

## **BSAC Executive Committee**

**26<sup>th</sup> June 2025 - 9:00-16:00 CEST**

**NH Brussels EU Berlaymont, Brussels - Belgium, and online through Zoom**

### **Report**

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

**The ExCom Chair** welcomed all participants, in-person and online. The meeting focused on finalising the BSAC recommendations on fishing opportunities for 2026. Representatives of DG MARE were also invited to present different files.

He reminded that the BSAC had invited the Commissioner and his Cabinet to the meeting and received a reply that neither the Commissioner nor a representative of his Cabinet could attend. He stated that the BSAC would like to meet the Commissioner before the Council meeting in October.

**An observer Alexandra Allard**, a PhD student from Örebro University introduced herself. She applied for an observer status to attend the meeting to get a deeper understanding of the yearly TAC process and how the BSAC recommendations are decided on.

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

There was a quorum for the meeting.

**The Executive Secretary** presented the agenda.

**A fisheries representative from Denmark** proposed a point under AOB to discuss the information flow from the Secretariat.

The agenda was adopted.

#### **b. Adoption of the *report from the last ExCom meeting (20<sup>th</sup> May 2025)* and review of the action items**

**The Executive Secretary** presented past action items and their current status. Progress was noted with respect to most actions.

**The ExCom Vice-Chair** informed that the Focus Group (FG) met on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2025 in Copenhagen and online. The FG reviewed the terms of reference. The next meeting of the FG is planned in the beginning of September, probably back-to-back with the BALTFISH Forum held on 8<sup>th</sup> September in Stockholm.

**The ExCom Chair** thanked the members for updating their contact details. He informed that the dates of the meetings planned in the second half of the BSAC year 2025-25 will be discussed by the Management Team and then sent to the ExCom for approval. The BSAC will remind the Commissioner of itself, with a kind request for a meeting with the Commissioner and his Cabinet before the October Council.

Reimbursement ceilings will be discussed with the Management Team and later communicated to the BSAC members.

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

Glenn Douglas (European Anglers Alliance) and Mart Undrest (Estonian Fishermen) agreed to check the minutes.

## 2. Presentation of the Commission Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: “Towards more sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2026<sup>1</sup>” by Unit D3 of DG MARE.

The representative of DG MARE presented the annual communication to the European Parliament and the Council, looking into progress in achieving sustainable fishing in the EU (legislative requirement), the balance between fleet capacity and fishing opportunities (legislative requirement), the socio-economic performance of the EU fishing fleet, the implementation of the landing obligation, the main orientations proposed for the 2026 fishing opportunities and the public consultation launched. The Commission is looking forward to the input from all stakeholders, including the BSAC until 31<sup>th</sup> August 2025.

In presenting the general context of the Communication, he drew attention to the impact of Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine, causing ongoing disruptions of fishing activities and trade flows, scientific advice and international negotiations. Fisheries and Oceans package launched a comprehensive and constructive cooperation process to tackle the key challenges and improve the resilience of EU fisheries

He referred to the fact that in general, European fisheries continue the trend from previous years of gradually improving their sustainability with more fish stocks fished at sustainable levels in 2024 than 2003. However, efforts must also be made to tackle pressures other than fisheries that are increasingly affecting fish stocks. The situation in the Baltic Sea remains worrying, as commercially important stocks remain in a critical condition due to multiple sources of pressure.

With reference to the state of the EU fleet, the representative of the Commission stated that Member States indicated in 2024 reports that their fleets are below the ceilings and meet the requirements under Article 22 of the CFP Regulation. However, concerns remain on the accuracy and reliability of the data underpinning the national reports and the accuracy of Member State action plans.

With reference to socio-economic performance, the representative of DG MARE stated that fuel prices continued to have a high impact on the socio-economic performance of the EU fishing fleet. The fuel prices have fallen in the first quarter of 2025 as compared to 2023. Most national fleets are expected to be profitable in 2025, however, a socio-economic analysis indicates that several fleet segments in major fisheries will still face challenging conditions, particularly those which are out of balance, depend on overfished stocks and/or use energy-intensive fishing gears. Fleet segments that depend on stocks exploited sustainably and that have increased their energy efficiency tend to perform better and generate higher salaries for their crews. The EU fishing fleet is expected to cover its operational costs and maintain employment in 2024 but it will remain financially vulnerable.

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

New EU Control Regulation will contribute to the effective monitoring of compliance with the landing obligation. Lack of compliance, undocumented discarding and misreporting of catches undermines the accuracy of catch reporting, that is essential for stock assessment.

