

WORK PROGRAMME FOR BALTIC SEA ADVISORY COUNCIL - BSAC¹

Period: 01/04/2024 to 31/03/2025

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. If the revised Rules of Procedure are not adopted by 1st April 2024, this item will remain a high priority of the BSAC in 2024-2025.

The BSAC membership is made up of 41 organisations representing fisheries interests, processors and marketing, and representatives of other interest groups (OIG) affected by the CFP (environmental, sports, recreational and angling organisations).

The BSAC has a General Assembly, Executive Committee (18 fisheries members and 8 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 the Executive Committee and Chairs

In May 2024, the General Assembly will vote for a new Executive Committee for a 3-year term. The General Assembly Chair will also be elected and so will be the Working Groups Chairs.

The mandate of the Executive Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs, and of the General Assembly Vice-Chair are now unaligned with the Executive Committee term and a vote might also be organised to realign them.

Election procedure will also depend on the pending approval of the new Rules of Procedures by the General Assembly.

In 2021 the BSAC conducted an external performance review. In 2024-2025 the BSAC will continue to monitor the implementation of the recommendations from that process. A new performance review will need to be conducted in 2025-2026 according to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/204, Article 7a.

Remote work and hybrid meetings

In 2023-2024, the BSAC has capitalised on the experience gained with virtual meetings and offered both online and hybrid meetings throughout the year. Hybrid sessions allow for important participation (like during the Workshop on predators in the Baltic of October 2023 with more than 100 participants). The hybrid setting however complicates the effective conduct of meetings and incurs additional costs.

War in Ukraine impact in the Baltic

The war in Ukraine had consequences on Baltic fisheries and stakeholders with delayed scientific advice for some stocks. The BSAC is concerned about future assessment of fish stocks shared with Russia in the Baltic due to the lack of fisheries data from Russia and securing data flows.

¹ This document has been *amended and* approved by ExCom at its meeting on 24th January 2024; it is then presented for final approval by the General Assembly at its meeting on 15th-16th May 2024.

² <https://www.bsac.dk/about/>

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

⁴ <https://www.bsac.dk/regulations/>

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;
- 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.

To achieve this mission, the BSAC will continue providing the European Commission and Member States and other partner organisations with timely, evidence-based, technical advice, either on its own initiative or in response to consultations and requests.

In many instances, the organisation plays the role of a think tank, providing new consensus where possible and creating links between peoples and ideas.

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 2024-2025 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 continue implementing and improving its Communication Strategy allowing to structure the steps already taken to implement the recommendations.

Work priorities

The BSAC has identified the work priorities listed below without a particular order in mind:

- Fish stock sustainability: fishing opportunities recommendations.
- Fisheries management, improving regulation and implementation: Common Fisheries Policy, Multiannual Plan for the Baltic (MAP), Landing Obligation, Technical Measures Regulations, Control Regulation implementation.
- Ecosystem approach, species interactions and environmental policies: Marine Action Plan, EBFM, species interactions and role of predators, MSFD, Marine Spatial Planning, windfarms.
- Climate change and fisheries: Climate change impact on the Baltic environment, blue dimension in the EU Green Deal and the Blue Economy, fisheries contributing to addressing the climate change, mitigation, adaptation.
- Fisheries and food security: sustainable, protein-rich seafood, Farm to Fork Strategy.
- Recreational fisheries.
- Socio-economic dimension of the CFP.
- Regionalisation, cooperation, and communication.

These are broken down into more precise work items either for a specific Working Group or for all, as set out below:

⁵ See Basic Regulation Articles 43, 44 and 45 and Annex III: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A02013R1380-20190814>

Horizontal issues for all Working Groups

- Recommendations on fishing opportunities for 2025. ICES will release its annual advice for the Baltic stocks at the end of May 2024. The BSAC will hold a working group to deal with this, and develop recommendations for the Baltic fishery in 2025.
- Follow up on the publication of the Communication on “The common fisheries policy today and tomorrow”⁶ and how it connects with the BSAC White Paper published in 2022.
- Follow the implementation of the Commission Action Plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems⁷, of the Member States’ Roadmaps, and of BSAC recommendations on the topic⁸.
- 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, now expected for spring 2024.
- Recreational fisheries: Consider ways recreational fisheries could contribute towards fisheries management: Upcoming control, reporting and management requirements.
- Follow-up on the webinar on Climate Change organised in May 2023, and organise a second one, providing up to date information from scientists to stakeholders.
- Management of seals and other predators and interactions with fisheries: Following on the successful workshop on predators in the Baltic in October 2023 (focused on current management regime and scientific knowledge), BSAC will organise a follow-up event more focused on recommendations.
- Discuss how to attract a new generation of fishers in the industry.

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

Working Group 1: Under the chairmanship of the Demersal Working Group, will undertake:

- Relevant work to address selectivity to avoid unwanted catches of cod.
- Continued work related to the Technical Measures.
- Work on species interactions between sprat, herring and cod (in close cooperation with the Pelagic WG).

Working Group 2: Under the chairmanship of the Pelagic Working Group, will undertake:

- The BSAC will investigate further work on management of the western Baltic spring spawning herring.
- Closely follow scientific analysis and measures proposed for herring stocks including the ICES WK REBUILD.
- 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)

Working Group 3: Under the chairmanship of the Ecosystem based Working Group, will undertake:

- The Marine Strategy Framework Directive: ongoing work with its 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 future multiannual plan for salmon in cooperation with BALTFISH and HELCOM, including on technical measures for salmon, as well as implementation issues in the salmon fishery.

