

## **BSAC Executive Committee**

**27<sup>th</sup> January 2025 10:00 - 13:30 CEST**

**Berlin**

**Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) in person and online via Zoom**

### **Report**

#### **1. Welcome by the BSAC ExCom Chair Jarek Zielinski**

**The ExCom Chair** welcomed all; the German BALTFISH Presidency, representatives of the Member States, BSAC members and all other observers, in-person and online. He reminded that the meeting will primarily focus on the internal BSAC matters. He thanked the German BALTFISH Presidency for providing the meeting room and technical equipment free of charge.

##### **a. Apologies, quorum, AOB, and adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted without changes.

The participants list, including the apologies is on the website<sup>1</sup>. There was a quorum for the meeting.

##### **b. Adoption of the report from the last ExCom meeting (29<sup>th</sup> October 2024) and review of the action items.**

**The ExCom Chair** informed that no comments had been provided to the draft report from the ExCom held on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

**The ExCom** adopted the minutes of the ExCom from 29<sup>th</sup> October 2024. The report was uploaded to the BSAC website.

**The Executive Secretary** presented progress report on the implementation of the action points from the last ExCom meeting. He pointed out that most actions had been completed and some of them will be dealt with under the current ExCom agenda.

##### **c. Two ExCom members to check the minutes**

**The ExCom** took note that Michael Andersen DFPO and Aimi Hamberg CCB have agreed to check the minutes.

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<sup>1</sup> [Past Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

## 2. From the Secretariat

### a. Presentation of the new BSAC Executive Secretary

**The ExCom** welcomed Aimi Hamberg, the new representative of Coalition Clean Baltic.

**The ExCom** also welcomed Alexander Ben Embarek, the new Executive Secretary.

### b. Update about the BSAC office premises

**The Executive Secretary** informed that as of 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025 the BSAC Secretariat will join DPPO in their new premises at the BUEN building in Copenhagen. The Danish Pelagic PO has kindly provided some space for the BSAC Executive Secretary in their office space. Following negotiations with the building owner, an own office room for the BSAC Secretariat could be expected in the coming months. He also informed that a meeting room for approx. 28 people is available in the building.

**The ExCom** took note.

### c. Brief status on expenditure and admin. for 2024-2025

**The Executive Secretary** informed that after 7 months of the current year the expenditures are on track with 57.3% of the budget spent.

**The ExCom** took note.

### d. Draft estimated expenditure and work programme for 2025-2026

**The Executive Secretary** presented the draft budget and the work programme, prepared by the Secretariat in collaboration with the Working Group Chairs and the ExCom Chair.

**The Executive Secretary** presented the draft budget for 2025-2026. The budget was increased by 1.9%, in line with the allowed inflation rate (2%) as compared to the previous one and there were no major re-allocations between the budget lines.

**The Executive Secretary** presented the work programme for 2025-2026, 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 year. More money was allocated to travels and hotels due to the increase in prices. He reminded that the work programme 2026 includes an external performance review of the organisation. The performance review will be financed from the savings.

**The ExCom Chair** noted that a tender will be launched in due time to select a company to carry out the performance review. He reminded the BSAC members that their input to the review will be essential to evaluate the internal functioning of the BSAC and to recommend how to improve the performance of the BSAC.

**A representative of the OIG** proposed to include the implementation of the Nature Restoration Regulation through the national plans<sup>2</sup> into the work programme of the EBM Working Group.

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<sup>2</sup> National plans to the Nature Restoration Law are to be submitted by Member States to the European Commission in 2026 [The EU #NatureRestoration Law](#)

**The EBM WG Chair** replied that the work related to the preparation of the national restoration plans is mostly carried out by Member States and therefore it is not directly relevant to the BSAC. If needed, any matters related to the Nature Restoration Regulation relevant to the BSAC would be discussed in the framework of the EBM WG.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** drew attention to the need for a representative of the BSAC to follow the ICES Workshop on Nature Restoration (WKREST) on 4-7 March 2025 (hybrid). The workshop will review evidence on the active and passive restoration of marine habitats and species, and the ecosystem functions they provide.

**A fisheries representative from Denmark** requested that BSAC ExCom will be informed about representation of the BSAC in external meetings before the meetings take place.

**The ExCom Chair** underlined that with regard to representing the BSAC in external meetings, the Rules of Procedure<sup>3</sup> (RoP) apply. The Management Team can empower the Chair of the Executive Committee, the Vice Chair or other members of the Executive Committee, or the Secretariat, to take part in external meetings on behalf of the BSAC. As indicated in the RoP, the BSAC representative shall solely express the adopted opinions of the AC.

