

BSAC Executive Committee

13th November 2025 9:00-15:30

Online through Zoom

Report

1. Welcome by the BSAC ExCom Chair Jarek Zielinski

The Executive Committee Chair welcomed all online participants, among them the representatives of Member States, all other observers as well as the BSAC ExCom and General Assembly members.

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

The agenda was adopted. There was a quorum for the meeting.

b. Adoption of the report from the last ExCom meeting (26th June 2025) and review of the action items

The Secretariat presented the progress report on the action points from the last ExCom.

The report of the last ExCom was adopted. The report was uploaded to the BSAC website.

2. Two ExCom members to check the minutes

Vesa Karttunen (Federation of Finnish Fisheries Associations) and Cathrine Pedersen Schirmer (Fisheries Secretariat) agreed to check the minutes.

3. Reports from meetings

- BALTFISH Forum, 8th September 2025, Stockholm¹

Glenn Douglas, the ExCom Vice-Chair presented a short report from the meeting. The BSAC was represented by the Vice Chair (in person), Teija Aho, Demersal Working Group Chair, Lise Laustsen, Pelagic Working Group Chair and the secretariat (rapporteur - online). The meeting discussed the BALTFISH work programme. The main point on the agenda was the Commission's proposal on the fishing opportunities in the Baltic for 2026, presented by a representative of DG MARE. The BSAC Vice-Chair had the opportunity to present the BSAC recommendations on 2026 TACs, species by species.

- Science Focus Group, 9th September 2025, Stockholm²

Christian Tsangarides, LIFE and the General Assembly Vice-Chair chaired the meeting in the absence of Glenn Douglas. A representative of DG MARE presented the advice request process, including the recurrent and non-recurrent advice. DG MARE invited BSAC members to the side event of the ICES annual conference where Commission and ICES discuss the Baltic issue and specific advice for the Baltic. The Focus Group discussed how to address the current gaps in the advice. This discussion will continue in the next meeting

¹ [External Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

² <https://www.bsac.dk/past-meetings/>

of the Science Focus Group meeting on 4th December. The group also discussed the draft BSAC input to the Baltic Conference. The report and presentation are on the website³.

Krzysztof Stanuch, National Chamber of Fish Producers proposed that at its next meeting the Science Focus Group proceeds into discussing in depth scientific matters.

Christian Tsangarides stated that the advice request process had been presented to the Focus Group, because not all BSAC members have the same level of know-how in this field. He agreed that the Focus Group should deal with more specific topics in the future.

The ExCom Chair looked forward to numerous in-person participation in the science focus group in Gdynia, on 4th December. Considering that scientific advice is now very high on the agenda of high-level fisheries meetings, he proposed to consider making the Science Focus Group a permanent working group in the future.

- **Baltic Conference 30th September 2025, Stockholm**⁴

The ExCom Chair informed that he represented the BSAC at the meeting. His speaking points were adopted by the ExCom. He recalled that the Member States had underlined the need to improve science, scientific advice and to implement multispecies management. Some Member States had declared that they were going to make additional financial contributions to the national scientific institutes and ICES; they called on others to do the same. Despite their divergences in the approach to predator management, Member States had agreed that the impact of predators needs to be minimised and managed. In view of the recognized and discussed impact of agriculture on the Baltic environment, the ExCom Chair proposed to start a dialogue between agriculture and fisheries authorities at the AGRIFISH Council regarding possible measures aimed at improving the state of the Baltic.

Krzysztof Stanuch appreciated the Chair's participation in various meetings. He drew attention to the fact that in the past, different BSAC members, not only the members of the Management Team, were delegated to various meetings, depending on their professional background and expertise and reported back. He called for returning to this practice.

Cathrine Pedersen Schirmer, the Fisheries Secretariat expressed dissatisfaction towards the Commission with the fact that NGOs and other stakeholders were not invited to the Baltic Conference. Those stakeholders were invited at the last two Baltic conferences, and even presented at the conferences.

Glenn Douglas, the ExCom Vice-Chair reminded that all members of the BSAC including the NGOs have the opportunity to give input to the BSAC representative's speaking notes for any external meeting. He recalled that in attending external meetings, the BSAC representative shall solely express the adopted opinions of the BSAC and shall not express personal views⁵. The upcoming InterAC meeting gives an opportunity for NGOs to take part as BSAC representatives.

The ExCom Chair underlined that the BSAC has not changed its practices with regard to representation at external meetings. Members are allowed to represent the BSAC to share

³ [Past Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

⁴ <https://www.bsac.dk/external-meetings/>

⁵ BSAC Rules of Procedure point 46. [BSACROP-adopted17.04.2024.pdf](#)

their expertise on various topics. However, due to the fact that high level meetings have often a limited number of participants, the Management Team members represent the BSAC at these meetings. He also stated that high level meetings do not leave room for sharing expert knowledge. In such meetings, with time restrictions imposed on stakeholders, the BSAC should aim at presenting its high quality recommendations. He recalled that during the roundtable meeting with the Commissioner he had asked the Commissioner to allow the Commission's representatives to attend, if possible, future BSAC meetings in person, especially the science working group, where their expertise would add value to the discussions.

Krzysztof Stanuch pointed to the need to delegate BSAC members to such meetings as the Energy Transition Conference in Helsinki, where the voices of the fishing industry should be clearly presented.

Christian Tsangarides underlined that several members of BSAC had attended the meeting on energy transition in Helsinki and spoke on behalf of their organisations. They highlighted, among others, the need to prioritise getting stocks at healthy level in the Baltic, as under the current regulations, funding for fleet renewal could only be accessed if the stocks are above MSY Btrigger.

