

WORK PROGRAMME FOR BALTIC SEA ADVISORY COUNCIL - BSAC¹

Period: 01/04/2025 to 31/03/2026

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. The BSAC membership is made up of 38 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 9 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 (Chair and Vice Chair of the Executive Committee, Chairs of the Working Groups and Secretariat).

In 2025-26 the BSAC will conduct an external performance review, according to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/204, Article 7a.

Remote work and hybrid meetings

In 2024-2025, 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 more members to participate. They do, however, create even greater challenges when it comes to participating in a meeting, and extra costs incur for the organisation to organise hybrid meetings.

War in Ukraine - impact on the Baltic

The war in Ukraine has had consequences on Baltic fisheries and stakeholders. 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;
- 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.

BSAC WORK PRIORITIES

¹Latest version adopted by the General Assembly on 17 April May 2025 to align with Regulation 2022/204.

² <https://www.bsac.dk/about/>

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

⁴ <https://www.bsac.dk/regulations/>

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>

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 2025-26 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.

20TH ANNIVERSARY – January 2026

The Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BSAC), established and operational in 2006 with the revision of the Common Fisheries Policy (EC) 2371/2002, will enter its 20th year of operations in 2025/2026. The 20th Anniversary event is planned in January 2026.

Work priorities

The BSAC has identified 7 work priorities that are part of its current and future focus:

1. Fish stock sustainability: fishing opportunities recommendations.
2. Fisheries management, improving the regulations and their implementation: Common Fisheries Policy, Landing Obligation, Technical Measures Regulations, Control Regulation.
3. Ecosystem approach, species interactions and environmental policies: Marine Action Plan, EBFM, species interactions and role of predators, MSFD.
4. Climate change and fisheries: Climate change impact on the Baltic environment, blue dimension in the EU Green Deal and the Blue Deal, fisheries contributing to addressing the climate change, mitigation, adaptation.
5. Fisheries as a sustainable, protein-rich seafood: Farm to Fork Strategy.
6. Socio-economic dimension of the CFP and recreational fisheries.
7. Regionalisation, cooperation, communication.

These are broken down into more precise work items either for all Working Groups (horizontal) or for a specific one.

Horizontal issues for all Working Groups

- Recommendations on fishing opportunities for 2026. ICES will release its annual advice for the Baltic stocks at the end of May 2025. The BSAC will hold a working group to deal with this, and develop recommendations for the Baltic fishery in 2026.
- Evaluation of the CFP
- Follow the implementation of the Commission Marine Action Plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems⁶ and of BSAC recommendations on the topic⁷.
- 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.
- Management of seals and other predators and interactions with fisheries: join a workshop on predators together with NSAC in March 2025.
- BSAC Science Working Group (ToR to be developed in January – February 2025)

⁶ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/publications/communication-commission-eu-action-plan-protecting-and-restoring-marine-ecosystems-sustainable-and_en

⁷ <https://www.bsac.dk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/BSACrecommendationsAP-2023-2024-35.pdf>

- OCEAN PACT – BSAC looks forward to work on OCEAN Pact – more information from the Commission needed

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 implementation of the new technical regulations
- Developing a cod recovery plan
- Management of seals and cormorants and interactions with fisheries: Following on the successful workshop on predators in the Baltic in October 2023 and 2024 BSAC will join a workshop on predators together with NSAC.
- Discussion on the Pan-European cormorant management plan, developed on request of the FAO and DG MARE. (During a meeting on cormorants in Tallinn the BSAC Chair invited **Niels Thorvald Jepsen DTU Aqua** to the Demersal WG agenda meeting scheduled on February 2025)
- Salmon in collaboration with the EBM WG (HELCOM recommendation, Baltic Salmon Management Plan).

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)
- Follow-up the implementation of the control regulation
- Data collection in pelagic fisheries.