**The ExCom** approved the draft work programme for 2025-2026 with some amendments proposed by a BSAC member<sup>4</sup>.

**The ExCom** adopted the draft budget for 2025-2026.

### 3. Reports from meetings and future meetings

- ***EFCA-BALTFISH-BSAC workshop on landing obligation, 28 November 2024, Berlin and online***

**The Executive Secretary** informed that the BSAC report from EFCA-BALTFISH-BSAC meeting on landing obligation will be available on the website.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** referred to the use of DNA analysis in sampling mixed pelagic catches, discussed at the meeting, and asked whether BALTFISH has taken account of the information that DNA analysis is the most precise tool for sampling catches.

**A representative of the German BALTFISH Presidency** replied that DNA analysis has not yet been addressed by BALTFISH. He stated that this issue could be raised at the BALTFISH HLG in June<sup>5</sup>.

- ***Roundtable with Commissioner before December Council, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2024, Brussels***

**The BSAC** was represented by the ExCom Chair and the EBM WG Chair.

The speaking points for the BSAC representatives were agreed by the ExCom. During the roundtable, the Commissioner underlined the key role of the Advisory Councils in the Commission's portfolio as well as the need for more direct communication with the ACs. The

<sup>3</sup> [BSACROP-adopted17.04.2024.pdf](#)

<sup>4</sup> Low Impact Fishers of Europe

<sup>5</sup> BSAC report is on the Website past meetings <https://www.bsac.dk/>

BSAC representatives referred to western herring and eel. They asked the Commissioner for a separate meeting with the BSAC prior the October AGRIFISH Council, where Baltic fishing possibilities for the upcoming year were determined, to discuss the key concerns regarding the Baltic environment and fish stock management<sup>6</sup>.

- ***Energy Transition Partnership workshop, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2024, Brussels***

**The BSAC** was represented by the ExCom Chair.

**The ExCom Chair** informed the ExCom that following the work on the Energy Transition in EU fisheries and aquaculture Partnership, launched on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and the successful workshops organised since, the Energy Transition Partnership has organised its new round of consultations. This time, it hosted three workshops for stakeholders specifically dedicated to small scale coastal fisheries (SSCF), large scale fisheries (LSF) and distant water fleet (DWF). The BSAC ExCom Chair attended the meeting dedicated to small-scale coastal fisheries. The output of these workshops will be published [in the ETP website](#) by the end of January. Further workshops and support group meetings will be held over the coming months<sup>7</sup>.

**The ExCom Chair** underlined that individual approach to fleet segments as well as sea basins is needed with regard to energy transition as one-size-fits-all solution will not fit all.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** agreed that regional differences in diverse fishing fleets should be taken into account. Small vessels are less likely to use energy-efficient solutions such as for example electric engines. He referred to the SEA GLOW project<sup>8</sup> as an example of energy efficient solutions addressed to small-scale fleets.

**A fisheries representative from Denmark** stated that the work on energy transition should be supported by fishers.

- ***Preparatory meeting with the Commission and ICES Ahead of MIRIA<sup>9</sup> 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025 (ExCom Chair, Executive Secretary and Vice-Chair)***

**The BSAC** was represented by the ExCom Chair, ExCom Vice-Chair and Executive Secretary. The first pre-MIRIA meeting was organised by the European Commission in response to ACs calling ICES and the Commission for greater stakeholder engagement in preparing scientific requests. The meeting specifically considered rebuilding scenarios in ICES advice, reference points, rebuilding plans, multi-annual advice, ICES mixed stock guidelines and framework to deliver practical and operational EBM. The ACs were asked to present their research priorities. The BSAC research priorities<sup>10</sup> were presented at the

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<sup>6</sup> BSAC report is on the Website past meetings <https://www.bsac.dk/>

<sup>7</sup> BSAC report is on the Website under external meetings [External Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

<sup>8</sup> [SEAGLOW: equipping small-scale fisheries with clean energy solutions | Research and Innovation](#)

<sup>9</sup> MIRIA is the annual meeting between ICES and requesters of ICES Advice.

<sup>10</sup> In terms of research priorities, **the BSAC** is of the opinion that the current system of scientific advice should better reflect **the changes in the ecosystem as well as such processes as predation, consequences of climate change, regime shift etc. and their impact on productivity of the ecosystem**. To this end the advice from science should include more

meeting (based on the statements in the BSAC recommendations and input received from EAA, Fish Sec and CCB) were sent after the meeting to DG MARE<sup>11</sup>.