The ExCom Chair stated that the BSAC members had the opportunity to present their views in the Energy Transition Focus Group. However, not many of them took part in the Focus Group meetings. The recommendations of the Focus Group had been consulted with the ExCom and then presented by the ExCom Chair during the Conference as the official BSAC position of the fishing sector and the OIG.

- **Roundtable meeting with the Commissioner before October Council, 14th October 2025, Brussels⁶**

The ExCom Chair informed that the Commissioner Costas Kadios invited the BSAC representatives to the meeting, in response to the written request addressed by the BSAC Chair. The BSAC was represented by its Executive Committee Chairs, General Assembly Chairs and Working Group chairs. The report is on the website. In his opening speech the Commissioner underlined that Baltic fish stocks are challenged and continue to be under pressure, also from sources other than fisheries, which has led to the ecosystem failure and biodiversity degradation. The Commissioner declared that the Commission's proposal for the fishing opportunities in the Baltic in 2026 is based on the best available scientific advice. The BSAC representatives presented the BSAC priorities based on "the speaking notes", approved by the ExCom. The Commissioner and his team took note of these priorities. Science was the main point. The Commissioner informed that he will meet ICES to discuss how to improve the advice. The BSAC will provide the recommendation about improving cooperation with ICES and ICES advice, following discussions at Science Focus Group. The Commissioner was asked to allow DG MARE representatives to attend upcoming BSAC meetings in person, especially the science working group, where their expertise would add value to the discussions

⁶ <https://www.bsac.dk/past-meetings/>

Vesa Karttunen, the General Assembly Chair informed that he presented the BSAC recommendations on seals and cormorants. The BSAC is waiting for the results of the fitness check of the EU rules on trade in seal products before the end of the year.

- **Pelagic Working Group, 4th November 2025⁷**

Lise Laustsen, the Pelagic WG Chair informed that the working group hosted presentations on the application of eDNA in herring advice and management from DTU Aqua. The presentations are on the website. The Working Group will follow up on the results of the project conducted by DTU Aqua, aimed at developing new data series (also historical) to determine stock mixing in time and space. A representative of SLU presented the data collection framework in the Baltic, including regional plans to make data uniform.

Krzysztof Stanuch asked to remind the Danish researcher to include the Pomeranian Bay in the research of DTU Aqua on spawning areas of western spring spawning herring. The WG Chair agreed.

Glenn Douglas proposed to draft a recommendation on the use of eDNA in the Science Focus Group.

The WG Chair insisted that the eDNA is discussed in the Pelagic WG until a new tool is ready to be used to determine stock mixing and for quantitative bycatch assessment and can be recommended as such by the BSAC.

- **Demersal Working Group, 6th November 2025⁸**

Teija Aho, the Demersal WG Chair informed that the meeting was almost entirely dedicated to discussing cod recovery, with an introductory presentation by Christopher Zimmermann who underlined that the Baltic ecosystem and Baltic cod are mainly affected by nutrient inputs and efforts should be focused on reducing the input from land. The Working Group asked the Science Focus Group to consider the elements that could be part of such plan. The WG will start drafting an advice on cod recovery at its next meeting in spring.

Some members stated that they could not agree with the opinions expressed by the invited expert and proposed to continue discussing the cod recovery plan with some other experts, presenting another perspective.

The ExCom Chair asked the ExCom to come up with names of experts.

- **Energy Transition in Fisheries 2026⁹ - Conference in Helsinki, 4-5 November 2025**

The ExCom Chair attended the conference on behalf of the BSAC. The ExCom Chair presented the BSAC recommendations on energy transition, drafted by the Energy Transition Focus Group and adopted by the ExCom. These recommendations were sent to the Commission in the end of October¹⁰. The presentations from this meeting are on the website.

⁷ [Past Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

⁸ [Past Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

⁹ [External Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

¹⁰ [Advice & Recommendations - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

He stated that the BSAC should discuss the new Multi-Annual Financial Framework and draft a recommendations in the framework of Energy Transition Focus Group.

- Energy Transition Focus Group – 22nd September, 10th October 2025

The ExCom Chair informed that in September the BSAC reactivated the Focus Group on energy transition to discuss the BSAC input to the draft AC recommendations. Two meetings were held in the end of September and beginning October to formulate / update BSAC recommendations. The final draft was sent to the ExCom, approved and then submitted to the Commission, on 28th October.

The ExCom took note of the reports from past meetings.

4. Planned meetings

- Science Focus Group, 4th December 2025, Gdynia¹¹

The ExCom Chair informed that the agenda will be distributed in the coming days. While encouraging in-person participation, there will be a ZOOM connection for participants that cannot come to Gdynia.

Glenn Douglas, Science Focus Group Chair stated that the Focus Group should produce one solid draft recommendation from each meeting that could be sent to the ExCom for decision. He underlined that there should be a clear delimitation with other Working Groups and their role towards the Focus Group should be defined. The Focus Group will discuss the issues that the Commissioner had specifically asked for, including the recovery advice. He proposed to invite the Commission to discuss in-year TAC revision process and whether the BSAC will be able to respond to any in-year TAC review.

Krzysztof Stanuch emphasised that discussion and exchange of information, rather than recommendations should be the goal of the Science Focus Group. He proposed to discuss age reading methods for cod, as proper age determination is essential for stock assessment.

Matti Ovaska, the EBM WG Chair warned against putting too much burden on the Focus Group. In his opinion, the Focus Group should only deal with specific scientific issues needed for the BSAC recommendations.

Glenn Douglas suggested inviting an expert on age reading methods to the Demersal Working Group.

The ExCom Chair underlined that the agenda of the Science Focus Group should directly refer to its objectives, but also respond to the specific requests of the Commission, namely input on what recovery advice should be from a Baltic perspective and what are the gaps in science.

