

WORK PROGRAMME FOR BALTIC SEA ADVISORY COUNCIL - BSAC¹

Period: 01/04/2023 to 31/03/2024

Background to the BSAC²

The Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BSAC) was established in March 2006 after a decision by the EU to create Advisory Councils³.

The BSAC operates according to its Rules of Procedure⁴. These are being revised to align with the legal amendments introduced by Commission Delegated Regulation 2022/204 and clarify further the rules of procedure. They will be presented for approval by the General Assembly on 16th – 17th May 2023.

The BSAC membership is made up of 42 organisations representing fisheries interests, processors and marketing, and representatives of other interest groups (OIG) affected by the CFP (environmental and sports, recreational and angling organisations).

The BSAC has a General Assembly, Executive Committee (18 fisheries members and 7 OIG members), and three Working Groups: demersal fisheries, pelagic fisheries, and ecosystem-based management. It can set up Focus Groups for limited time to work on specific topics. It also has a Management Team to facilitate the running of the BSAC (Honorary Chair of the General Assembly, Chair and Vice Chair of the Executive Committee, Chairs of the Working Groups and Secretariat).

Election of a Vice Chair for the General Assembly

In May 2023, pending approval of the new Rules of Procedures, the BSAC General Assembly will have to vote for a Vice-Chair of the General Assembly.

In 2021 the BSAC conducted an external performance review. In 2023-2024 the BSAC will continue to monitor the implementation of the recommendations from that process.

Covid and war in Ukraine impact on the work

The BSAC has continued to work through the COVID-19 pandemic period. This has lasted through 2020-2021 and for most of 2021-2022. In 2022-2023, the BSAC has capitalised on the experience gained with virtual meetings and offered both online and hybrid meetings throughout 2022-2023. Hybrid sessions allow for important participation (like during the EBM WG of October 2022 setting a record in BSAC). They however create even greater challenges for engagement of participants and incur additional costs.

The war in Ukraine has had consequences on Baltic fisheries and stakeholders with delayed scientific advice for western Baltic herring and a roll-over of the advice for the salmon stocks. The BSAC is concerned about future assessment of fish stocks shared with Russia in the Baltic and securing data flows.

Mission and objectives of the BSAC

The main aim of the BSAC is to⁵:

- make recommendations and suggestions to the Commission and the Member State concerned on matters relating to the management of fisheries and the socio- economic and conservation aspects of fisheries;

¹ This has been amended and approved by ExCom at its meeting on 30th – 31st January 2023 and by writing by the 24th February 2023; it is then presented for final approval by the General Assembly at its meeting on 16th – 17th May 2023.

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

³ Council Regulation 2371/2002 and later Council Regulation 1380/2013

⁴ <http://www.bsac.dk/BSAC/About-the-BSAC>

⁵ See Basic Regulation Articles 43, 44 and 45 and Annex III: http://www.bsac.dk/getattachment/BSAC-Resources/Documents-section/European-Parliament-and-Council/BR1380_2013UK.pdf.aspx?lang=en-GB

- inform the Commission and Member States about problems relating to management and the socio-economic and conservation aspects of fisheries;
- contribute to the collection, supply and analysis of data necessary for the development of conservation measures.

BSAC WORK PRIORITIES

Overarching long term and short term work priorities (at least 3 priorities)

External Performance review and Communication Strategy

In 2021 the BSAC conducted an external performance review. In 2023-2024 the BSAC will continue to monitor the implementation of the recommendations from that process.

As a key element in this process the BSAC will aim at continuing the strengthening relations with Member States in the Baltic Region and strengthen outreach activities in relation to stakeholders currently outside the membership of BSAC. To that end, BSAC will develop a Communication Strategy allowing to structure the steps already taken to implement the recommendations.