- ***Fishers for the Future – final meeting 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025, Brussels and online***

**The BSAC** was represented by the ExCom Chair and the Executive Secretary. The BSAC report is available on the website<sup>12</sup>. The Fishers for the Future study was launched in 2023. The study produced four hypothetical scenarios for the future as well as future profiles of fishers. The aim of this study is to support the Commission in developing transition pathways for 2050. To close the Fishers of the Future Foresight Study, the European Commission, Tetra Tech and partners held an event in Brussels on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025. The objective of the event was to share the results of the study with stakeholders and relevant target audiences. The study served to stimulate further the important debate on securing and giving a perspective on the future of EU fishers. Commissioner Kadis attended the meeting. The Chairs of NWWAC and SWWAC spoke on behalf of the Advisory Councils. They underlined that the AC members had raised doubts in relation to the methodology developed by the project consultants as well as the results of a survey of fishers carried out as part of the project, especially regarding the theoretical profiles developed during the first phase of this project. These profiles seem rather simplistic and do not fully capture the full and diverse reality of the EU fishing industry.

**A fisheries representative from Denmark** underlined that the fishing sector has expressed many serious concerns regarding the survey conducted in the project as well as project conclusions. Taking account of several gaps in the study, the scenarios for the future are far from reality and could hardly be used for the future of fisheries.

- ***MIRIA debrief 22 January 2025***

**The BSAC** was represented by the ExCom Chair and the Executive Secretary. The Commission informed on the outcome of MIRIA 2025.

- ***Meetings with ICES: MIAC / MIACO 23-24 January 2025***

**The Executive Secretary** referred to the MIAC and MIACO meetings held on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> January 2025 in the ICES Headquarters in Copenhagen. The ExCom Chair and the Executive Secretary, as well as some BSAC members attended the meetings. The BSAC asked the question submitted before the meeting<sup>13</sup>, how changes within the ecosystem

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options and include an explanation of the consequences of each option. The BSAC reiterates its call to include **species interactions** in the advice. Predator-prey relationships should be reflected in the advice.

**The BSAC** would like to highlight that given the current state of the Baltic ecosystem, the environmental considerations other than climate change should be part of the advice. **The BSAC** draws attention to the need to further develop the advice on mixed fisheries in the Baltic. **The BSAC** has set up a **science focus group** to make better use of science in the management decisions. **Input from EAA, CCB and Fisheries Secretariat was also included** (see full paper at <https://www.bsac.dk/>)

<sup>11</sup> BSAC report is on the Website past meetings <https://www.bsac.dk/>

<sup>12</sup> BSAC report Fishers of the Future <https://www.bsac.dk/>

<sup>13</sup> **The BSAC** would like to raise the question of the general changes in productivity in the Baltic and how is this reflected in the models and ICES output: How the Baltic Sea stock advices account for natural mortality including predators (seals



(productivity, natural mortality, predator abundance) are considered in the ICES advice. Fisheries representatives from Poland referred to the existing gaps and false assumptions in the advice, underlining the importance of the changes in the stock structure. The ACOM Vice-Chair replied that changes in the Baltic ecosystem, including productivity are considered in the advice. These changes are associated with climate change. Predators may also be a contributing factor. She underlined that multispecies models are very complex and difficult to take account of.

*Several participants expressed their views related to the MIAC and MIACO meetings.*

**A small-scale fisheries representative** highlighted his disappointment with the fact that the management had been too slow to react to the changes in the state of the Baltic environment. In his view, the European Commission has not undertaken actions aimed at rebuilding the Baltic fish stocks. He drew attention to the rebuilding scenarios proposed by ICES in the framework of WKREBUILD<sup>14</sup>. He underlined that contrary to the Commission's opinion, the implementation of the MSY strategy has proved to be a complete disaster. A decade after its implementation, it can be concluded that the MSY strategy does not work. The failure of this strategy has resulted in the loss of one million tonnes of catches from the Baltic since the CFP reform was implemented because stocks have shrunk by 800,000 tonnes. The example of mismanagement of the Baltic cod should be highlighted to the Commission in order not to be repeated. He also referred to the American model of fisheries management that in the opinion of LIFE should also be followed in the Baltic.

**A fisheries representative from Denmark** disagreed with the opinion expressed by the small-scale fisheries representative and underlined that managers cannot manage things which are outside their remits. The situation in the Baltic cannot be changed through fisheries management, from one day to another. There is a need for a realistic, pragmatic approach. Such approach consists of incorporating several impacts in the fisheries management, because fish stocks are affected by many other factors than fisheries. He argued against painting a black picture of the entire Baltic. In his view, establishment of wider bodies for fisheries management should be discussed when revising the CFP. Fishers should support the scientific processes and participate in meetings to give their input.