- Meeting with EFCA and visit onboard of the patrol vessel, Gdynia, 5th December 2025

The ExCom Chair informed on the visit to the EFCA vessel at 9:00 and a presentation on modern surveillance methods by EFCA at 10:30 -11:30 in the National Marine Fisheries Research Institute. The BSAC Secretariat will send an invitation to the meeting.

¹¹ [Upcoming Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

Krzysztof Stanuch reminded that at the InterAC meeting with DG MARE in February 2024¹², the BSAC members had tabled several questions on the provisions of the new Control Regulation, addressed to the Commission and EFCA. These questions, mainly pertaining to unworkable provisions of the Control Regulation have not been answered. He asked if these questions could be asked during the meeting with EFCA, either on the 4th December or 5th December.

The ExCom Chair explained that on 4th December EFCA and the Fisheries Department of the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development are organising an event to celebrate the 20th anniversary of EFCA¹³, while the BSAC will be holding the Science Focus Group. The BSAC will meet EFCA on 5th December for the visit of the patrol vessel and a presentation.

- **EBM Working Group meeting, 5th December 2025, Gdynia¹⁴**

Matti Ovaska, the EBM Working Group Chair informed that the meeting will host a presentation by Simon Jennings, ACOM Vice-Chair on ICES advice on offshore wind farms. The meeting will also discuss the draft BSAC advice on EBFM. The meeting will decide whether to initiate the process to develop a BSAC recommendation on the Nature Restoration Law and protected areas.

- **Inter-AC meeting on 18th November, 2025¹⁵**

The ExCom Chair informed that an observer link and the agenda has been made available to the members of the BSAC. He noted that the Commission only allows 3-minute interventions by each Advisory Council.

Julia Rubeck from DG MARE underlined that the InterAC meetings are aimed at bringing all the ACs together, to exchange information on current issues dealt with by the Commission and the ACs. To ensure efficiency of the exchange and so that all 11 ACs can speak, the Commission restricted the interventions to 3 minute for each AC. Julia Rubeck stated that maintaining a strict and limited timeframe allows to ensure proper feedback from the Director General to all interventions, as well as another opportunity for comments. She informed that an in-person InterAC meeting is planned in 2026, during which longer statements will be possible.

The ExCom Chair emphasised that such short interventions are not sufficient for the ACs to present their work. The speaking points prepared for the InterAC are based on agreed BSAC positions. The speaking points will be shared for a short consultation with members after the ExCom. These speaking points will be sent to the Commission after the meeting¹⁶. Given the complexity of issues facing the Baltic fisheries, he requested the Commission to consider a meeting of the Director General with the BSAC.

¹² [Past Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

¹³ The invitation to attend the dedicated panel debate held on 4th December 2025 in Gdynia, Poland, under the overarching theme of “*European fisheries control in the Baltic Sea: the next 20 years and the role of EFCA*” was sent to the BSAC members on 18th November.

¹⁴ [Upcoming Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

¹⁵ [External Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

¹⁶ [External Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

Several participants agreed on the need to organise a longer meeting with DG MARE focused on the Baltic.

The representative of DG MARE took note of the frustration expressed by the BSAC members regarding very limited timeframe for the interventions at the InterAC and the need for longer exchange of views between the Commission and the BSAC. She underlined that the Commission welcomes proposals on how to improve the InterAC meetings. She assured the BSAC members that the Director General reads all mails received from Advisory Councils.

Cathrine Pedersen Schirmer, the Fisheries Secretariat noted that for the Advisory Councils to function properly, all stakeholders representing different interests should be able to present their positions. She referred to the item on the InterAC agenda on the functioning of the ACs and referred to a letter sent by NGOs to the Commission¹⁷. She asked whether the speaking points for the InterAC meeting on 18th November will be shared with the members.

Julia Rubeck informed that the INTERAC will give the possibility of the first exchange of views on the functioning of the ACs. DG MARE will consult bilaterally with the ACs how to improve the functioning of the ACs. The Commission welcomes any input on this matter as part of the CFP evaluation.

The ExCom Chair informed that the advice on the functioning of the ACs is on the agenda of the ExCom. The members will decide on how to proceed further with this advice. The ExCom Chair informed that the Commission will present the new multiannual financial framework (MFF) at InterAC. The BSAC could discuss its advice on the MFF in the Baltic context at the next ExCom in January. The Commission's presentation on MFF could be shared with BALTFISH Member States, as the first step to initiate the discussion on the regional approach to MFF.

Krzysztof Stanuch asked to take into account the objectives that guided the establishment of the Advisory Councils in any further discussion on the functioning of the ACs.

Several participants raised the point that speaking points of the BSAC representatives at external meetings should be shared with BSAC members to give a opportunity for input well before the meeting takes place.

The ExCom decided to ask the Secretariat to share the BSAC ExCom Chair's speaking points for the InterAC meeting with members for a short consultation of the priorities before the meeting.

- **MIAC (22nd January 2026), MIACO (22-23 January 2026) + preparatory meeting with COM on 21st January 2026**

The ExCom Chair informed that the agenda of the MIAC and MIACO meeting will be available at a later stage.

- **ExCom meeting, 28th January 2026, Gothenburg (afternoon)**

¹⁷ Letter to Commissioner Kadis sent by NGOs on participation of environmental NGOs in Advisory Councils sent in August 2025.

The ExCom Chair invited members to propose points to the agenda of the ExCom and encouraged them to come in person to Gothenburg.

- **Meeting with BALTFISH Control Expert Group**, 29th January 2026, Gothenburg (morning)- meeting with BALTFISH control experts.

The ExCom Chair invited members to propose questions on control measures that could be raised at the meeting. The meeting will be attended by member State experts and national fisheries inspectors.

- **DEMERSAL WG** meeting in March – online

The ExCom Chair invited members to propose points to the agenda.

- **PELAGIC WG**, meeting in March – online

The ExCom Chair invited members to propose points to the agenda.