**The representative of DG MARE** referred to the fishing opportunities. For stocks managed only by the EU in the Baltic Sea, Skagerrak/Kattegat and Atlantic Ocean, the Commission will propose TACs and quotas in line with the MSY and precautionary advice. Provided that the conditions set out in the multiannual plans are met, the Commission may propose using the upper range of MSY for healthy stocks. Where the size of fish stocks has decreased below healthy limits, the Commission will propose to rebuild these stocks and include remedial measures, in line with the multiannual plan.

**The representative of DG MARE** underlined that the Baltic stocks are challenged. The stocks in the Baltic Sea continue to be under pressure from sources other than fisheries, which have led to ecosystem failure and a degraded biodiversity. Failure to implement fully EU legislation (not only fisheries legislation) continues to be a relevant factor and the effect of pollution on fisheries is widespread in the ecoregion. International conventions should also be implemented. He informed that the Commissioner will organise a Ministerial meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025 in Stockholm, together with the Swedish BALTFISH Presidency to discuss how to tackle these issues. He also informed that the Commission's proposal on the fishing opportunities for the Baltic will be published in the end of August.

**The ExCom Chair** thanked the representative of DG MARE for his presentation.

### Discussion

**A fisheries representative from Denmark** objected against a standard, blanket statement that all fish stocks in the Baltic have continued to decline. He underlined that some stocks such as cod are at low level, much lower than desired, but they had not declined further, and some stocks have improved, such as plaice and some others. He also drew attention to the disastrous situation of some fleet segments, and very favourable situation of some other segments and therefore questioned the relevance of presenting an average economic situation of all fleet segments.

**The representative of DG MARE** took note of the comment made with reference to all stocks in the Baltic showing a declining trend, however he underlined that most of the stocks in the Baltic remain at a very low level and some have further declined.

**The ExCom Vice-Chair, also representing recreational anglers** referred to the statement made by the representative of DG MARE that environmental degradation, not fisheries is the main problem in the Baltic. He disagreed with such categoric statement and underlined that there are problems with some fisheries in the Baltic.

**The representative of DG MARE** underlined that fisheries are putting pressure on the stocks, but other pressures than fisheries are becoming more apparent in the Baltic. He underlined that this year the Communication highlights some impacts on the Baltic ecosystem that need special attention.

**The ExCom Chair** asked whether a representative of the BSAC could take part in the Ministerial meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> September as observer.

**The representative of DG MARE** answered that DG MARE will come back with information on observer options for the BSAC to the Ministerial meeting.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** stated that the main problem in the Communication is the reference to sustainability as a proxy to  $F_{MSY}$ . He recalled that during the recent BALTFISH Forum, a German scientist explained that the Baltic environment is so dynamic that reference points do not keep up with the changes in nature. Therefore, making an assumption that stocks at  $F_{MSY}$  are sustainable is false. He referred to the fact that 29% of the Baltic stocks are still above the target for fishing mortality consistent with achieving maximum sustainable yield. He also referred to the shortcomings in implementing the EU reporting rules and asked the Commission's representative to elaborate on the implications of these shortcomings. He asked what are the specific remedial measures that should be applied for the stocks that decrease below healthy limits.

**The representative of DG MARE** replied that the Commission's policy is based on the best available scientific advice (e.g. ICES, STECF). The Commission also relies on relevant scientific bodies if shifts or updates need to be done in the advice. As to the environmental impact on the fish stocks, the Commission relies on the input from DG ENV.

**Another representative of DG MARE** explained that the Commission's communication does not propose any specific remedial measures for cod. In the past the Commission had asked ICES for advice on the effectiveness of spatial management, notably on moving sprat fishery to the north to leave more food for cod and improve cod condition and ICES answered that they could not advise on this issue. With reference to the number of TACs at MSY level, he stated that these TACs remained at six for 2025, as in the previous year.

**A representative of an environmental NGO** underlined that fish stocks in Baltic are not doing well. The environmental situation is very difficult, despite different actions taken by HELCOM. Fisheries still need to adapt to the situation in the Baltic. According to several scientific studies, overfishing in Baltic is a main impact harming the size at maturity of cod over the last 20 years. She referred to the fact that in the last years, the NGOs have been pushing ICES to improve its advice. ICES recognises that the advice does not work for overfished stocks. She underlined that the headline advice does not follow the relevant legal requirements (the MAP) and policy objectives. She referred to the letter addressed by the NGOs to the Commissioner Kadis asking the Commission to initiate key improvements to the advisory process to address this problem as a matter of urgency. She referred to the staff working document and the staff working document, accompanying the Communication and in particular to the misreporting. According to the verification conducted by the Commission over the years has shown that Member States do not always ensure that catches are weighed in accordance with EU rules and that there is often significant misreporting of the actual quantities landed. The problem is especially serious in the Baltic Sea where major shortcomings have been detected in those Member States with the largest quotas<sup>2</sup>. She asked for more information in which Baltic fisheries this problem exists.