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
- Ecosystem approach, species interactions and environmental policies: Marine Action Plan, eel.
- Salmon in collaboration with the Demersal WG (HELCOM recommendation, Baltic Salmon Management Plan, information on new studies on natural mortality and species interaction e.g. salmon and herring)
- How to better incorporate the EBM into the scientific advice

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.

Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF)

The BSAC will continue the new engagement with STECF. In particular, it will scrutinise the conclusions 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 to organise one ExCom meeting in the same location as the BALTFISH Presidency to ensure smooth communication and the monthly exchanges of the Management Team and the BALTFISH Presidency through “Virtual Coffee Meetings”.

The BSAC has been invited by the BALTFISH Presidency to participate in Control Expert Group and stands ready to participate in CEG meetings.

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. The BSAC is ready to actively participate in a joint BALTFISH – HELCOM – BSAC workshop in March, to discuss and reach a common understanding of ecosystem based fisheries management.

External meetings

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

- BALTFISH Forum under the German Presidency (until 30th June 2025) and the Swedish Presidency (from 1st July 2025), and regular meetings between BSAC Management Team and BALTFISH Presidency
- European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) Advisory Board meetings
- Commission Inter-ACs meeting (the meetings 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/benchmarks
- MIRIA debriefs
- 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.

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 SEAwisdom 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 25-26:

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 2026	TAC/quota	Joint WG	July 2025
2	Advice on the State of play & orientations 2026	State of the stocks	Joint WG	August 2025
3	Advice on CFP		Joint WG	

4	Definition of the EBM from Baltic perspective		EBM WG	
5	Advice on the implementation of the Marine Action Plan	Conservation and sustainable exploitation of marine biological resources, including eel	EBM, Pelagic and Demersal WG,	
6	Advice on management in relation with species interactions	Multiannual plans, TAC/quota, Ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management	EBM, Pelagic and Demersal WG and Science Focus Group	

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 in person/hybrid.

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

7 Working Groups [depending on the expenditure] (2 Pelagic, 2 Demersal, 2 EBM), one Joint Working Group. Some Working Groups might be held in person back-to-back with Executive Committee meetings, some online and Joint WG will be in hybrid format.

2 Focus Group meetings on science, usually online.

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 01/04/2025 to 31/03/2026)

N o	Date (for the first 6 months, please provide precise dates)	Topics /subjects of meeting	Type of meeting (physical/planned/ hybrid)	European Commissio n participatio n requested (yes/no)	If Commissio n participatio n requested, specific issues to be dealt with	Priority for a Commissio n participatio n (from 1 to 4) (1= highest priority)
1	20/05/2025 or week 21	General Assembly	Hybrid, in Lulea	Yes	Annual Meeting	2
2	20/05/2025 or week 21	Executive Committee	Hybrid, in Lulea	Yes	Admin matters + selected topics	2
3	21/05/2025 or week 21	EBM WG	Hybrid, in Lulea	Yes	TBD	2
4	17-18 /06/2025	Demersal and Pelagic Working Groups – joint	Hybrid, in Copenhagen	Yes	Annual Baltic stocks advice	1
5	26/06/2025	Executive Committee	Hybrid, in Brussels	Yes	Finalisation and adoption of annual Baltic stock advice	1
5	Sept/Oct 2025	Demersal WG	Online	Yes		2
6	Sept/Oct 2025	Pelagic WG	Online	Yes		2
7	Sept/Oct 2025	Ecosystem Based management WG	Online	Yes		2
8	Oct 2024	Executive Committee	Hybrid	Yes	Admin matters + selected topics	1
9	January 2026	Executive Committee ANNIVERSARY in person	Hybrid	Yes	Admin matters + selected topics	1
10	March 2026	Demersal WG	Online	Yes		2
11	March 2026	Pelagic WG	Online	Yes		2
12	March 2026	Ecosystem Based management WG	Online	Yes		2
13	TBD	Focus Group on science	TBD	Yes		3