- **EBM WG** meeting in March – online.

The ExCom Chair invited members to propose points to the agenda.

5. Update on AGRIFISH decisions by BALTFISH Presidency

The ExCom Chair stated that the Swedish BALTFISH Presidency informed that the BSAC should address the Danish Presidency of the Council for the final Council decisions. Due to the short notice, this was not possible before the ExCom. The final package of decisions will be published by the Danish Council Presidency on 28th November 2025. In the future, the BSAC will ask the BALTFISH Presidency as well as the Presidency of the Council to present outcomes of the AGRIFISH Council.

The representative of DG MARE informed that she will ask her colleagues from unit C1 to come with proposals for a debrief of the October Council with the BSAC. She stated that the decision whether the roundtable meeting with the Commissioner will take place before the December AGRIFISH Council will be taken soon.

The ExCom Chair stated that such debrief could take place at the Science Focus Group meeting on 4th December.

The ExCom took note.

Cathrine Pedersen Schirmer, the Fisheries Secretariat suggested that we should be a standing point that BSAC invites both the BALTFISH Chair and the Council presidency to BSAC to present a debrief. She highlighted the useful exchange with the German BALTFISH presidency and that we should aim to keep this tradition going.

6. 5-year BSAC performance review – launch of performance review, adoption of the terms of reference.

The BSAC Secretariat asked the ExCom to approve that the Secretariat takes the necessary steps to launch the performance review, in line with the proposed Terms of Reference, to be carried out during the first semester of 2026¹⁸. The delivery of the report is planned by 15th July 2026.

¹⁸ [Past Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

The ExCom adopted the Terms of Reference for the performance review.

7. Information on ongoing files and Executive Committee input

a. Preparation of the meeting between ICES and Advisory Councils (MIAC – MIACO)¹⁹

The ExCom Chair informed that MIAC and MIACO meetings between ICES and the Advisory Councils will take place on 22nd and 23rd January 2026 in Copenhagen and online. Following discussions held at Science Focus Group and approval of the ExCom, the BSAC has tabled the same questions as last year: one question on the ecosystem considerations in stock advice (including predators other species interactions) and another question on the mixed fisheries advice. These were sent at the end of September to the organising AC (Pelagic AC)²⁰.

In October, the BSAC Secretariat received additional questions addressed to MIAC from Krzysztof Stanuch, National Chamber of Fish Producers²¹. The questions refer to the need to determine the age and size structure of cod and the need to take into account the existing studies on mortality of small pelagic fish.

Krzysztof Stanuch explained that the question on the age and size structure of cod had been asked at previous MIAC meetings in the context of the results of TABACOD project, but it is still very relevant in the context of rebuilding resources of cod. In his view, there is still a data gap on age and size structure.

Cathrine Pedersen Schirmer stated that other members would also be interested in asking additional questions and therefore the BSAC should have more opportunities for an exchange with ICES, to make sure the questions are answered.

Wolfgang Albrecht, Association of Fisheries Protection, Schleswig-Holstein underlined that the need to take account of the data on natural mortality caused by predators should be highlighted at MIAC.

The ExCom Chair drew attention to the fact that it is not possible to get replies to all questions at MIAC due to the limited time. It has been agreed that each AC can ask one question at MIAC. Additional questions may be provided by ICES in writing. He proposed to deal with any questions to ICES at Science Focus Group or send directly to ICES.

Glenn Douglas, speaking as the chair of the Science Focus Group proposed to collect questions addressed to ICES from members and put them on the agenda of the Science Focus Group.

Christian Tsangarides underlined that national research institutes should first be asked to enhance the sampling programmes before asking ICES to determine the age and size structure of stocks.

The ExCom decided to leave the main question sent to MIAC (how ecosystem considerations are considered in the stock advice) unchanged. The ExCom asked the

¹⁹ [MIAC-2026-BSAC-questions-submitted-to-ExCom.pdf](#)

²⁰ [External Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

²¹ [External Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

Science Focus Group to discuss additional questions asked by members and address them to ICES.

b. Discussion on the Commission's proposal for a new Advisory Council dedicated to small-scale fisheries, as referred to in the Communication on the European Ocean Pact – BSAC recommendation /letter

The ExCom Chair informed that on 28th August 2025 the BSAC ExCom had been consulted on the letter of Advisory Councils referring to the proposal for a new AC dedicated to small-scale fisheries sent to BSAC members. In view of divergent views on this matter, the BSAC had abstained from signing the letter and decided to discuss the Commission's proposal at the ExCom on 13th November 2025. The ExCom was asked to decide whether the BSAC should formulate a statement on the Commission's proposal for a new Advisory Council dedicated to small-scale fisheries.

Christian Tsangarides, LIFE underlined that small-scale fisheries sector is undergoing negative developments due to increasing pressures and insufficient policy support. In his view, a dedicated small-scale fisheries Advisory Council would be helpful to safeguard the future of small-scale fisheries in Europe.

The representative of DG MARE underlined that as indicated in the Ocean Pact the Commission will consider the establishment of a dedicated AC for small-scale fisheries. However, the creation of a new AC would require amending the CFP Regulation.

The ExCom Chair stated that the BSAC could be considered as a good example in following the incentives recommended by the Commission for small-scale fishers. The BSAC pays a per diem to small-scale fishers attending the meetings. However, this incentive does not really help in mobilizing the small-scale fishers to take part in meetings. Therefore, additional measures aimed at attracting small-scale fishers should be further considered. He underlined that the BSAC did not sign the letter of ACs referring to the proposal for a new AC dedicated to small-scale fisheries because no consensus had been reached on this matter. He asked the members to express their opinions.

Krzysztof Stanuch stated that in his view there is no need for another Advisory Council dedicated to small-scale fisheries. Fisheries organisations represent both small and large vessels. All have equal access to the resources. He emphasised that the EU administration already considers support for small scale fisheries as a priority.

