

Inter-AC, 8-9 April 2025
and dialogue with stakeholders
Brussels and online
BSAC report

Participants: Advisory Councils Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Executive Secretariats in person, Commissioner Costas KADIS, European Commission (DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries - MARE), observers and AC members online.

8th April

Director Mr Stelios Mitolidis, Director MARE.D and Chair welcomed all participants.

Opening speech by Commissioner Costas Kadis

Commissioner Kadis stated that on many occasions he has witnessed the hard work of the Advisory Councils and their valuable advice. He underlined massive impact of climate change on the oceans and his commitment to keep the fisheries sector sustainable. Key policies are needed to prepare a comprehensive response. They should be updated to facilitate the work of the sector. The Commission has already started this work by developing the Ocean Pact and evaluating the CFP. The input of the Advisory Councils is crucial.

He underlined that the Ocean Pact is the key deliverable of his mandate. It will be aimed at ensuring that the seas are managed sustainably for the benefit of future generations. He thanked the ACs for their active participation in the roundtable dialogue on 21st February 2025.

The CFP remains one of the main tools in fisheries management. The 2013 revision had partly failed to set the right measures. The CFP evaluation will build on positive aspects and will be finalised in the beginning of 2026. Further legislative actions will be taken if need arises. The involvement of the ACs is crucial in building the 2040 vision of fisheries. An EU strategy for external actions will be developed to feed into the 2040 vision and strengthen the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RMFO) and sustainable fisheries agreements.

He thanked the ACs for their dedicated work and once again underlined the importance of their advice.

Roundtable on the Vision for EU Fisheries in 2040 with Commissioner Costas KADIS

The representatives of all the ACs took the floor (4 minutes each) on the vision for the EU fisheries in 2040. They underlined a number of challenges ahead. They stated that it is crucial to assess the present when talking about the future. Policy should be developed with the input from the ACs. Some legislative acts have not been assessed sufficiently. There is a need for simplification to avoid administrative burden. Strategic long term perspective is lacking in fisheries management. The sector needs security and stable access to resources. The Ocean Pact must embrace a multisectoral management model and adaptive management strategies. It is crucial to link the 2040 vision of fisheries to food security. The 2040 vision should reinforce socioeconomic resilience of the sector, facilitate

innovations in low impact technologies, support data collection and support the role of ACs ensure their input to future policies as a key elements in providing advice on fisheries policy. Several of them underlined the crucial role of fisheries in food security. Pressures can only be addressed in close collaboration with stakeholders. Working conditions for fishers should be improved.

The BSAC ExCom Vice-Chair underlined that the BSAC values the InterAC meetings as a forum to exchange opinions. He stated that in the Baltic the focus is on the more immediate future. In 2040, people living around the Baltic expect to have as good fish stocks and environmental conditions as possible. This would benefit the millions of people living around the Baltic Sea, giving them good quality of life, sustainable livelihoods and also providing strategic food security directly from the sea.

On the long list of the current challenges of today, a close look should be taken at the effects of various maritime activities, pollution and climate change. The Baltic Sea is quite unique and fragile and any efforts *on* and *in* the water must go hand in hand with efforts *on* land. So, to reach the goal of healthy fish stocks and sustainable environmental conditions, a broader approach is needed for the governance of the Baltic Sea. It has to include also the agricultural policies as well as water policies. In this light it is obvious that the CFP and the fisheries sector cannot address these challenges alone. An integrated approach coherent with other policy domains, such as environmental, agricultural and energy policies is needed.

The BSAC welcomes the European Oceans Pact¹ as an opportunity to strengthen ocean governance and policy coherence as well as to address the challenges affecting marine ecosystems and coastal communities. The BSAC would like to see fisheries in 2040 embedded in a coherent set of rules and effective actions so that fishers can operate in a context which would reflect the current CFP objectives having been achieved. The current CFP will no doubt contribute to the future CFP, so looking at possible shortcomings of the existing CFP and how to overcome these should help bring about better fish stocks and environmental conditions in 2040. The future is taking shape right now. He recalled that the BSAC contributed to the Commission's evaluation of the CFP in 2024 by reviewing the White Paper.