**The representative of DG MARE** answered that all Baltic Member States are audited in terms of misreporting. The Commission asks those Member States where problems have been identified to prepare action plans. However, the information on misreporting in particular fisheries is not publicly available.

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<sup>2</sup> [Past Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#) Staff working document, p. 28

**Another representative of an environmental NGO** asked the representative of DG Mare to elaborate on the impact of fishing in the Baltic and underlined that the ICES ecosystem overview published in 2024 identifies fishing as the main activity impacting the ecosystem. She referred to the correlation between a decrease in the fishing mortality and an increase in the biomass of a fish stock.

**The representative of DG MARE** underlined that fishing pressures is one of the pressures in the Baltic, but it has become clear that the impact of other pressures from land-based activities and climate change have been increasing. There is a need to improve the implementation of the EU legislation. However, the situation cannot be improved by the fisheries sector alone, and other sectors need to help as well.

**A representative of an environmental NGO** asked which countries had been asked to prepare action plans for the fleet segments for which overcapacity has been identified<sup>3</sup>.

**The representative of DG MARE** referred to the graph in the staff working document<sup>4</sup> showing the 2024 compliance with capacity ceilings in different Member States and that all Member States are in compliance with the capacity ceilings. If the capacity of a fleet segment is not effectively balanced with fishing opportunities, the Member State shall prepare and include in its report an action plan for the fleet segments with identified structural overcapacity. The action plan shall set out the adjustment targets and tools to achieve a balance and a clear time-frame for its implementation.

**The ExCom Chair** welcomed the analysis of the socio-economic aspects of the landing obligation and asked the representative of DG MARE to elaborate on this analysis.

**The representative of DG MARE** stated that the chapter on the landing obligation in this year's communication is short, because the Commission has just published an independent study assessing the performance of the landing obligation<sup>5</sup>.

**The ExCom Chair** underlined that the BSAC recognises the need to improve the communication with ICES as well as the process by which BSAC develops its own advice, and had asked ICES<sup>6</sup> to consider if the ICES presentation takes place within two weeks of the publication of the advice. The BSAC asked ICES that the experts directly involved in the individual stock assessments participate in presenting their respective findings. He referred to the recent example that a German expert had presented the ICES advice during the BALTFISH Forum on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2025. He asked the Commission to support the BSAC request.

**The representative of DG MARE** stated that the event held on the 8<sup>th</sup> July 2025 will present the study on the landing obligation<sup>7</sup>. The study will feed into the evaluation of the CFP Regulation.

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<sup>3</sup> An action plan with adjustment targets, tools and a clear implementation time frame, in line with Article 22 of the CFP Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC

<sup>4</sup> Staff working document, p. 14 figure 8

<sup>5</sup> [Independent study highlights some challenges in implementing the landing obligation across EU fisheries - European Commission](#) published on 16th June 2025

<sup>6</sup> [\[Modtagerfelt\]](#)

<sup>7</sup> [External Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

The **ExCom Chair** invited the BSAC members to consult the BSAC website and register to the meeting.

### 3. BSAC recommendation on fishing opportunities for the Baltic in 2026

#### a. Answers from ICES post Joint Working Group

The **ExCom Chair** informed that the replies from ICES to the questions asked by the BSAC members during the Joint Working Group on 17<sup>th</sup> June with regard to the advice will be submitted at a later stage.

#### b. Status of the draft recommendation

The **ExCom Chair**, in the spirit of looking for compromise, invited the members to give further input to the recommendations. He asked the members to review and adopt the recommendations at the meeting, in order to send them as soon as possible to the Commission, BALTFISH and the Member States.

The **BSAC rapporteur** reminded the members that in preparing the first draft of the recommendations, the Secretariat followed the guidelines of the BSAC guidelines<sup>8</sup>: *The Secretariat draws up a first draft recommendation based on input from the joint working group meeting and derived assumptions on majority positions.*

The **BSAC members** had some general comments to the draft recommendations in the table. These comments were duly noted by the Secretariat.

**Some representatives of environmental NGOs** questioned whether the majority positions had the necessary support, in terms of the number of supporting organisations, members of the ExCom. In some cases, they underlined that they would prefer to vote, rather than to base on assumptions on the majority and minority positions.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** asked to add a statement that members of his organisation would support the TAC proposed by the BSAC members for both cod stocks and western herring only if small-scale fishery using passive gears can conduct directed fishery. He also underlined that that in some cases the figure attributed to the majority does not have the necessary support. In addition, in his view, the organisations should be named in the recommendations.