Cathrine Pedersen Schirmer supported the establishment of a dedicated Advisory Council to deal with issues specific to small-scale fisheries across Europe. She expressed the view that the consultation of the letter was initiated by Advisory Councils at wrong time, during the summer holiday, which had deprived many members of different ACs of the opportunity to comment on the letter.

Vesa Karttunen, Federation of Finnish Fisheries Associations stated that his organisation does not support the establishment of a new AC dedicated to small-scale fisheries as this fleet segment is already well represented at the BSAC. One practical reason for not establishing a new AC is a limited capacity to use working days to take part in AC meetings.

Aimi Hamberg, Coalition Clean Baltic supported the establishment of small-scale fisheries AC. She appreciated the fact that the BSAC gives an opportunity to further discuss the issue. She underlined that such new AC would not be geographically limited, like the Pelagic AC.

Marc Eskelund, Association for Low Impact Coastal Fishery PO stated that his organisation could also support the establishment of a new AC for the benefit of small-scale, coastal fishers. The fishery is threatened, at the brink of collapse and the future does not look promising. This is reflected by the declining participation and commitment in the ACs.

Aimi Hamberg expressed hope that this new AC can be established within the existing legal framework, without re-opening of the CFP Regulation.

The ExCom Chair welcomed onboard a new representative of the Swedish Pelagic PO, Annelie Rosell.

Annelie Rosell stated that her organisation has small scale and large scale fishers who share the same challenges and problems. Limited resources should be one of the reasons for keeping small-scale and large scale fishers within the same organisation. The SPPO is not in favour of establishing a small-scale AC.

Teija Aho, Swedish Fishermen PO informed that SFPO cannot support the establishment of an AC dedicated to small-scale fisheries for the same reasons as the Federation of Finnish Fisheries Associations and Swedish Pelagic PO. The SFPO has small and large scale members.

Wolfgang Albrecht, Association of Fisheries Protection, Schleswig-Holstein noted that the Commission has recognised that small scale fishers are underrepresented in the existing Advisory Councils. This fact cannot be ignored and should be solved either by establishing a dedicated AC or by increasing the seats for small-scale fishers at ExCom.

Rafał Bocheński, Darłowska Group of Fish Producers stated there is enough room for another Advisory Council that could help small-scale fishermen's voices be heard and solve the problems of this fleet segment.

Christian Tsangarides, LIFE noted that there seem to be no consensus on this matter in the BSAC. He pointed out that the main argument against the new AC, namely limited capacity to attend more meetings, would not apply to many BSAC members. There are specific socio-economic issues that the new AC could help solving, such as low profits, low wages, declining economy of small-scale fishers. In his view, there would be no need to re-open the CFP as the ACs have been established by a Delegated Act. He could not agree that the Swedish Pelagic PO pretends to represent small-scale fishers.

Annelie Rosell underlined that the members of SPPO represent 95% of the volume of small-scale Swedish fishery in the Baltic and all fishers with passive gears are members of the SPPO.

Amanda Öberg, BalticWaters supported the initiative to establish a small-scale dedicated AC.

Glenn Douglas, EAA stated that European Anglers Alliance is in favour of establishing an AC dedicated to small-scale fisheries.

The ExCom decided to ask the Secretariat to draft a BSAC response to the proposal for a new AC dedicated to small-scale fisheries. The draft response will be sent to ExCom and adopted through written procedure.

c. Advice on good management practices in the AC - joint advice²²

The BSAC Secretariat informed that the BSAC has consulted the draft joint AC advice on good management practices until 16th October. The ExCom adopted the text with one amendment proposed by a member²³. However, since then, the text has been considerably amended by other ACs. A new draft version was sent today by PELAC and NWWAC. The amendment proposed by the BSAC has been removed.

The ExCom Chair asked the ExCom to decide on the next steps.

Some participants proposed to have a short consultation of the new draft until 17th November 2025.

Marc Eskelund expressed the opinion that amendments have not changed the text substantially and the new draft could be accepted.

The ExCom Chair reminded that the advice had been adopted by the ExCom in October. It is now up to the ExCom whether to accept the amendments to the text proposed in the last draft.

Aimi Hamberg stated that the rephrasing of the text and the deletion of the paragraph proposed by a BSAC member is fairly substantial and should not be accepted.

The ExCom decided to ask the members until 17th November, 12:00 whether they can accept the last amendments introduced to the text of the advice on good management practices in the AC.

d. BSAC advice to enhance the role and functioning of the Advisory Councils²⁴

The ExCom Chair informed that the BSAC ExCom had endorsed the text of the advice to enhance the role and functioning of the Advisory Councils drafted by ACs with some amendments provided by its members. However, amendments proposed by the BSAC members had not been accepted by other ACs²⁵. He informed that this advice will be discussed at the InterAC meeting on 18th November.

The ExCom was asked to decide whether the BSAC should formulate its own advice on how to enhance the role and the functioning of the ACs.

Cathrine Pedersen Schirmer appreciated the fact that the BSAC will formulate its own statement on the role and functioning of the ACs. She proposed to proceed with the advice through written procedure, until the end of December, so the advice could be delivered on time to the Commission to feed into the evaluation of the CFP.