In this context, the BSAC calls for reviewing the CFP in order to secure sustainable fisheries in the future and highlights the following:

- Delayed management actions are detrimental to effective management, therefore we call the decision makers to come up with faster and more adaptive solutions.
- There is a continued need to focus on the overall ecosystem, and on the other factors that are affecting the well-being of certain stocks. Today, in the Baltic Sea, fishing is just one of the factors that is having an influence on the stocks. Several other challenging developments are occurring at the same time, among other species interaction and climate change. The BSAC calls for including the ecosystem-based approach to EU fisheries management and scientific advice.

¹ *The BSAC presented its recommendations on the Ocean Pact on 24th March 2025.*

- Especially in the Baltic, the EBM should first be considered in strategies for fish stocks recovery, including protecting and restoring habitats. Finally, EBM should be considered in the context of climate change and the fragility induced to affected ecosystems.
- The management of fisheries and fish stocks should ensure a maximum sustainable yield and also recreational fishing opportunities, so much relevant for the EU citizens.
- The criteria for the catch opportunities, in mixed commercial fisheries, should take into account the choke species problem. TACs should be calibrated in such a way as to take into account the precautionary principle and the ability for the industry to adapt to such fluctuations.
- We need the management, the control and enforcement that ensure the policy objectives are met, that a level playing field is observed and that fishermen are given the incentive to fish in a sustainable manner as individuals and collectively.
- We need the scientific advice that provides comprehensive and up to date information about the actual situation of commercial fish stocks and about human and natural factors influencing the development of these stocks.

The BSAC continues to focus on an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management and remains committed to providing valuable input for the revision of the Common Fisheries Policy.

The Commissioner thanked all ACs for valuable input, demonstrating their level of expertise. He asked the ACs to send their contributions to the Commission. He underlined the importance of following the ecosystem-based management, regionalisation and ensuring the level playing field. With reference to the Baltic, he stressed that there is consensus among stakeholders and political parties on the need to focus on the recovery of the Baltic through integrated approach taking account of all pressures affecting the sea.

The Chair invited the ACs to brainstorm on the 2040 vision, including the links of fisheries policies with other policies.

The representatives of the ACs underlined that fisheries cannot be treated in separation from other sectors. Several policies, such as maritime spatial planning are under the competence of the Member States. Marine strategy and spatial planning need to be integrated with fisheries. It was also stated that alignment with other initiatives, such as the clean industrial deal², Nature Restoration Law and food system initiatives are needed. In this context, the Ocean Pact is an opportunity. The 3 main pillars of sustainability in the CFP are not implemented. They need to become operational in the future CFP. There is a need to tighten the bridges between fisheries and environmental policies. Majority of legal and non-legal tools to achieve this objective already exists. There is a need to secure adequate infrastructure for energy transition.

A small scale fisheries representative from the BSAC underlined the need to strengthen resilience and competitiveness of fisheries. He emphasised the need to fill data gaps in order to rebuild the stocks. Data gaps undermine the resilience of fisheries. There is a need

² The **Clean Industrial Deal** is a strategic initiative by the European Commission aimed at driving **decarbonization** and enhancing the **competitiveness** of European industries.

for a strategy to rebuild the stocks of low trophic species and predators. Coastal communities need to be protected. For years, fishing opportunities have been unequally distributed, promoting the interest of large scale vessels to the detriment of small-scale fishers and the marine environment. The level playing field approach is not working. This has to change.

The Chair summarised the discussion by thanking the ACs for their elaborated contributions. He underlined that the Commission aims at making the discussions on the 2040 vision inclusive.

Day 2

Dialogue with DG MARE on key fisheries topics related to the CFP

Stelios Mitolidis, Director MARE.D chaired the meeting. The Commission informed on the state of play of several initiatives, such as the vision for fisheries in 2040, the Ocean Pact and the evaluation of the CFP.

Follow up of discussion of day 1

Vision 2040

The representative of DG MARE referred to the vision for the fisheries sector with a 2040 perspective, mentioned by Ursula von der Layen in her mission letter addressed to the Commissioner – designate³. The Commission has started to work on identifying the elements to be taken into account in the vision, such as the European Green Deal, Competitiveness Compass⁴, Nature Restoration Law⁵, Communication on implementation and simplification⁶, Communication on a Union of skills⁷, Vision for agriculture and food⁸ as well as the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework proposal. Key ongoing DG MARE initiatives were presented, among others the CFP evaluation, energy transition, Fishers of the Future, the European Ocean Pact, the EU ocean research and innovation strategy, fisheries external actions.