**A small-scale fisheries representative from Germany** stated that in line with the relevant legislation and its statutes the BSAC is composed of representatives from the industry and from other interest groups, with a 60% - 40% allocation of the seats. This composition determines the majority – minority proportion. He underlined that the main objective should be to find consensus. The organisations which do not agree with the majority positions should what present a minority position, mentioning the organisations that oppose to the majority statement.

**A fisheries representative from Denmark** stated that unless otherwise stated the fishing organisations are in agreement with general majority advice. If they are not, they should be

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<sup>8</sup> Guidelines for the format and preparation of the annual BSAC recommendations on the fishery in the Baltic [Advice & Recommendations - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

mentioned. He was against changing the basic structure of the recommendations. In his view, written procedure should be used to confirm the positions of different organisations included in the draft. As agreed earlier, there should only be one BSAC position and minority positions. He agreed that given the 60%-40% composition of the BSAC, the NGOs cannot presume that they are a majority.

**A representative of DG MARE** underlined that it is up to the BSAC to decide how to present the recommendations. He stated that the recommendations in the present form contain all information needed for the Commission.

**A representative of an environmental NGO** recalled that in the past the BSAC had attempted to reach a common position with regard to the fishing opportunities and presented only the advice it could agree on and no minority positions.

**A fisheries representative from Sweden and a fisheries representative from Estonia** proposed not to change the structure of the recommendations on the fishing opportunities. They underlined that the fisheries organisations in most cases align their positions.

**The ExCom Chair** stated that the structure of the recommendations on the fishing opportunities should not be changed this year and proposed to come back again to the discussion on the best formulae for the BSAC recommendation for the fishery next year. In his view, the majority/minority formulae has worked so far, and the table has been adopted by the ExCom and therefore should not be changed, ad hoc, at this meeting- creating a questionable precedent.

Then, the BSAC could also decide whether to quote the names of the organisations directly in the text of the recommendations. He also proposed to look into the recommendations prepared by other ACs to see how they are constructed. He also recalled that consensus had been reached with regard to the recommendations on seals and cormorants and believed that with better discussions, the BSAC can also reach compromise on the recommendations on the fishing opportunities.

After some further discussion, **the ExCom** decided to come back to the discussion on the best formulae for the BSAC recommendation for the fishery before the next Joint Working Group in June 2026, in order to have clear guidance for the preparation of the BSAC advice on the fishery. This year, the table would contain figures, majority positions would not include footnote list of organisations (and minority positions will be listed with footnotes).

**The ExCom** discussed the advice for the Baltic fishery for 2026 for different fish stocks on the basis of a text, which was a compilation of all comments submitted by the participants at the Joint Working Group held on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

**Some representatives of environmental NGOs** proposed to shorten the text of the introductory part by removing three paragraphs that go beyond the scope of these recommendations.

**The ExCom** agreed to shorten the introductory part by removing 3 last paragraphs.

#### Western cod

**A small-scale fisheries representative** proposed to include a text that they could support the rollover of the 2025 TAC for western cod on the condition that the small-scale fishery using passive gears could conduct directed fishery.

**A representative of an environmental NGO** proposed to attribute the statement referring to seal and cormorant and the need to introduce management without delay to the fisheries representatives and not the entire BSAC.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** could not agree with the reference to the good recruitment in 2022.

**Fisheries representatives** found the entire paragraph extremely relevant.

After some discussion, **the ExCom** decided to change the second paragraph of the recommendation to read "fisheries representatives" instead of the BSAC.

### Eastern cod

**A small-scale fisheries representative** proposed to include a text that they could support the rollover of the 2025 TAC for eastern cod on the condition that the small-scale fishery using passive gears could conduct directed fishery.

**A fisheries representative from Denmark** referred to the TAC for plaice proposed by NGOs ( $\leq$  4,894 t) and stated that in his view such level of TAC does not reflect the science and at the same time creates an incentive for discards.

**A representative of an environmental NGO** explained that in order to increase the SSB and minimise the bycatch impact on the cod stocks the TAC should be set even lower than 4,894 t. She referred to the fact that the actual catch in 2024 had amounted to approximately 4,000 tonnes.

**A small-scale fisheries representative from Germany** agreed that any increase of the quota for plaice would mean a higher possible bycatch of cod in the trawl fishery. He underlined that such increase does not make any sense because more than 95 % of the landed plaice cannot be used for human consumption.

**A fisheries representative from Denmark** emphasised that setting the TAC at the level of the actual catches of the previous year as proposed by some representatives of the NGOs should be avoided as it would impact the existing TAC allocation key.

After some further discussion, **some participants** informed that they will return with TAC proposals for plaice at a later stage.

