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Sent by e mail to: jrc-aquafish@ec.europa.eu
cc: BALTFISH Member States, mare-ac@ec.europa.eu

Ref: BSAC/2023-2024/27

Copenhagen, Monday 30th October 2023

Subject: BSAC recommendation regarding the Marine Action Plan work of STECF and invitation of experts to STECF meetings

Dear Madam, Sir,

The Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BSAC) is working on its recommendations regarding the Marine Action Plan published in February 2023. In relation to this scheduled work, and in general, **the BSAC would like to recommend the STECF and the Commission to make use of the provisions of the Commission's Decision Article 6 point 3 of Commission Decision (2016/C 74/05)¹, setting up a Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries, as well as the STECF's Rules of Procedures Article 7² allowing to invite relevant external experts to its meeting.**

In particular, the BSAC has taken note of the Commission's plan to ask ICES to give advice on *how to boost selectivity, starting with the fish stocks with the highest expected biological gains*; and an advice on *optimum size of fish in order to obtain the highest long-term yield and improving fishing gear*. As a matter of facts, the BSAC stakeholders have extensive knowledge on gears and gear selectivity. The BSAC has been advising on the topic for years and now stands ready to share with you any past recommendation on the topic.

We would like to point out the specific characteristics of pelagic fisheries also has to be reminded here, in which an increase of the mesh size may have a detrimental effect, due to increasing mortality of pelagic fish escaping through meshes (hidden underwater mortality).

¹ Article 6 point 3 of Commission Decision (2016/C 74/05):. [Commission Decision of 25 February 2016 setting up a Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2016/74/05/oj)

² External experts possessing particular and relevant scientific knowledge may be invited to contribute to the work of the STECF or EWGs with the approval of the Commission. External experts invited to participate in STECF Plenary sessions will not be considered as members of the STECF and will have no right to vote.

<https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/43805/51238/2022.08.07+-+STECF+Rules+of+procedure.pdf/f018e298-28f3-4259-9f92-9a5b0f438101>

Further to the advice on optimum size of fish, the BSAC wants to highlight that ICES is working on similar topics (linked to the MSFD - see *WKD3C3*³) and the two organisations should work in connection with each other.

Finally, the **BSAC would like to know what timeline STECF will adopt for the development of this advice** and would like to start a discussion on how STECF will understand the term '*highest long-term yield*' in the mixed fisheries context.

We look forward to continuing exchanging with STECF on these topics.

Kind regards,



Lise Laustsen
BSAC Pelagic Group Chair



Jarek Zieliński
BSAC Executive Committee Chair

³ <https://www.ices.dk/community/groups/Pages/WKD3C3SCOPE.aspx>