For a thriving sector we need fish that is caught from healthy stocks, labour force and people working in processing industry and fisheries that have appropriate knowledge to catch (fishers), farm and process fish, tools to catch fish that optimise costs and infrastructure to land/farm, transport fish.

The representatives of the ACs welcomed the initiative aimed at preparing the vision for the fisheries sector with a 2040 perspective. They underlined that some additional points need to be included in the vision, such as freedom of movement of labour, promoting who catches the fish and the value of fish, as well as compliance with the rules of all marketed fish products in the EU. Some ACs underlined the need to take into account competitive prices. They also emphasised that generational challenge is extreme and competition for

³ [028ce7d5-e328-4416-8f0d-35c8884acaa8_en](#)

⁴ [Competitiveness compass - European Commission](#)

⁵ [Regulation - EU - 2024/1991 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

⁶ [Simplification and Implementation - European Commission](#)

⁷ [Union of skills - European Commission](#)

⁸ [Vision for Agriculture and Food - European Commission](#)

skilled workers is high. Planning the future requires looking at the present. Food sovereignty approach to fisheries should be considered as one of the priorities.

Ocean Pact

The representative of DG MARE informed on the ongoing work on the Ocean Pact. The Commission is trying to integrate all input received during the call for evidence in a holistic and coherent approach to ocean governance across all sectors. This political initiative will aim 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. An informal EU Council of Ministers will discuss the Ocean Pact. An in-depth discussion took place at the European Parliament. The Ocean Pact will also be in focus during the Maritime Days in the end of May.

The representatives of the ACs underlined the need for the Pact to ensure that the EU uses its market access as a tool to protect its interests and prevent imports from illegal and non-sustainable sources or seafood linked to illegal fishing. They welcomed the inclusion of the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management into the Pact. The Ocean Pact must be supported by an adequate financial mechanism. Maritime spatial planning should involve sufficient mechanisms to deal with the competition for marine space. A science task force should be set up to adapt the science to the new developments.

The BSAC ExCom Vice-Chair referred to the uniqueness and fragility of the Baltic Sea where any efforts on and in the water must go hand in hand with efforts on land. This points to the need to include agricultural policies as well as the Water Framework Directive in the Ocean Pact, to foster a broader governance approach needed in the Baltic region. The Ocean Pact must be backed with legally binding targets and a financial support.

The representative of DG MARE informed that the Ocean Pact will be a 20 page document accompanied by a road map. The Ocean Pact must be implementable. The instruments are key and they are the main challenge. The financial support is also key to its success. A sea-basin approach and maritime spatial planning will be taken into account.

CFP evaluation

The Chair reminded of a consultation to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the CFP, with the deadline on 21st April 2025. This evaluation will provide an overview on how the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation, its instruments and measures have been performing over the last decade and whether there is need for any changes. He asked the ACs to express their views on the evaluation.

The BSAC ExCom Chair presented the key fisheries topics related to the CFP⁹ as agreed by the BSAC. Fisheries management should follow ongoing changes in the ecosystem: adaptive and fast decision-making process at regional level. Interactions between any sea users as well between species should be taken into account in fisheries management. Ecosystem based management should always be considered, in fisheries management, as well as strategies for fish stocks recovery, especially Baltic cod. Including protecting and restoring habitat. EBM should be considered in the context of climate change and the fragility induced to affected ecosystems. Fishing is only one of the pressures. The BSAC

⁹ BSAC recommendations on the evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy, December 2024 [\[Modtagerfelt\]](#)