Horizontal issues for all Working Groups

- Recommendations on fishing opportunities for 2024. ICES will release its annual advice for the Baltic stocks at the end of May 2023. The BSAC will hold a working group to deal with this, and develop recommendations for the Baltic fishery in 2024
- Follow up on the publication of the report on the functioning of the CFP and how it connects with the BSAC White Paper published in 2022
- Follow up on the Commission Action Plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems
- Co-organise a workshop on monitoring and enforcement of the Landing Obligation with European Fisheries Control Agency and BALTFISH (EFCA-BALTFISH) in the framework of the Joint Working Group. The workshop on control and enforcement of the Landing Obligation will follow the publication of a specific report on the Baltic Sea in 2019-2021.
- Recreational fisheries: Towards a balanced and proportionate policy for recreational fisheries under the Common Fisheries Policy, work will include measures to strengthen reporting and data collection from recreational fisheries,
- The blue dimension in the EU Green Deal and the Blue Deal
- Fisheries as part of the Farm to Fork Strategy – a sustainable, protein-rich seafood provided by fisheries
- Fisheries contributing to addressing the climate change, mitigation, adaptation.
- Management of seals and other predators and interactions with fisheries: BALTFISH Work programme mentions the organisation of a workshop on the topic (before June 2023) and BSAC will co-organise it.

Work priorities identified for each Working Group and Focus Group (where available)

Working Group 1: Under the chairmanship of the Demersal Working Group

- Relevant work to address selectivity to avoid unwanted catches of cod
- Continued focused work related to the Technical Measures

Working Group 2: Under the chairmanship of the Pelagic Working Group

- The BSAC will investigate further work on management of the western Baltic spring spawning herring
- Closely follow scientific analysis and measures proposed, and if relevant advise on Bothnian bay herring and other herring stocks
- Follow up on stickleback and trial fisheries in the Baltic

- Work on species interactions between sprat, herring and cod (in close cooperation with the Demersal WG)
- Explore the potential of a Geographic Information Software (GIS) tool for the Baltic Sea.

Working Group 3: **Under the chairmanship of the Ecosystem based Working Group**

- The Marine Strategy Framework Directive: ongoing work with its the review, including work on those descriptors that are relevant to fisheries
- Integrated sea use management/maritime spatial planning: continue working in particular on offshore windfarms developments and consider organising a webinar on the topic
- Discuss salmon management, including technical measures for salmon, as well as implementation issues in the salmon fishery
- Eel: Reflect on the coordination of the application of the measures (including the flexible closures) and continue to put forward BSAC advice and proposed actions. Follow the publication of the latest ICES advice

Other issues of interest if any:

European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA)

EFCA and BSAC will continue to cooperate and take part in the meetings. EFCA has proposed to host one of BSAC meeting this year in its premisses in Vigo, Spain to enhance collaboration and present EFCA's work.

Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF)

Continue the new engagement with STECF. In particular, scrutinise the conclusion of the Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet and other relevant reports.

BALTFISH

The BSAC is cooperating closely with BALTFISH. This is work in progress. The BSAC will continue its new habit of organising some meetings in the same location as the BALTFISH Presidency to ensure smooth communication and the Management Team monthly exchanges with BALTFISH through "Virtual Coffee Meetings".

The organisation of joint workshop on predators and interactions with fisheries is foreseen by BALTFISH. The BSAC has also been asking to set up a BALTFISH-BSAC Expert Focus Group to discuss the draft implementing act to the Technical Measure Regulation and will consider co-organising other events on other relevant topics.

HELCOM

The BSAC will follow closely the work of the HELCOM FISH Group and will continue to contribute to the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

External meetings

The BSAC will take part in relevant external meetings. The key external meetings for BSAC participation are:

- BALTFISH Forum under the Lithuanian Presidency (until 30th June 2023) and the Polish Presidency (from 1st July 2023), and regular meetings between BSAC Management Team and BALTFISH Presidency
- European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) Advisory Board meetings
- Commission Inter-ACs meeting (the annual meeting with the Advisory Councils)
- Commission State of the Stocks meeting, as well as other relevant seminars or meetings
- European Parliament PECH Committee meetings where agenda points are relevant to the BSAC
- ICES annual meetings with the Advisory Councils, as well as relevant working groups/benchmarks
- HELCOM Group on ecosystem-based sustainable fisheries (FISH) and related HELCOM meeting activities
- Follow relevant STECF meetings

Other meetings by Member States, stakeholders, scientific institutions, and international organisations touching upon Baltic Sea and BSAC work program issues.

Participation in projects

The BSAC supports research and projects that further the understanding of the Baltic ecosystem. It is not in a position to participate in or provide support to every project application, and the Management Team has the task of filtering projects.

BSAC will continue to follow closely the SEAwisE project (aimed at understanding the current state-of-play of fisheries management and facilitating the implementation of Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) in the region), and other relevant projects (such as Cibbrina).