²² [Draft-Joint-AC-advice-on-the-internal-AC-management vesrion-adopted-by-BSAC-ExCom.pdf](#)

²³ Low Impact Fishers of Europe

²⁴ [EN-Inter-AC Advice AC-functionning Evaluation-CFP 1September2025 signed.pdf](#)

²⁵ Mail sent to the BSAC members at the end of August: on *The comments submitted by the Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BSAC), which were the result of consultations with its members and reflect their views, could not be incorporated into the advice, as ten Advisory Councils unanimously confirmed their preference to retain the version originally adopted, without further amendments. The BSAC will present its advice on the role and functioning of the Advisory Councils later this autumn. We thank the members for their input provided during the consultation of the draft advice. Please note that the BSAC will discuss its advice to enhance the role and functioning of the ACs during the ExCom meeting on 13th November (online).*

Christian Tsangarides proposed to take into account the conclusions on how to improve the functioning of the ACs from the side event on ACs at the 2024 edition of the European Maritime Day took place in Svendborg, Denmark²⁶.

The ExCom decided to ask the Secretariat to come back with the information on the timeframe for consulting the BSAC advice on the functioning of the ACs after the meeting.

e. BSAC format for written reports and recommendations

The ExCom Chair explained that the BSAC has been using a format of reports with no names and affiliations. He asked the members to decide whether this format should be changed.

The ExCom unanimously decided to change the formula of the BSAC reports and recommendations. The reports should include the names and affiliations of all speakers. The names of the organisations should also be mentioned in the text of BSAC recommendations.

f. BSAC to join Energy Transition Partnership (ETP) - decision of the Energy Transition Focus Group to promote the interests of the Baltic

The agenda item was not discussed at the meeting and will be taken up at the next ExCom.

8. From the Secretariat

Brief status on expenditure and admin. for 2025-2026

The ExCom Chair informed that the expenditures of the BSAC in 2025-26 are on track. More information on the status of expenditure will be given at the next ExCom in January.

The ExCom took note.

The ExCom Chair informed the meeting of the current situation in the Secretariat. The Executive Secretary, Alexander Ben Embarek was on sick leave in August and September. Following his doctor's recommendations, he has been back for 9 hours per week since mid-September, with very limited workload. To secure proper functioning of the BSAC, the Secretariat work has been carried out by Ewa Milewska and the ExCom Chair. The BSAC has joined the Danish Chamber of Commerce to seek legal assistance in order to solve the current problems.

The ExCom took note.

9. Presentation the cormorant framework plan - Professor Ian Cowx for EIFFAC²⁷.

Ian G. Cowx, Professor Emeritus at the University of Hull, presented a framework for the development of a European management plan for the great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax*

²⁶ [External Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

²⁷ Presentation by Ian Cowx [Past Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council](#)

carbo), prepared by the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (EIFAAC)²⁸. The presentation pointed out that the increasing numbers and wide-ranging distribution of breeding and overwintering cormorants across Europe are intensifying conflicts with inland and coastal fisheries and aquaculture operations.

Cormorants are protected under the Birds Directive, Article 5 (not huntable species). The conservation status is considered as secure (favourable). Cormorants are protected in large designated conservation areas where they cannot be hunted. Article 9 allows derogations from general protection regime of the Birds Directive to take necessary actions, including lethal control, to prevent serious damage to fisheries and aquaculture.

Some examples on reducing the impact of cormorants by reducing the availability of fish to cormorants are presented in the INTERCAFE Cormorant Management Toolbox²⁹. The measures include lethal measures to reduce cormorant numbers; reducing reproductive success through egg destruction; scaring cormorants from fishery or fish farm; exclusion techniques; habitat modification to reduce availability of fish to cormorants; fish stock management to reduce availability of fish to cormorants; compensation; management plans.

He presented the efficacy of current cormorant control measures. The EU ProtectFish project³⁰ addresses some of these issues, proving considerable economic losses caused by cormorants. Despite existing national management measures, including derogations under Article 9 of the Birds Directive, most local and national actions have proven insufficient, fragmented, and often ineffective. Current methods of control are not working. Most countries do not apply for Article 9 licences, control under Article 9 is not endorsed by all management organizations and stakeholders. Some countries are of the opinion that there is no legal possibility under the Birds Directive for binding EU wide framework obliging Member States to reduce cormorant populations. Control of cormorant populations largely ineffective at local scale. Although not universally agreed, many national agencies and stakeholders call for a European-wide plan.

The overall goal of the cormorant management plan is: *To achieve a fair balance between pan-European conservation of the great cormorant, with the sustainable use and protection of fish populations, fisheries and aquaculture interests, including the socio-economic well-being of communities dependent on fisheries and aquaculture.*

Ian Cowx presented the guiding principles of the Framework, including sustainability, evidence based management, recognising alternative issues, adaptive management using flexible approaches, need for collaboration and coordination among the European countries and stakeholders, compliance with policies and legal frameworks, minimising the conflicts between stakeholders by balancing the needs of fisheries, aquaculture, biodiversity conservation, apply management measures with low adverse animal welfare impacts, apply precautionary approach and environmental stewardship.

²⁸ [EIFAAC - Conference on management advice to reduce cormorant predation impacts - Framework for a European Management Plan for the great cormorant \(Version August 2025\)](#)

²⁹ [INTERCAFE Cormorant Toolbox Manual FOR WEB.pdf](#)

³⁰ [Launch 'ProtectFish' project | European Fishing Tackle Trade Association](#)

The objectives of the framework are to:

- Maintain up-to-date status and trend data on great cormorants (breeding and overwintering), inland fish population abundance and distribution, and information about the ecological, economic and social impacts of cormorants on fisheries and aquaculture.
- Improve understanding, documentation and quantification of ecological, economic and social impacts of cormorants on inland and coastal waters and their associated impacts on aquatic biodiversity, and fisheries and aquaculture.
- Provide a plan of action to protect vulnerable fish species against predation by great cormorants, contributing to achievement of EU Water Framework Directive, Habitats Directive, and the European biodiversity targets.
- Adapt, update and provide framework to implement preventative measures to reduce and mitigate impact of cormorant predation on fisheries and aquaculture, and harmonise compensation schemes.
- Provide a framework to facilitate the use of derogations to authorise the controlled culling of great cormorants whilst maintaining the favourable conservation status of great cormorants across its distribution range in Europe.
- Promote cross-border collaboration and harmonisation of monitoring, management and policy frameworks. Provide a central, open-access, fully moderated platform for engagement with all key stakeholders.