**A representative of the OIG** praised the recently published Baltic ecosystem overview and appreciated the fact that the Commission and ICES are open to working more holistically with new issues such as offshore windfarms and nature restoration.

**A representative of DG MARE** underlined that the Commission's objective is to rebuild the stocks in the Baltic. The Commission follows ICES work on rebuilding plans. However, rebuilding plans are management tools and have strong implications for the management.

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and cormorants). Is this clearly conveyed to advice recipients and what actions are taken to make sure we can better estimate natural mortality and account for it in the advice? Building on the findings from the European seal project by Matis in Iceland, can ICES provide insights into the current understanding of seals, whales, and their ecosystem impacts, particularly in relation to fishing activity? How well do we understand the fish consumption required to sustain these populations, and how does this compare to human fishing removals? To what extent is this predator prey relationship reflected in ICES advice on fisheries management? BSAC report is available at <https://www.bsac.dk/>

<sup>14</sup> [WKREBUILD2](#)

The intention is to find a way to rebuild the stocks and avoid unforeseen consequences. The Commission is of the opinion that there should be clear separation between management and scientific considerations. Management decisions should be taken by managers.

**A representative of the German BALTFISH Presidency** underlined that the situation in the Baltic is of concern not only for the Commission, but also for the Baltic Member States. He stated that there is a need for in-depth discussion between scientists and managers to find the best tools reaching beyond the TACs and quota.

**The BSAC EBM WG Chair** agreed that several management tools such as the MAP or MSY are not effective. ICES has also stated that current advisory rules are not precautionary enough for depleted stocks.

**The ExCom Chair** underlined that the ACOM Chair had accepted the invitation to take part in the BSAC Focus Group on science.

**The ExCom** took note.

### **Upcoming meetings**

#### **- MAC workshop on the role of the POs, 28 January 2025**

*On 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025, the Market Advisory Council (MAC) and the South Western Waters Advisory Council (SWWAC) will be holding a workshop on “**Producer Organisations under the Common Market Organisation in Fishery and Aquaculture Products**”. The workshop is aimed at addressing some of the issues raised in the Commission’s report on the implementation of the Common Market Organisation Regulation<sup>15</sup>. The workshop will also aim to collect feedback on the implementation and use of funding for Production and Marketing Plans under the EMFAF (money from the Commission to support fisheries and markets). The ExCom briefly discussed this issue at the ExCom in October.*

**The ExCom Chair** informed that he will attend the meeting and will base his intervention on the discussions held at the ExCom held in October 2024 in Helsinki.

He proposed the following statement:

**The BSAC** points out that under the present rules the financing of the PMPs strongly depends on the fishing opportunities. As indicated by fisheries representatives during the BSAC Executive Committee meeting in October 2024, under the existing fishing opportunities, the producer organisations (POs) in the Baltic are going through very difficult times, and some of them face the end of their existence. At present, support granted per producer organisation depends on the average annual value of production placed on the market by the members of the PO. Therefore, the BSAC is of the opinion that the level of support granted per PO should not depend on the current fishing opportunities and in consequence, should not be directly related to the value of production placed on the market.

**The ExCom** agreed.

#### **- Commission – ACs Workshop on Control Regulation, 5 February 2025, Brussels**

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<sup>15</sup> [Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council](#)

Groupings of fishermen or fish farmers can be formally recognised as producer organisations (POs) under Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013 (the CMO Regulation). *The Commission’s report mentions the difficulties in their implementation, among others differential treatment by national administrations, need to improve support for Transnational Producer Organisations and for Interbranch Organisations, limited number of aquaculture POs, specificities of small-scale fishers.*

*The multi-AC event will take place in Brussels starting with a hybrid session at 08:30 and continuing with an in-person session only for members of the NWWAC, PelAC, NSAC, BSAC and LDAC. The event is open for AC members only.*

**The Executive Secretary** invited the BSAC members to inform the Secretariat if they want to attend the meeting and to submit questions on the new Control Regulation.

**- NSAC Workshop on predators, 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025, Lulea**

**The Demersal WG Chair** informed that the NSAC workshop on predators will take place in person on 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> March in Lulea. More information will be sent to the BSAC members at a later stage.

**The ExCom Chair** stated that the BSAC will actively participate in the workshop and present the BSAC recommendations to feed into a more horizontal view on predators.