**The ExCom Chair** reminded the participants that in accordance with the BSAC Rules of Procedure, Annex II (Code of Conduct), when taking part in meetings, the BSAC members and observers use appropriate language and tone and respect the meeting etiquette, listen to and respect the opinions of others<sup>9</sup>.

### Herring 30-31

**A small-scale fisheries representative** stated that the BSAC recommendation for this stock at **55,869 t** is inconsistent with the existing legislation (*Article 4.6, the so-called 5% rule*)<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> [BSACROP-adopted17.04.2024.pdf](#)

<sup>10</sup> Regulation amending the Multiannual Plan for the Baltic: **MAP's Article 4.6** which provides that 'fishing opportunities shall in any event be fixed in such a way as to ensure that there is less than a 5 % probability of the spawning stock biomass falling below Blim' (called the 5% rule)

**A representative of DG MARE** informed that the provision in Article 4.6 in the MAP is still part of the MAP Regulation<sup>11</sup>. However, it is not part of the recurrent request to ICES, since there is difference in understanding between the Commission and Member States with regard to this provision. Moreover, there is an on-going legal case launched by one of the BSAC members asking the Court for an annulment of the Council's decision not to review the 2024 Baltic fishing opportunities regulation. So for the time-being the Commission cannot ask ICES to include this provision in the headline advice.

**The ExCom Chair** concluded that this provision is legal as it is still part of the Baltic MAP Regulation.

**Representatives of environmental NGOs** underlined that the so-called 5% rule is still in force and should be applied. They asked to include a statement that the BSAC recommendation for this stock does not follow the provisions of the Baltic MAP.

**Some fisheries representatives** confirmed their proposal to set the TAC for this stock in line with the headline scientific advice, at **55,869 t.** (MAP range  $F_{lower}$ ). They underlined that according to the observations made by fishers, there is a lot of herring in SDs 30-31. With a TAC set at the proposed level the SSB of the stock is expected to further improve.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** indicated that according to the latest assessment the stock is at the lowest level in history and continues to decline. He asked the fisheries representatives to reconsider their proposal. Fishing in 2026 would be exploiting year 1 class and this would be a clear mismanagement of the stock.

**A representative of recreational anglers** expressed concern that suggested MSY catch levels will have serious ecosystem effects for wild salmon stocks. He asked to include such statement in the recommendations.

**A representative of an environmental NGO** underlined that according to the ICES advice sheet even with a zero TAC the probability of SSB being below  $B_{lim}$  or MSY  $B_{trigger}$  in 2027 is 70%.

#### Herring 22-24

**A small-scale fisheries representative** proposed to include a text that they could support the rollover of the 2025 TAC for western herring on the condition that the small-scale fishery using passive gears could conduct directed fishery.

**A fisheries representative from Denmark** drew attention to the derogation for small-scale fishery to conduct targeted fishery and the bycatch quota should not be reserved for small-scale fishers, as this may create a choking condition.

**Some fisheries representatives from Poland** supported the rollover of the bycatch TAC, in order to allow other fisheries to continue and to not create a choke problem. They were in favour of additional restrictions applied to fisheries during the herring spawning season in the spawning grounds.

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<sup>11</sup> [REGULATION \(EU\) 2016/ 1139 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL - of 6 July 2016 - establishing a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Council Regulation \(EC\) No 2187 / 2005 and repealing Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1098 / 2007](#)

**A representative of DG MARE** stated that according to the Commission an exemption for small-scale fishers to conduct targeted fishery was legally not possible because of article 4.6 and the Court rulings stating that MSY applies “strictly and without exception” for target stocks.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** confirmed that he could agree with such statement: a rollover of the bycatch TAC of 788 t, with an exemption for small-scale fishers to conduct targeted fishery.

### Sprat

**A representative of an environmental NGO** underlined that the decision on 2026 TAC should be based on the latest knowledge when the latest results from the spring trawl surveys are available. The 2024 year-class estimate is currently based on this one survey, and the year-class strength is uncertain until confirmed by the next survey (conducted in May 2025)<sup>12</sup>. She questioned whether the majority position for sprat had the necessary support, in terms of the number of supporting organisations.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** echoed the previous statement on the need to base the decision on the 2026 TAC on the results of the latest survey and proposed to include it as a consensus-based BSAC position. He drew attention to the exceptional situation with high uncertainty behind the assessment and called for flexibility in the BSAC approach to this problem.

**A fisheries representative from Estonia** asked whether this procedure will be repeated every year and whether the Commission takes this into consideration in their proposal on the fishing opportunities. He expressed confidence that the results of the May survey will confirm the estimate of the 2024 year class.