The European management planning framework for the great cormorant (CMP) adopts an adaptive approach and involves a series of steps: 1) assessment of the status of cormorant–fish interactions, related economics, and the underpinning policy drivers, objectives and target end points; 2) formulating management measures; 3) choosing a course of action; 4) implementing management actions, monitoring changes in cormorant, fish, aquaculture and ecosystem characteristics, region-wide cooperation, and compensation for damages to fisheries and aquaculture; and 5) evaluation and adjustment of the plan’s end-points and goals for the future. Explicit specifications and documentation are required at each step, supported by stakeholder participation and consultation.

The following management measures are considered in the Framework:

- Status quo /do nothing
- Non-lethal deterrent methods to prevent or reduce predation rates of cormorant populations to protect fish, fisheries and aquaculture, building on INTERCAFE Cormorant Management Toolbox
- Implement targeted lethal control to manage the cormorant population size – in a manner proportionate to damage caused – when justified under Article 9 of the Birds Directive and without compromising the favourable conservation status of the great cormorant.
- Establish spatial management to reduce the impact of cormorant predation on fish, by assigning zones where cormorant abundance is actively managed to protect fish populations and aquaculture and “no-regulation protection-zones” for cormorants

The plan calls for setting reference points and performance indicators for both cormorant abundance and fish conservation targets, ensuring compliance with EU environmental

directives. A centralized coordination mechanism, including a Cormorant Management Advisory Group and Secretariat, is recommended to oversee implementation, stakeholder dialogue, and track progress.

Sustainable financing is fundamental to successful endorsement and implementation of the management plan. Without funding from national budgets, the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF), and possibly the EU LIFE Programme or Horizon Europe, to support key elements such as data collection and collation, model development, and initial stakeholder collaboration, the plan will be difficult to implement.

The funds will be required to implement conflict prevention and mitigation measures, including non-lethal deterrents, predation thresholds and fish stock resilience; damage assessment and compensations. No mass culling is planned, reduce numbers to sustainable numbers.

Technical support will be provided to European countries for developing national plans, capacity building, awareness raising and legislation review and amendment (as needed). The outcomes of management actions will be evaluated after a 6-year cycle.

Next steps: the plan will be subject to approval by EIFAAC Technical and Scientific Committee and Management Committee and submitted to EIFAAC members. Member countries and European Parliament will decide on a way forward. Options include:

- Request for adoption of the regional plan (e.g. at EP, EIFAAC, Bern Convention)
- Request further development of framework into regional management plan Request partial adoption and implementation of regional plan
- Discard regional plan -> continue business as usual
- Increase funding of research at national and regional levels to inform regional management
- Request AEWA to produce a single species management plan

In conclusion, Ian Cowx underlined that cormorants are a permanent part of Europe's ecosystem, but their impact must be regulated through a pan-European and adaptive management plan that is grounded in scientific research. Acknowledging that vulnerable fish populations remain in decline, he stressed that coordinated regional action, legal flexibility, financial compensation, and regular assessment, is essential to mitigate ecological damage and support the viability of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

The ExCom Chair thanked Ian Cowx for his presentation of the framework for the development of a European management plan for the great cormorant.

Florian Stein, EAA stated that European Anglers Alliance fully supports a pan-European management plan for the cormorants and has been calling for its implementation for years to achieve a balanced European management of cormorants.

Glenn Douglas, EAA added that in the Baltic the large flocks of migrating cormorants cause substantial losses in fish populations and impact the fishing opportunities, including the opportunities for recreational anglers. Predation of large numbers of salmon in a very short time by large flocks of migrating cormorants can be especially problematic. Tagging studies provide scientific evidence of the rapid and alarming negative impact of cormorant predation

on salmon. He underlined that angling organisations invest large amounts of time, money, and energy into the goal of restoring salmon populations in the Baltic, finally eaten by cormorants.

Ian Cowx agreed that exponential growth of cormorant predation within rivers and estuaries compromises the fishing opportunities and incurs very high costs for fishers.

Wolfgang Albrecht stated that there is a need to implement a cormorant management without delay. The European Commission should take immediate actions in view of the difficult situation faced by small-scale fishermen.

Ian Cowx stated that the NSAC and BSAC, with the support of the European Parliament should join efforts in calling on the Commission to implement a management plan for cormorants.

Cathrine Pedersen Schirmer highlights that the conflict that the industry has with cormorants does not arise from a large number of cormorants. Their impact should be considered in relation to very diminished fish stocks. She made it clear that her organisation does not support any lethal measures. Furthermore, she noted how the presentation presented figures on cormorants consumption of fish without comparing it to the numbers of how many fish is taken out by fisheries. She mentioned that the Baltic pelagic fishery is alone is catching more than the entire estimate of EU cormorants population consumption. Furthermore, she highlighted that there is no scientific consent on the impact of cormorants on the fish population and she mention that at the BSAC demersal WG, Dr. Christopher Zimmerman made it very clear that the predation of cormorants and seals is not the reason that the Baltic fish stocks is in crisis and that reducing predators like cormorants and seals will not get fish stocks to recover.

Ian Cowx referred to the Framework for a European management Plan for cormorants³¹. The CMP states that the impact from cormorant predation is very dependent on the foraging habitat. In marine fisheries it generally represents a less direct impact. In coastal areas and fjords the predation impact will only be major when fish stocks are low, but in rivers and lakes with a naturally lower fish biomass, the impact can be very high. The Plan includes an economic and legal component and proposes different management measures, including lethal and non-lethal measures.

