including full implementation of CFP Art. 17.

The ExCom Chair thanked François Bastardie for a very interesting presentation.

A representative of an organisation representing small scale fishers agreed with conclusions of the report presented by F. Bastardie. He drew the attention to the risks related to regular revisions of reference points and the missing the biomass reference point

(MSY B_{trigger}) and underlined that biomass increase is of key importance and a priority to increase the resilience to the effects of climate change on fish stocks.

A representative of Polish fisheries underlined that the proposed modified trawls cannot be used in flatfish fishery, because these gears have less contact with the seabed. He asked whether size selectivity and mortality of fish escaping through meshes had been taken into account in the proposed gear modifications.

F. Bastardie replied that the biomass reference points had not been considered in all the projections for the Baltic stocks. He stated that the use of more selective gears will result in a higher biomass, composed of larger fish. He underlined that gears made of lighter materials have the same catchability and at the same time allow fuel savings and precise operation. He understood the concerns of fishers related to the elimination of bottom trawling by introducing new gear designs with reduced hydrodynamic drag of otter boards lifted off the seabed, but radical changes consisting of replacement for lighter gears producing less bottom contact need to be pushed forward. F. Bastardie also confirmed that sprat is more resilient to the effects of climate change. He informed that the OCEANA report: A pathway to decarbonise the EU fisheries sector by 2050, of which he is the author will be launched on 1st February 2023³⁴.

The ExCom Chair invited Francois Bastardie to one of the BSAC WG meeting 2023 to present the OCEANA report.

15. Next steps for BSAC: development of advice

A representative of the OIG stated that the BSAC should immediately start working on the recommendations on energy transition. He underlined that the development of these recommendations will be a complex task, taking into account long and short term measures aimed at improving energy efficiency, such as modifications of gears and new gear development, vessel design, new technologies etc. He underlined that climate change has long term implications on ICES advice process and fisheries management. He proposed to ask ICES to present how the effects of climate change are taken into account in the stock advice and what could be their impact on terms of management.

A representative of Polish fisheries underlined that fishers do not need to be encouraged to use new energy-efficient materials, gear modifications and engines, which decrease resistance and permit to make energy savings. This is a process that has already been going on.

The ExCom Chair underlined that both presentations had raised interest and discussion. In his view, the BSAC should give input to the Commission's Communication on energy transition. The discussion on the effects of climate change and energy transition should be continued in the framework of the EBM WG or a dedicated Focus Group.

The EBM WG Chair underlined that climate change impacts is an overarching topic which should be included in the work and recommendations of all BSAC working groups and also

³⁴ OCEANA report: A pathway to decarbonise the EU fisheries sector by 2050. <https://europe.oceana.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2023/01/A-PATHWAY-TO-DECARBONISE-THE-EU-FISHERIES-SECTOR-BY-2050-digital-version.pdf>

dealt with in the ExCom to enable a wider participation of the BSAC members. The issue could also be discussed in connection with the Commission’s Action Plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems and the report on the functioning of the CFP.

A representative of German fisheries pointed out that the fisheries sector is facing deep crisis, but nevertheless is ready to discuss the urgent implementation of gear innovations required for energy transition. He underlined that the several aspects need further discussion before formulating the BSAC recommendation. He referred to the recommendation of the North Sea Advisory Council, prepared with experts in the framework of a focus group. The exchange of view in the NSAC focus group had contributed to a better understanding of decarbonisation. In his view, the NSAC recommendation should be carefully considered by the BSAC in formulating its advice related to energy transition. He advised to establish a BSAC Focus Group on energy transition and carry out discussions in the framework of this FG.

The ExCom Chair acknowledged the work done by the NSAC on energy transition and proposed to establish a Focus Group on energy transition, chaired by Peter Breckling, who is also involved in the NSAC Focus Group. The task of the FG will be to produce a draft recommendation, to be further discussed in the BSAC Working Groups and presented to the ExCom for adoption.

The Pelagic WG Chair stated that the next steps to be taken with respect to the BSAC position on climate change should be decided after the ICES presentation on climate change to the BSAC.

The ExCom decided to establish a Focus Group on energy transition and asked Peter Breckling to chair the group. The Secretariat will invite the BSAC members to take part in the Focus Group. The task of the FG will be to prepare the BSAC recommendation on energy transition.

The ExCom decided to ask the BSAC Secretariat to enquire on the possibility to organise an online meeting with ICES to present how the effects of climate change are taken into account in the stock advice and what could be their impact on terms of management (ICES to give a presentation).

16. Concluding remarks

The ExCom Chair thanked the Commission representatives, Member States representatives, BALTFISH Presidency, experts and scientists, as well as all participants for their input to the meeting. He also thanked the interpreters and technicians for their excellent work and the Secretariat for organising the meeting.