**A representative of DG MARE** referred to the uncertainties in the assessment of sprat in relation to the abundance of the latest year class and at the same time exceptionally high forecast for this stock provided by ICES. ICES has declared that it could attempt to process the results of the last survey in September. He informed that the Commission will provide its proposal for the fishing opportunities in the Baltic in the end of August on the basis of the ICES advice provided on 28<sup>th</sup> May. However, this proposal can always be modified before the AGRIFISH Council in October, if any new advice is provided by ICES in September.

**Some fisheries representatives from Poland** underlined that the results of the May survey will not change the ICES assessment. They drew attention to the fact that there is no directed fishery for sprat in May. In their view the BSAC should recommend an EU TAC for sprat at the level of 201,975 t.

**Some fisheries representatives from Poland** underlined that the weak condition of cod does not result from the lack of food, but from environmental impacts. They strongly disagreed with the need to reduce the sprat and herring quota to ensure food availability and a rapid recovery of the cod stock above  $B_{MSY}$ .

After some further discussion, **the ExCom decided** to include the statement that the decision on 2026 TAC should be based on the latest knowledge from the spring trawl surveys.

### Salmon

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<sup>12</sup> From ICES advice for 2026, sprat advice sheet.

## 22-31

**A representative of recreational anglers and a representative of an NGOs** proposed setting the TAC at 5,000 adipose fin-clipped salmon from SD 31, caught only in close proximity to rivers with compensatory releases, to keep fisheries-related mortality on wild salmon as low as possible. In their view, if the number of returning spawners remains below the spawning stock targets again this summer, all targeted salmon fishing must be completely suspended in 2026.

**Some other representatives of environmental NGOs** agreed that set the TAC for targeted fishery at zero until the number of returning spawners remains below the targets. They pointed to the bad forecast for this stock. They also explained that this position could be reviewed when the number of spawners increases to sufficient numbers.

**A representative of DG MARE** pointed to the fact that a zero TAC would result in the closure of other fisheries, as a bycatch of salmon in different fisheries cannot be excluded.

**A fisheries representative from Finland** stated that the Finnish fishers propose to follow the scientific advice and set the TAC at 30,000 individual salmon. They will not accept any further restrictions.

**A small-scale fisheries representative from Germany** stated that a zero bycatch quota would mean in practice a closure of all Baltic fisheries. He disagreed with such unrealistic proposal.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** agreed to set the TAC in line with the scientific advice at 30,000 salmon. He expressed concern about the amount of bycatch of salmon in other fisheries and referred to the WGBAST<sup>13</sup>, which indicates that the annual bycatch of salmon in pelagic trawls could have reached almost 200,000 salmon in the 2000s.

He recommended e-DNA analysis of unsorted pelagic catches.

**The ExCom Chair** noted that this recommendation will be considered by the Science Focus Group.

**A fisheries representative from Finland** stated that according to Finnish pelagic fishers the bycatch of salmon in pelagic fisheries is very rare and amounts to a few salmon per year per fisher, giving a total annual bycatch of no more than 100 salmon.

## Salmon 32

**A fisheries representative from Finland** proposed to follow scientific advice, despite the fact that such TAC will probably not be fully utilised.

**The ExCom** decided to ask the Secretariat to make the necessary amendments to the draft recommendations as agreed during the meeting and send the revised document to the members.

**The ExCom** adopted the recommendations, except for the parts on Gulf of Riga herring, central herring, western herring, sprat, Main Basin salmon and Gulf of Finland salmon. These parts need to be approved by written procedure until the agreed deadline of 4<sup>th</sup> July 2025, before being sent to the Commission and Member States.

## **4. Presentation of the Ocean Pact by Unit A2 of DG MARE, coordinating work on Ocean Pact.**

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<sup>13</sup> [Baltic Salmon and Trout Assessment Working Group \(WGBAST\)](#)



**The representative of DG MARE** presented the Ocean Pact, adopted on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2025 and presented during the United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice on 9<sup>th</sup> June. He quoted the mission letter addressed to Commissioner Kadis: *European Ocean Pact, ensuring coherence across all policy areas linked to the oceans*. The EU is an Ocean Union, the world's largest collective maritime area. The EU has critical interest in maritime matters. The EU is blue economy powerhouse, with 5 million jobs and €250 billion in annual GVA.

Biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution have impact on the ocean. A strong governance framework is needed to align actions at Union, regional, national, and local levels through the various sea basins, involving both EU and non-EU countries.

**The Ocean Pact** announces concrete proposals, such as:

- An Ocean Act by 2027 that will build on a revision of the MSPD and strengthen the implementation of Maritime Spatial Planning Directive
- Ocean Board: stakeholders supporting the Commission in implementation
- Ocean Pact dashboard: to monitor and report progress

**The Ocean Pact will support six priorities:**

- Protecting and restoring ocean health, including a revision of Marine Strategy Framework Directive
- Boosting the competitiveness of the sustainable blue economy, including CFP evaluation
- Supporting coastal, island communities and outermost regions
- Advancing ocean research, knowledge, skills and innovation
- Enhancing maritime security and defence as a prerequisite
- Strengthening EU Ocean diplomacy and international rules-based governance.