**The ExCom** took note.

**4. Relating to the current Work Programme 2024-2025**

**Update on what is planned until 31 March 2025 (end of current year)**

**• Demersal Working Group 25<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

**The Demersal WG Chair** presented an update on the work of the WG under the current work programme. The WG will discuss the STECF Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet, the pan-European cormorant management plan and issues that could be brought to the BSAC Focus Group on science. The WG could also discuss the items that are in the work plan for 2025-26: salmon (with EBM WG) and cod recovery plan.

**• Pelagic Working Group 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

**The Pelagic WG Chair** presented an update on the work of the WG under the current work programme. The WG will discuss issues relevant to pelagic fisheries in the new Control Regulation. The agenda will also include an update on stickleback trial fisheries and possibly an update from the DNAMIX & CATCHDNA projects for catch identification<sup>16</sup>.

**• Ecosystem Based Management Working Group (in May)**

**The EBM WG Chair** presented an update on the work of the WG under the current work programme. He underlined that the next meeting of the WG (May 2025) will prioritise the definition of ecosystem-based management in the Baltic. This is also relevant in the context of the HELCOM workshop on EBM held in March 2025. The BSAC will deliver input to the workshop. The BSAC will produce a checklist of issues important to include in the EBM (policy initiatives, what needs to be included in ICES advice). He pointed to other important issues such as the MSFD review and offshore wind farms (OWF<sup>17</sup>), salmon and eel that could be dealt with by the group.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** proposed to add to include discussion on a recovery plan for cod in the work plan for the Demersal WG and salmon-herring interactions into the work plan of the EBM WG.

<sup>16</sup> [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

<sup>17</sup> ICES advice on cumulative impacts of OWF is to be expected



A fisheries representative from Latvia supported the proposal for the working group to discuss a recovery plan for cod recovery.

- **BSAC Focus Group on science**

The Executive Secretary informed that the FG now has 6 tentative members from EFFOP, WWF, Fisheries Secretariat, LIFE, Polish National Chamber of Fish Producers and BalticWaters<sup>18</sup>. The BSAC Secretariat will ask the members of the Focus Group to meet in February 2025 to decide on the terms of reference for the group. The Focus Group will be a good platform to cooperate with ICES in the future. The ACOM Chair will be invited to take part in one of the meetings of the BSAC Focus Group.

The ExCom Chair encouraged the BSAC members to join the Focus Group.

The ExCom took note.

- **Call for evidence to shape the Ocean Pact**
- **Roundtable on Ocean Pact with the Commissioner, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2025**  
(AC Chairs invited)

On 20th January 2025, the European Commission has **launched a [call for evidence to shape the European Oceans Pact](#)**, a political initiative that aims to promote sustainable ocean management and ensure the health, resilience, and productivity of the oceans and thus the prosperity of the EU's coastal communities. The pact was announced by President von der Leyen in her [political guidelines for the next European Commission \(2024-2029\)](#).

The call for evidence will **run until 17 February 2025**, with the Commission expecting to receive a wide range of contributions from stakeholders, experts, and citizens. The feedback collected will be used to shape the European Oceans Pact, which the Commission aims to present in time for the 3<sup>rd</sup> UN Ocean Conference in June 2025.

The European Oceans Pact seeks to foster a broader, integrated and holistic approach to ocean governance across all sectors, including both internal and external policies<sup>19</sup>.

The ExCom Secretary stated that the Commission had informed the Advisory Councils that they can submit their input also after the deadline of 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

A representative of DG MARE informed that the Ocean Pact is part of the European Commission's political guidelines for 2024-2029. The Pact will focus on boosting the blue economy and ensuring the good governance and sustainability of our oceans in all of their dimensions. Ocean-related policies still remain rather fragmented. The European Commission has invited the AC Chairs to participate in a first-roundtable in Brussels on 21st February 2025 as the starting point for *the Fisheries and Oceans Dialogue*.

The main goal of the Ocean Pact is to identify key challenges facing the EU's ocean governance model, and the priorities for addressing these challenges. It will address the key measures needed to protect biodiversity and promote ecosystem-based management of the

<sup>18</sup> After the ExCom more BSAC members signalled interest to join the group. The Focus Group is now composed of representatives of EFFOP, WWF, Fisheries Secretariat, LIFE and BalticWaters, Polish National Chamber of Fish Producers, DFPO, SFPO.

<sup>19</sup> [Shaping the European Oceans Pact: Commission launches a call for evidence - European Commission](#)

ocean, to sustain its climate function, health and productivity, the opportunities for sustainable growth and job creation in the EU's blue economy, and the role that the European Oceans Pact can play in promoting these opportunities, an effective marine knowledge value chain that supports EU competitiveness in ocean technologies and solutions, translated into market innovation as well as the priorities for supporting the resilience and sustainability of coastal communities in the various sea basins of the EU.