Action points agreed upon during the BSAC ExCom 30-31/01/2023

Agenda item	Action
Status of current expenditure	The ExCom decided to further explore the possibility to join the other ACs in the

	development of the GIS tool <u>at a later stage</u> .
Communication strategy, website overhaul	The ExCom <u>adopted</u> the new Communication Strategy. The ExCom <u>validated</u> the proposal for the secretariat to work on the revision of the website with Ben Stone.
Reimbursement Guidelines proposal	The ExCom approved the amended <u>draft reimbursement procedure for submission to the General Assembly</u>
Draft expenditure and Work Program	The ExCom proposed two minor amendments to the Work Programme. The ExCom adopted the proposed draft budget and draft work programme for 2023-2024. Feedback from the Commission was still awaited on these drafts.
Proposal translation of BSAC recommendation on TAC in Baltic languages	The ExCom adopted the proposal to translate the BSAC recommendation on TACs in 4 Baltic Languages (PL, LT, SE, DE). Further translation proposals could be raised in future years if needed.
Focus Group on Rules of Procedures	The ExCom discussed the progress report of the Focus Group and was invited to join the next Focus Group meeting to provide further input
Inter-AC coordination meeting	The ExCom validated the draft ACs letter calling the Commission to support ACs.
PECH hearing on the MAP	The ExCom supported the Chair proposal to open the topic of BSAC's position with regards to the MAP during the May meetings.
Follow-up on the conclusion of the STECF AER report	The ExCom decided that a proposal for a BSAC recommendation will be dealt with during the demersal WG.
Cooperation with BALTFISH	The ExCom Chair decided to organise a joint BALTFISH - BSAC workshop on predators in the spring 2023. The ExCom decided that further actions referring to the implementation of Article 7 the Council Regulation 2021/1888 should be discussed in the Pelagic WG.

Permanent cessation schemes	The ExCom took note of the explanation provided by the representative of DG Mare.
Draft letter on western Baltic herring and eel	The ExCom adopted the letter as presented.
Dates of the next meetings	The ExCom noted the dates of the next meetings and potential changes to the May meetings (to be confirmed by mid-February)
AOB - Implementing act on roofless gear	The ExCom decided to ask the Commission to inform on the foreseen consultation with the BSAC on the new draft Implementing Act.
AOB- IUU watch report	The ExCom decided that the report of IUU watch on IUU landings should be presented to the next BSAC ExCom meeting
Energy transition of the fisheries sector in the Baltic	The ExCom decided to establish a Focus Group on energy transition and asked Peter Breckling to chair the group. The task of the FG will be to prepare the BSAC recommendation on energy transition. The Secretariat will invite the BSAC members to take part in the Focus Group.
Climate Change in the Baltic	The ExCom decided to ask the BSAC Secretariat to enquire on the possibility to organise an online meeting with ICES to discuss how the effects of climate change are taken into account in the stock advice and what could be their impact on terms of management (<u>ICES to give a presentation</u>).

Answers to the questions asked by BSAC members, received from DG MARE after the meeting

Regarding the STECF report

The 2023 AER will continue efforts made in previous years to streamline the contents while providing more in-depth look at the different factors driving the economic performance of the EU fleets.

The report will provide an in-depth look at the different factors affecting the economic performance of the EU fishing fleet with a special focus on the major drivers and issues affecting the sector (in particular, the impacts of the high prices for fuel, energy transition of the fleet and conservation measures). Special focus should be given to the energy transition of the EU fleets and economic benefits of MSY. In particular it will produce a break-even revenue analysis in relation to fuel prices for the main fleet segments of the EU fishing fleet.

Regarding permanent cessation

To be eligible to compensation for the permanent cessation of fishing activities under the EMFAF, fishing vessels must have “carried out fishing activities at sea for at least 90 days per year during the last two calendar years preceding the date of submission of the application for support”. This condition ensures that only active fishing vessels are compensated, i.e. those that have an actual impact on resources. This is justified by the fact that permanent cessation is a tool of the actions plans established pursuant to Article 22 of the CFP Regulation to correct structural imbalances between fleet capacity and fishing opportunities.

The same rule applied under the EMFF until the expiration of the eligibility of permanent cessation at the end of 2017. However, such support was reintroduced in 2020 for fleets fishing for Eastern Baltic cod, Western Baltic cod and Western Baltic herring. Because of the drastic restrictions implemented on fishing for Eastern Baltic Cod, a specific rule was introduced for fleets fishing for that stock: the two calendar years taken into account to calculate the 90 days of activities are not the last two years but years 2017 and 2018. It is to be noted that support under the EMFF is eligible until the end of 2023. After that, only the EMFAF will be available, without specific conditions for Eastern Baltic Cod.

On Article 7:

BSAC asked about DG MARE’s views as regards the implementation of the exemption from the cod spawning closure period for sorted pelagic fisheries for human consumption (Art 7(2)c+(4)c Baltic FO Reg). As already expressed some time ago our view is that, while the fishery has necessarily to be for human consumption, the fish can be sorted on board or ashore. To require that the fish is sorted on board is therefore one of the possibilities available to the MS to implement the exemption.