**The Pact** aims at a holistic approach and collaboration across Member States, regions, and with stakeholders: fishers, blue economy professionals, innovators, investors, scientists, and civil society.

**The ExCom Chair** thanked the representative of DG MARE for his presentation.

**A representative of an environmental NGO** asked whether the Ocean Pact will ensure conservation of resources to help achieving the goals of the CFP.

**The representative of DG MARE** underlined that the Ocean Pact will not replace the existing legislation but rather facilitate the implementation of the objectives of relevant legislation, including the CFP, through strengthened governance.

**Another representative of an environmental NGO** appreciated ambitious goals of the Ocean Pact as well as the fact that the Pact gives specific attention to the Baltic Sea. She also welcomed strengthening and modernising maritime spatial planning as a strategic tool that will serve the priorities of the Ocean. In her view, marine spatial plans are essential at regional level. The Baltic also needs such a plan because of so many pressures. She stated that the Marine Action Plan should be aligned with the Ocean Pact. She asked about the specific role of the Ocean Board and its members.

**The representative of DG MARE** replied that the Ocean Pact launches an ambitious ocean observation initiative, including for the coastal and deep sea, covering the entire knowledge value chain, and taking a leading international role, to deliver critical information to all marine actors and sectors. With reference to the Ocean Board, he stated that it will be a high-level stakeholder group, composed of representatives from relevant sectors linked to the Ocean. As to the Marine

Action Plan, it is not mentioned as its implementation is ongoing, but its main objectives are covered by the Ocean Pact.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** stated that his organisation<sup>14</sup> had welcomed the Commission initiative to develop a holistic approach to ocean-related policies. He drew attention to the growing inequality in the fishing sector, due to the profit being concentrated in the hands of a few companies. Small-scale fleets are displaced and marginalised due to large-scale fleet activities and overfishing, offshore renewable energy expansion and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The Ocean Pact should help to protect small-scale fleet's rights (access to fishing areas and resources) and protect the sector, reserving access in the 12 nautical mile zone for small-scale low impact fishing where management plans are set through co-management schemes. Fair and equitable allocation of fishing opportunities should be ensured. Small-scale fishers are sceptical about the energy transition focus, because the emissions can still increase despite measures taken to ensure the transition. The energy transition of the fisheries sector must aim at both decreasing emissions and increasing carbon sequestration. The EU must increase the competitiveness of the fishing sector, and for the small-scale fleets this means to prioritise high value, and not high volume.

**The representative of DG MARE** referred to the 12 nautical miles zone reserved for small-scale fleets and encouraged the BSAC members to advocate for the implementation of this measure in the upcoming Strategy for coastal communities. He underlined that further work is planned with respect to the energy transition. The energy transition is aimed at helping those who suffer from high energy costs. Studies have been launched on CO2 emissions in fisheries and aquaculture to prepare the transition in more detail.

**A representative of an environmental NGO** stated that progress in implementing the Ocean Pact needs to be monitored and, taking into account many different objectives of the Ocean Pact, she asked what should be the guiding indicators of progress. She gave an example of the descriptors relating to the size and structure of populations used in MSFD and asked if the objectives of different legal frameworks will be in some way prioritised.

**The representative of DG MARE** stated that it is too early to predict what should be the guiding objectives and indicators.

**Another representative of an environmental NGO** referred to the fact that in the Baltic the main target species are not doing well. In this context, she asked how the Ocean Pact will support the small-scale fisheries. She also asked how the Marine Action Plan is integrated in the Ocean Pact and referred in particular to legally designated MPAs, so-called paper parks that are ineffective in achieving conservation goals.

**The representative of DG MARE** underlined that the Ocean Pact does not go into the detail of such elements as MPAs. It sets the political direction to align the policies related to the oceans. More specifically, on small-scale fisheries, there are two elements - one is a vadaemecum on Article 17 that will be published in the autumn 2025, and the second is a concrete consideration to set up a specific Advisory Council dedicated to small-scale coastal fishers.

**A fisheries representative from Poland** underlined that there is an enormous pressure on the fisheries sector that produces food. He asked how the need to protect nature corresponds with the

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<sup>14</sup> Low Impact Fishers of Europe [Copy-of-The-Oceans-Pact- LIFE-contribution\\_submitted.pdf](#)

drastic interventions such as offshore wind farms and cables in coastal waters and also in Natura 2000 sites.