**A fisheries representative from Denmark** underlined that in its statement on the Ocean Pact, the BSAC should draw attention to the need to secure food sovereignty by developing resilient, competitive and sustainable European fisheries, in line with the Mission letter<sup>20</sup> of the EU President to the Commissioner-designate for Fisheries and Oceans.

**The EBM WG Chair** welcomed the initiative and pointed to need to include the agricultural policies as well as Water Framework Directive in the Pact, to foster a broader approach needed for the governance in the Baltic region.

**A representative of the OIG** praised the opportunity to send input to the call for evidence on the Ocean Pact. She stated that legally binding targets are needed with respect to this political initiative and that it should provide coherence between different existing policies and legislation. She asked how the BSAC position on the Ocean Pact will be prepared.

**A member of the BSAC Secretariat** explained that the Ocean Pact will be a communication<sup>21</sup> and therefore it is not aimed to include any legally binding targets. The Ocean Pact will look at a broader, integrated approach to ocean governance across all sectors. The Advisory Councils will be consulted in designing the Pact and will be involved in monitoring its implementation. The BSAC Secretariat will prepare the first draft of a short intervention for the ExCom Chair, for the Roundtable with the Commissioner on 21<sup>st</sup> February. The ExCom members will be consulted and asked to comment on the main challenges of the Ocean Pact.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** noted that the first Manifesto for the European Ocean Pact advocating for a holistic approach was published in 2023 by a high-level stakeholders and later as a Communication of the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council.<sup>22</sup>

**The ExCom** agreed that, due to time constraints, the ExCom Chair's intervention at the roundtable meeting with the Commissioner on 21<sup>st</sup> February should be very generic, as each participant will only have a few minutes of speaking time. The draft will be prepared by the Secretariat. The BSAC would provide written input to the Commission during March. It was agreed that BSAC members should submit comments no later than Friday 14<sup>th</sup> February to the BSAC Secretariat and focus their comments on the key challenges facing the EU's ocean governance model.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Mission letter to Commissioner-designate [028ce7d5-e328-4416-8f0d-35c8884acaa8\\_en](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52023DC0103)

<sup>21</sup> From the call of evidence: A Commission Communication is the appropriate instrument to introduce a holistic approach to all EU ocean related policies, calling on all players, at all levels (EU, national, regional and local) and thematic and sectorial communities to adhere to that vision and put it into practice in their respective remits.

<sup>22</sup> [eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52023DC0103](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52023DC0103)

1) <sup>23</sup> The key challenges facing the EU's ocean governance model, and the priorities for addressing these challenges.  
2) The key measures needed to protect biodiversity and promote ecosystem-based management of the ocean, to sustain its climate function, health and productivity.

## 5. Co-operation with BALTFISH

### *The BALTFISH workplan update from the German Presidency*

**The BALTFISH Presidency** presented an update of its workplan until June 2025. Sweden will take over the BALTFISH Presidency as of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025.

With respect to the eel, **the representative of the German Presidency** informed that in February BALTFISH will further discuss the dates for additional closure of eel fishery and seek agreement of all Member States<sup>24</sup>. If no consensus is reached, the closure will remain as in 2024 (15<sup>th</sup> September – 15<sup>th</sup> March). He referred to the proposal put forward by the European Commission to classify the European eel in Appendix I of CITES, a classification prohibiting the exploitation of the species, including for restocking. BALTFISH will also continue discussing harbour porpoise protection measures in the light of the ICES advice on harbour porpoise, released in December 2024<sup>25</sup> and will call a technical meeting in March on this issue. BALTFISH will discuss the possible next steps with regard to measures to protect harbour porpoise in the Baltic in June, with a view to finding a balanced solution. BALTFISH will also organise a workshop on the impacts of offshore wind farms. BALTFISH will inform on the dates of the Forum and HLG meetings in June. The representative of the German Presidency stated that in the coming months BALTFISH will focus on the CFP evaluation while following the developments related to the Ocean Pact.