⁶ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/publications/common-fisheries-policy-today-and-tomorrow-fisheries-and-oceans-pact-towards-sustainable-science_en

⁷ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/publications/communication-commission-eu-action-plan-protecting-and-restoring-marine-ecosystems-sustainable-and_en

⁸ <https://www.bsac.dk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/BSACrecommendationsAP-2023-2024-35.pdf>

- 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.
- BSAC will inform and advise on coming recreational fisheries management control and reporting measures (specifically concerning species with conservation measures).

Other issues of interest if any:

European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA)

EFCA and the BSAC will continue to cooperate and take part in the meetings. In particular, following the postponement to spring 2024 of the EFCA evaluation report on the implementation of the Landing Obligation, BSAC would like to take part in a meeting dedicated to this report together with EFCA and BALTFISH. BSAC would also like to hear about the progress of the Remote Electronic Monitoring projects.

Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF)

The BSAC will continue the new engagement with STECF. In particular, it will follow-up on the recommendations shared in November 2023⁹ and 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 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/follow relevant external meetings. The key external meetings for BSAC participation are:

- BALTFISH Forum under the Polish Presidency (until 30th June 2024) and the German Presidency (from 1st July 2024), 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
- Commission meetings on energy transition of the fishing sector and blue economy
- 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/ workshops/ benchmarks
- HELCOM Group on ecosystem-based sustainable fisheries (FISH) and related HELCOM meeting activities
- Relevant STECF meetings

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

⁹ https://www.bsac.dk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/BSAC_RecommendationsSTECF_AER-2022-2023-32.pdf

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, PROTECT BALTIC).

Planned recommendations for year 24-25:

BSAC will also prepare recommendations on an ad-hoc basis based on legal and political developments that cannot always be foreseen.

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 2025	TAC/quota	Joint WG	July 2024
2	Recommendations on the State of play & orientations 2025	State of the stocks	Joint WG	August 2024
3	Follow-up recommendations on offshore windfarms developments in the Baltic	European Union environmental legislation- energy	EBM WG	When relevant
4	Recommendations on eel management	Conservation and sustainable exploitation of marine biological resources	EBM WG	When relevant
5	Recommendations on management in relation with species interactions	Multiannual plans, TAC/quota, Ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management	Pelagic WG/ Demersal WG/ Joint WG	When relevant
6	Recommendations on implementation of the Landing Obligation in the Baltic	Landing obligation	Dedicated FG / Demersal WG/ Joint WG	When EFCA report is made available
7	Recommendations on seals and cormorants in the Baltic Sea	Species interactions, Ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management	Pelagic WG/ Demersal WG/ Joint WG	See timing of COM public consultation on trade of seal products (planned for second quarter 2024)
8	Recommendations on the CFP Communication	CFP Communication	Pelagic WG/ Demersal WG/ EBM WG	When relevant
9	Recommendations on salmon management	Fisheries management	EBM WG	Will also depend on BALTFISH Members work on a future multiannual plan for salmon

10	Recommendation on the Baltic Sea Multiannual Plan	Fisheries management	Pelagic WG/ Demersal WG/ Joint WG	See timing of COM questionnaire on the report on the implementation of the Baltic Sea Multiannual Plan
11	Generational renewal in the fisheries sector	Socio-economic aspects of the CFP, EMFAF use	Pelagic WG	

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 recommendations to the Commission.

Topic/subject	Link with the CFP	Deadline for the EU Survey (if available)	Planned date for adoption (if available)
COM public consultation on trade in seal products	Species interactions, Ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management	Planned for second quarter 2024	Commission adoption Planned for third quarter 2025
Questionnaire on the report on the implementation of the Baltic Sea Multiannual Plan	Fisheries management	2024	

BSAC planning of meetings

1 General Assembly in person only.

4 Executive Committee meetings in person and online, one of which will be held in person only 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 in hybrid format 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 in hybrid back-to-back with Executive Committee meetings.

3 Focus Group, or more if required, usually online.

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

One webinar on Climate Change in the Baltic, updating on the one from May 2023.

Management Team meetings, usually online, during the year where necessary (anticipated prior to ExCom or other BSAC meetings), and with BALTFISH Presidency (so called Virtual Coffee Meetings).

BSAC PLANNING OF MEETINGS (from 01/04/2024 to 31/03/2025)

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	15/05/2024	General Assembly	In person only in Copenhagen	Yes	Annual Meeting	1
2	16/05/2024	Executive Committee	In person only in Copenhagen	Yes	Admin matters + selected topics	1
3	12-13 /06/2024	Demersal and Pelagic Working Groups – joint	Hybrid, in Copenhagen	Yes	Annual Baltic stocks advice	1
4	27/06/2024	Executive Committee	Hybrid, in Brussels	Yes	Finalisation and adoption of annual Baltic stock advice	1
5	Sept/Oct 2024	Demersal WG	Online	Yes		2
6	Sept/Oct 2024	Pelagic WG	Online	Yes		2
7	Sept/Oct 2024	Ecosystem Based management WG	Online	Yes		2
8	Sept/Oct 2024	Executive Committee	Hybrid	Yes	Admin matters + selected topics	1
10	January 2025	Executive Committee	Hybrid	Yes	Admin matters + selected topics	1
11	March 2025	Demersal WG	Online	Yes		2
12	March 2025	Pelagic WG	Online	Yes		2
13	March 2024	Ecosystem Based management WG	Online	Yes		2
14	TBD	Workshop on predators	TBD	Yes		1
15	TBD	Workshop on implementation of the LO with EFCA-BALTFISH	TBD	Yes		1
16	TBD	Webinar on Climate Change	TBD	Yes		3
17 +	TBD	“Ad-hoc” Focus Group	TBD	Yes		3