**The representative of DG MARE** explained that offshore wind farms (OWF) have smaller environmental impact than installations that use carbon-based fuels, and emission reductions are urgently needed to limit global warming, which is bad for Ocean health. He referred to the guidelines on wind energy developments published by the Commission in 2020<sup>15</sup>. These developments need to be monitored and assessed very closely. He also referred to the ICES advice on economic, social and ecological impacts of offshore wind farms<sup>16</sup>. This is an important area of Commission's work, even if not mentioned in the Ocean Pact.

**The ExCom Chair** stated that the BSAC had sent its contribution to the Ocean Pact in March 2025<sup>17</sup>. He expressed hope that the BSAC could exchange views on the Ocean Pact with the Commissioner in the near future. He underlined that the Baltic Sea needs special perspective and efforts. As mentioned in the BSAC statement, any efforts on and in the water must go hand in hand with efforts on land.

**The representative of DG MARE** informed that the Commission will organise a high-level "Our Baltic" event in 2025 as the starting point to a renewed, holistic approach to tackle ecosystem challenges, pollution from land and sea, strengthen security, environmental and fisheries management, and support coastal communities, in cooperation with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and existing regional bodies.

**The ExCom Chair** look forward to receiving an invitation to this high-level event.

#### **5. Question and Answer session on Marine Action Plan**

**The representative of DG MARE** informed that the Joint Special Group will meet on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025 to discuss the implementation of the Marine Action Plan.

**The ExCom** took note.

**The ExCom** took note that the BSAC will be represented by Niki Sporrang (Fisheries Secretariat) and the BSAC rapporteur.

#### **6. Update on the topic of BSAC – ICES cooperation and communication – Follow up on the letter sent to ICES**

**The ExCom** decided that the Science Focus Group will discuss the cooperation and communication with ICES in September.

#### **HELCOM EBFM paper – BSAC reply**

**The ExCom** asked the Secretariat to submit the latest version of the BSAC reply to HELCOM EBFM paper to all BSAC members and to adopt the document by written procedure by 4<sup>th</sup> July 2025<sup>18</sup>.

#### **7. BSAC 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary proposals and discussion**

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<sup>15</sup> [Commission issues guidance on reconciling wind energy developments and nature - European Commission](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Sharing marine space](#)

<sup>17</sup> BSAC contribution to the consultation on the Ocean Pact [\[Modtagerfelt\]](#)

<sup>18</sup> BSAC Rules of Procedure, paragraphs 34-36

*Ideas so far:*

- *Port of Gdynia EFCA vessel visit in November*
- *Seminar / Workshop in Stockholm, maybe led by BALTFISH*
- *Hosting an event / dinner in the Vasa Museum*
- *Final Anniversary event May 2026*

The **ExCom** decided to ask the BSAC members to come forward with more ideas. Please send them to Secretariat.

## 8. AOB

**A fisheries representative from Denmark** referred to the insufficient information flow from the Secretariat. He asked the Secretariat to consider that there is room for improvement.

**A fisheries representative from Poland** complained about late submission of documents.

**A representative of an environmental NGO** underlined that the Secretariat should follow the Rules of Procedure and send documents three weeks in advance of meetings. She asked the Secretariat to inform well in advance of the meeting whether there is a block booking made at a certain hotel, to avoid any misunderstanding and huge costs related to the late individual booking.

**The ExCom Chair** asked the Executive Secretary to take into account all comments made by members and to improve his performance.

**The ExCom Chair** thanked all participants for a good meeting.

### Action points:

BSAC recommendations on the fisheries for 2026	Finalisation of the recommendations	Secretariat circulated draft the next day for a 5 day written approval from ExCom
Dates of the BSAC meetings in second half of 2025 and 2026	MT to discuss the dates in July	The meeting calendar will be sent to the members for approval and later to the Commission
Reimbursement ceilings for hotels	MT will discuss the new ceilings	The ExCom members will be informed
Commission's Communication "Towards more sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2025"	BSAC ExCom discussed the Communication	The BSAC secretariat will circulate A draft BSAC response to this based on the discussions with aim to publish will be circulated in teh beginning of August. The BSAC response to the Commission will be sent by 31/08
Science Focus Group meeting		Tentative date 9th September
HELCOM EBFM paper – BSAC reply		The ExCom asked the Secretariat to submit the latest version of the BSAC reply to HELCOM EBFM paper to all BSAC members and to

		adopt the document by written procedure
Ministerial meeting on 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2025 in Stockholm		COM promised to come back with observer options for the BSAC.
BSAC – ICES cooperation and communication – Follow up on Letter sent to ICES		To be discussed by the Focus Group in September
20 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the BSAC		Members to come up with ideas