**A representative of the German anglers** referred to the proposed listing of the European eel in Appendix I of CITES. He noted that such classification could have dramatic consequences for eel related activities, including exploitation and restocking<sup>26</sup>.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** referred to the latest ICES advice on harbour porpoise which has identified fishing gears most likely causing bycatches of harbour porpoise<sup>27</sup>. He underlined that the potential biological removal limit (0.7 individuals per year for the Baltic Proper) is very restrictive. To immediately reduce bycatch of Baltic Proper harbour porpoise, ICES has previously advised a combination of spatial temporal closures

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- 3) *The opportunities for sustainable growth and job creation in the EU's blue economy, and the role that the European Oceans Pact can play in promoting these opportunities.*
  - 4) *An effective marine knowledge value chain that supports EU competitiveness in ocean technologies and solutions, translated into market innovation.*
  - 5) *The priorities for supporting the resilience and sustainability of coastal communities in the various sea basins of the EU.*

<sup>24</sup> in ICES subarea 3 (Baltic Sea and Skagerrak-Kattegat) and for silver eel, closure periods should be agreed by all the Member States concerned (i.e. Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden), so as to ensure an effective protection of silver eel on its migration from the Baltic Sea into the North Sea [2023-12-10-non-paper-updates-2024-fishing-opportunities-regulation-com-587-eel\\_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>25</sup> ICES advice on: [EU request on support for the implementation of the Action Plan – harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea \(Baltic Proper\)](#) December 2024

<sup>26</sup> Stein FM, Nijman V, Lau MCW, Dekker W. Eels: uncertain impacts of proposed CITES listings. *Oryx*. Published online 2025:1-1. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0030605325000018>

<sup>27</sup> The métiers identified with the highest risk of bycatch were set gillnets (GNS), trammel nets (GTR), and driftnets, followed by bottom and midwater otter trawls and midwater pair trawls. No bycatch of harbour porpoises was reported in longlines or pots.

and application of pingers in static nets (i.e. trammel net, gillnet, and semi-driftnet) fisheries. In the view of small-scale fisheries representative, more dynamic fisheries closures should be applied in high-risk areas, allowing fisheries in no risk areas. He noted that cod, sprat and herring are not mentioned in BALTFISH workplan. He also mentioned that there is an overcapacity in the pelagic processing plants around the Baltic due to the restricted fishing opportunities which calls for some coordination and dialogue.

**A representative of DG MARE** underlined that the Commission has at this stage not formally proposed to the Council to propose to the CITES Conference of the Parties to classify the European eel in Appendix I of CITES. However, the Commission has been discussing this possibility with the Member States since last year and drew attention that there is scientific consensus that the European eel fulfils the criteria for an uplisting.

**A fisheries representative from Denmark** stated that there is an obvious mismatch between the ICES advice on eel and the observations made by fishers who see a substantial increase in the catch rates. The eel stock has not declined since the introduction of national eel management plans. The eel fishery in Denmark has been substantially reduced in line with the management plan. However, the fishing industry is frustrated to see the idea of uplifting eel to Appendix I of CITES and prohibiting its exploitation. He underlined that the Danish fishers find the provisions of the Eel Regulation too rigid, they welcome the initiatives that contribute to the further recovery of eel, whilst allowing a continued fishery. The information provided by fishers should be taken into account in eel management.

He referred to the conference on the future of eel fishing organised by Danish Fishers PO on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025, with the aim to bring together all key stakeholders to examine the facts and explore whether eel fishing has a sustainable future.

**A small-scale fisheries representative from Germany** underlined that non-fishery-related sources of mortality of eel should be dealt with at first. Fisheries impact is limited.

**The representative of the German BALTFISH Presidency** took note of the concerns expressed on the eel and harbour porpoise. With reference to overcapacity in the pelagic processing industry, he stated that it is up to the Member States to decide how to proceed.

**The ExCom Chair** asked the German Presidency to recommend the Swedish Presidency to continue with virtual coffee meetings with the BSAC Management Team.

**The ExCom** took note.

## **6. Format for the BSAC recommendations on the fishing opportunities** (*follow-up from discussions of the last ExCom in October 2024*)

**The BSAC Secretariat** recalled that the BSAC ExCom in October 2024 had discussed the format of the BSAC recommendations on the fishing opportunities and decided to come back to the discussion in order to have clear guidance for the preparation of the BSAC advice on the fishery before the next Joint Working Group in June 2025. The Secretariat has proposed draft guidelines<sup>28</sup>.

**Some fisheries representatives** pointed to the benefits of having a two-day working group meeting in June to discuss the fishing opportunities and possibly reduce a number of

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<sup>28</sup> [See draft Guidelines format for TAC recommendations](#)

positions through longer discussions. **The Pelagic WG Chair** proposed to limit the accompanying text in the table explaining why members support a position to maximum 1-2 sentences.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** proposed to discuss the ICES advice and the corresponding fishing opportunities in a meeting of the Science Focus Group, before the Joint WG meeting.