Planned recommendations for year 23-24:

| No | Issue/subject | Link with the CFP | WG/FG at the origin of the recommendation | Planned date of adoption (if available) |
|----|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | Recommendations on fishing opportunities for 2024 | TAC/quota | Joint WG | July 2023 |
| 2 | Advice on the State of play & orientations 2024 | State of the stocks | Joint WG | August 2023 |
| 3 | Advice on the strategy for the energy transition of the EU's fisheries and aquaculture sector | Union environmental legislation- energy | Dedicated FG / Joint WG | |
| 4 | Advice on offshore windfarms developments in the Baltic | Union environmental legislation- energy | EBM WG | |
| 5 | Advice on eel management | Conservation and sustainable exploitation of marine biological resources | EBM WG | |
| 6 | Advice on management in relation with species interactions | Multiannual plans, TAC/quota, Ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management | Pelagic WG/ Demersal WG/ Joint WG | |
| 7 | Advice on stickleback fisheries in the Baltic | Trial fishery | Pelagic WG | |
| 8 | Advice on deduction of water or ice for landings for industrial purposes | Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No. 404/2011 | Pelagic WG | |
| 9 | Advice on implementation of the Landing Obligation in the Baltic | Landing obligation | Dedicated FG / Demersal WG/ Joint WG | |

BSAC will advise, as appropriate, on the publication of the report on the functioning of the CFP, and the Commission Action Plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems.

Planned participation to Commission public consultations

BSAC will participate to the Commission public consultation on the topics part of the work priorities. If the timeline doesn't allow BSAC to respond within the deadline, it will still work on an advice to the Commission.

| Topic/subject | Link with the CFP | Deadline for the EU Survey (if available) | Planned date for adoption (if available) |
|---------------|-------------------|---|--|
| | | | |

BSAC planning of meetings

1 General Assembly

4 Executive Committee meetings, one of which will be held on the day before the General Assembly.

8 Working Groups [depending on the expenditure] (3 Pelagic, 3 Demersal, 2 EBM), two of which at least will be held as a "Joint Working Group" [the BSAC will hold an additional WG if needed and if it can afford one more], the 6 others will be held online, some might be held back-to-back with Executive Committee meetings.

3 Focus Group, or more if required

2 Workshops, depending on the co-organising partners (one on predators with BALTFISH and one with EFCA on the control and enforcement of the Landing Obligation)

Management Team meetings during the year where necessary (anticipated prior to ExCom or other BSAC meetings).

BSAC PLANNING OF MEETINGS (from 01/04/2023 to 31/03/2024)

| No | Date (for the first 6 months, please provide precise dates) | Topics /subjects of meeting | Type of meeting (physical/planned/ hybrid) | European Commission participation requested (yes/no) | If Commission participation requested, specific issues to be dealt with | Priority for a Commission participation (from 1 to 4) (1= highest priority) |
|----|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| 1 | 16/05/2023 | Executive Committee | Hybrid, in Brussels | Yes | Admin matters + selected topics | 1 |
| 2 | 17/05/2023 | General Assembly | Hybrid, in Brussels | Yes | Annual Meeting | 1 |
| 3 | 13-14 /06/2022 | Demersal and Pelagic Working Groups – joint if necessary | Hybrid, in Copenhagen | Yes | To deal with the annual Baltic stocks advice | 1 |
| 4 | 29-30 /06/2022 | Executive Committee | Hybrid, in Vigo | Yes | Finalisation and adoption of annual Baltic stock advice | 1 |
| 5 | Sept/Oct 2023 | Demersal WG | Online | Yes | | 2 |
| 6 | Sept/Oct 2023 | Pelagic WG | Online | Yes | | 2 |
| 7 | Sept/Oct 2023 | Ecosystem Based management WG | Online | Yes | | 2 |
| 8 | Sept/Oct 2023 | Executive Committee | Hybrid | Yes | Admin matters + selected topics | 1 |
| 10 | January 2024 | Executive Committee | Hybrid | Yes | Admin matters + selected topics | 1 |
| 11 | Feb/Apr 2024 | Demersal WG | Online | Yes | | 2 |
| 12 | Feb/Apr 2024 | Pelagic WG | Online | Yes | | 2 |
| 13 | Feb/Apr 2024 | Ecosystem Based management WG | Online | Yes | | 2 |
| 14 | TBD | Workshop on predators with BALTFISH | TBD | Yes | | 1 |
| 15 | TBD | Workshop on implementation of the LO with EFCA-BALTFISH | TBD | Yes | | 1 |