highlights the huge scientific knowledge needs when it comes to including ecosystem considerations in fish stock modelling. This is key to implement the EBM. Climate change has influenced the Baltic Sea ecosystem structure and function and consequently impacted the fisheries. Decision makers are urged to incorporate the impacts of climate change into the management decisions- as soon as more management options are understood. The BSAC also points to the need to mitigate, where possible, the effects of climate change. Restoring marine habitats will make the Baltic Sea more resilient to handling the effects of the climate crisis whilst also being able to better mitigate the effect. Eutrophication together with climate change is a major driver for changes in the Baltic Sea ecosystem. This phenomenon calls for improved water management measures. The BSAC highlights that over 97% of the Baltic Sea area is affected by eutrophication. The current system of scientific advice should include more options and include an explanation of the consequences of each option. The advice should also reflect the changes in the ecosystem. Advisory Councils should be more involved in the content of the advice requests and in use of the advice. The scientific advice needs to move away from a single species approach to an ecosystem approach. The current scientific advice contains risks, uncertainties and gaps that are not quantified, explained and communicated in the advice. This is mainly due to data misreporting, gaps in the data processing and uncertainties in scientific models. Therefore, ICES should quantify these uncertainties and include an assessment of the associated risks for fish stocks so that decision makers can make more informed decisions. There are still debates and many divergent views in the BSAC around the timeline and reference points related to the MSY principle. A robust MSY policy should be based on sound and timely advice reflecting overall stock abundance and composition, have a decided effect on stock development, and at the same time regulatory framework should allow fishers to adapt to changing circumstances. Regionalisation plays an important role in securing influence by MS and interest groups with a direct interest in the region. Regionalisation should be retained, and at the same time be optimised. BALTFISH has a strong and direct influence on implementation of the CFP in the Baltic. The BSAC is not part of the formal decision-taking on CFP implementation. Although BALTFISH-BSAC have established a well-functioning dialogue on general Baltic management issues, however, there is a need for more coordination and more transparency by making meeting reports and other documentation available. The BSAC agrees that the social, economic and environmental consequences of the taken decisions and their implementation need to be accounted for in setting priorities. The differences in opportunities available for fisheries in “Baltic-locked Member States” and the ones having access to other sea basins need to be accounted for. Impacts of decisions on fisheries management are felt by coastal communities but also along the rivers upstream and by the recreational fishing and tourism sectors. The BSAC also draws attention to the need to secure food sovereignty by developing resilient, competitive and sustainable European fisheries, in line with the Mission Letter of the EU President to the Commissioner-designate for Fisheries and Oceans.

The representatives of the ACs stated that they will provide their input to the evaluation by the deadline of 21st April. They underlined, among others, the need to include the external dimension in the CFP. They complained about the format of the consultation,

addressed more to the general public than to the ACs. In their view, the opinions provided by citizens and the ACs should not be given the same weight. The advice of the ACs should be prioritised. They called for including the management of predators as part of the EBM approach. More attention to work on conservation targets in the scope of Nature Restoration Law is needed..

The Chair thanked all the ACs for providing views on the CFP evaluation. The consultation process follows a standard procedure. The Commission tries to make the process inclusive. He informed that the public consultation for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) had been launched on the 12 February 2025 and will remain open until 6 May 2025.

With respect to the Nature Restoration Law, the Member States are to submit their implementing plans by August 2026. He asked the ACs to make clear to the authorities that this is an important element.

The Commission will publish EMFF and EMFAF evaluations in the summer.

Dialogue with DG MARE on EU Fisheries External Action (including update on SFPAs)

Welcome by Director & housekeeping rules Mr Fernando Andresen Guimaraes, Director MARE.B and Chair

The Chair presented general contextualisation of Fisheries External Action. Why do we need strategy for external actions? Managing fisheries sustainably faces challenges on international level. IUU is one of the largest threats. Coherence is also needed between the external dimension of the CFP and international environmental policy, for example in regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs), regional sea conventions, or sustainable fisheries partnership agreements (SFPAs).

The 2009 Green Paper highlighted the need to strengthen the external dimension of the CFP. It emphasised the importance of extending the principles of the CFP's core objective (i.e. to promote responsible and sustainable fisheries) at international level and to endorse better global governance of the sea, in particular fisheries. The Green Paper identified several fields for improvement, including action to make the external component more coherent across policies.

There are key pillars of CFP external dimension: managing shared stocks, a new generation of SFPAs and zero tolerance to IUU.

The representatives of the ACs underlined that the level playing field for all fleets and countries is one of the key elements and a driving force for the external dimension of the CFP. New generation of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements has a potential to deliver benefits in terms of sustainability. There should be zero tolerance to IUU. They drew attention to the new requirements put on EU fleet in external waters by the new Control Regulation and called for improving the transparency of vessel lists/registers. They underlined the fundamental role of regional fisheries management organisations (RFMO) in fisheries governance.

The Chair thanked everyone for good discussions.

The next InterAC meeting will take place in the autumn.