**The Germany BALTFISH Presidency** stated that the BSAC recommendations for the fishery in the Baltic Sea present a good overview of different opinions. He underlined that more unified recommendations on different stocks could help in elevating the impact of the BSAC on AGRIFISH Council decisions.

**The ExCom** adopted the *Guidelines for the format and preparation of the annual BSAC recommendations on the fishery in the Baltic*<sup>29</sup>, with one addition on limiting the text explaining the position in the table to 1-2 sentences.

## 7. Cooperation with HELCOM:

*HELCOM was invited to inform on the planned workshop with BALTFISH and BSAC on the definition of ecosystem-based fisheries management (4<sup>th</sup> March 2025). The next meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> Informal Consultation Session of the Working Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (IC WG FISH 5-2025) to be held on the Isle of Vilm, Germany on 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025.*

**The representative of HELCOM** presented an update on the outcome of discussions held in the 4<sup>th</sup> Informal Consultation of the Working Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (IC WG FISH 4-2024), as well as the planned HELCOM meetings. She informed that progress made regard to the BSAC recommendation on seal. The BSAC had recommended that HELCOM updates the limit reference points and target reference levels of seal populations in different Management Units. The issue is discussed by an expert group on mammals (WG MaMa) and the results of these discussions will be communicated to the WG FISH (IC WG FISH 5-2025) in March. Information on acoustic deterrent devices to minimise the bycatches of harbour porpoise as well as updates on the salmon recommendation will be provided during the WG in March. HELCOM will also discuss a recommendation on sea trout. With reference to the workshop on EBFM (4<sup>th</sup> March 2025), the HELCOM representative stated that the workshop will discuss the objectives and principles of ecosystem-based sustainable fisheries and how to proceed towards EBFM in the Baltic Sea. HELCOM will provide a pre-meeting document listing actions to be discussed at the workshop.

**The HELCOM representative** attended the MIRIA meeting and had discussion with ICES how HELCOM and ICES can work together on the EBFM issue.

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<sup>29</sup> [Advice & Recommendations - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)



**The ExCom Chair** thanked the HELCOM representative for bringing the BSAC recommendations on seals and cormorants to the agenda of the WG FISH. He informed that the EBM WG Chair will be the BSAC representative in the HELCOM meetings.

**The EBM WG Chair** stated that the BSAC will propose comments to the draft paper that will be submitted by HELCOM before the meeting.

**The ExCom** decided that the BSAC will be represented at the HELCOM EBFM workshop and WG FISH by Matti Ovaska, the Chair of the EBM WG.

**The ExCom** took note

#### **8. Dates and venue of the GA and ExCom meetings**

**The ExCom** decided to hold the General Assembly and Executive Committee meetings on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2025 and the EBM Working Group on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2025. The meetings will be held in person in Lulea and online.

#### **9. AOB**

**The ExCom Chair** thanked all participants for good discussions.

Topic	Action	Status
<b>HELCOM WG on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries March 2025</b>	The BSAC will attend and present its position on EBFM.	Matti Ovaska the EBM WG Chair will represent the BSAC at the meeting.
<b>BSAC format for fishing opportunities recommendations</b>	The ExCom discussed the template.	The ExCom adopted the new format with simplified table (with 1-2 sentences explaining different positions)
<b>Focus Group to prepare a BSAC science meeting</b>	8 BSAC members (EFFOP, WWF, Fisheries Secretariat, LIFE and BalticWaters, Polish National Chamber of Fish Producers, DFPO, SFPO, CCB) signalled interest to join the group.	The FG now has 8 members. The first meeting will take place in February.
<b>Ocean Pact – call for evidence and ExCom Chair’s intervention at The Roundtable with the Commissioner</b>	ExCom Chair’s intervention BSAC reply to the call for evidence	The BSAC Secretariat will prepare a short, generic intervention at the roundtable. The BSAC would provide written input to the Commission during March. It was agreed that BSAC members should submit comments no later

		than Friday 14 <sup>th</sup> February to the BSAC Secretariat and focus their comments on the key challenges facing the EU's ocean governance model.
<b>HELCOM workshop on EBM 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025</b>		A draft BASC position will be prepared (BSAC Secretariat and EBM WG Chair).
<b>Next BSAC meeting dates</b>	The ExCom agreed on the proposed meeting dates except for the General Assembly and ExCom meetings in May where new dates were requested and location.	The ExCom decided that the General Assembly and the ExCom will take place on 20 <sup>th</sup> May 2025 in Lulea and online. The EBM WG will take place on 21 <sup>st</sup> May 2025.