Christian Tsangarides stated that a pan-European framework for cormorant management is a logical way forward. He also indicated that predation data should be included in the stock assessment models.

Ian Cowx replied that the national institutes are working on including natural mortality of fish caused by predation into the modelling and this process may take a long time.

The ExCom Chair asked Ian Cowx to update the BSAC on the next steps taken with regard to the framework.

- **Information from HELCOM on grey seal population abundance**³²

³¹ [EIFAAC - Conference on management advice to reduce cormorant predation impacts - Framework for a European Management Plan for the great cormorant \(Version August 2025\)](#)

³² [Background-rationale-and-methodology-for-setting-threshold-values-for-the-abundance-of-grey-seals.pdf](#)

Florent Nicolas, HELCOM shared the document with replies provided by HELCOM Expert Group on Marine Mammals (EG MaMa) to questions asked by the BSAC to the HELCOM Working Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (IC WG FISH 3-2024) in 2024. The BSAC requested HELCOM to evaluate the population status against the criteria for carrying capacity for different areas as a complement to Baltic wide evaluations. BSAC also recommended to update the Limit Reference, Precautionary Approach and Target Reference Levels for seal populations of the described Management Units, based on best available science.

Florent Nicolas stated that there is no current evidence to support having more than one grey seal management unit. A complete and comprehensive picture of the genetic structure of grey seals in the Baltic Sea does not exist and there are unclear aspects.

With reference to the carrying capacity, Florent Nicolas stated that the Precautionary Approach Limit (PAL) and Target Reference Level (TRL) are theoretical points on the curve that describes carrying capacity. Since the carrying capacity fluctuates and is influenced by human activities in the marine environment, it is not reflected as a stable or absolute number. The planned PAL project aims to define the value for grey seal, acknowledging these circumstances. As stated above, carrying capacity for grey seals (or other units of seals in the HELCOM area) has not been estimated.

Glenn Douglas referred to the current usage of the “one out all out” principle for indicators of Good Environmental Status does this means that if grey seal in one SD does not reach a single threshold value for good environmental status then all the Baltic’s grey seal is judged as not having reached GES?

Krzysztof Stanuch referred to the fact that in the past HELCOM had set a quantitative target of 10,000 seals for the entire Baltic. Today, there are about 10 times more seals, i.e. about 100,000 individuals. What is the impact of this abundance on the entire ecosystem? How does such abundance of seals impact the elements of this ecosystem, including, among others, fishermen? Has HELCOM set a new quantitative target for Baltic seals? If so, where can the justification for this be found in the context of ecosystem changes?

Christian Tsangarides asked about the condition of seals and the connection to the historically low biomass levels of sprat, herring and cod. In the paper "Diet of seals in the Baltic Sea region: a synthesis of published and new data from 1968 to 2013" published in the [ICES Marine Journal of Science](#) these were identified as the main seal prey together with sandeel. How does HELCOM address the ecosystem dynamics and historically low population levels of seal prey in the context of evaluating seal condition?

The ExCom Chair proposed to formulate all additional questions and address them to HELCOM.

The ExCom decided to ask the members to provide questions in writing after the meeting and ask HELCOM to reply before the next ExCom on 28th January. ***The questions sent to the Secretariat are in the footnote³³***

³³ Questions addressed to HELCOM by BSAC members after the ExCom on 13th November.

- Currently HELCOM use the whole HELCOM area (SDs 22-32) as a single management unit for grey seal and the "one out all out" principle for indicators for if grey seal has reached Good Environmental Status (GES). With

10.AOB

- **BSAC recommendation on the future of EU fisheries funding**

The ExCom Chair referred to the Commission's presentation on the new financial framework planned at the InterAC meeting on 18th November. The work on the BSAC recommendation on the future EU fisheries funding will be initiated soon, possibly in the framework of the Focus Group on energy transition.

- **BSAC 20th Anniversary Celebration** - event in May 2026 – ideas, venue, list of guests, programme - discussion

The ExCom Chair asked the members to provide concrete proposals on the venue, guests and speakers to the Secretariat.

The ExCom Chair thanked everyone for good discussions and the interpreters for their work.

Action points

the current usage of the “one out all out” principle for indicators of Good Environmental Status does this mean that if grey seal in one SD does not reach a single threshold value for good environmental status then all the Baltic's grey seal is judged as not having reached Good Environmental Status?

- For which current indicator threshold values and in which SD does grey seal not reach GES?
- Can HELCOM envisage problems with using the whole of the Baltic as a single management area e.g. high grey seal density within a SD leading to poor seal condition or seal numbers causing substantial negative effects on a fish population within a SD?
- If problems with using the whole HELCOM area as a management unit are apparent for either seals or fish populations within an SD would HELCOM re-evaluate the usage of the whole HELCOM area (SDs 22-32) as a single management area?
- According to HELCOM grey seal number over 60 000 individuals in the Baltic Sea. HELCOM also calculate that grey seal numbers increased at 5,1% year on year between 2003-2021. For grey seals the HELCOM threshold for good status is defined as 3% below the maximum rate of increase for seal species, i.e. 7% annual rate of increase for grey seals in the HELCOM area. Decreased population growth rates can be a sign of density-dependence due to limiting food or other resources and the functional factors of carrying capacity. Several fish stocks that seal utilize are at record low biomass, does HELCOM review grey seal numbers and population growth rate to determine if it is affected by density dependency?
- How does HELCOM address the ecosystem dynamics and historically low population levels of seal prey in the context of evaluating seal condition?
- Some time ago, HELCOM set a quantitative target of 10,000 seals for the entire Baltic. Today, there are about 10 times more seals, i.e. about 100,000 individuals. What is the impact of this abundance on the entire ecosystem? How does such abundance of seals impact the elements of this ecosystem, including, among others, fishermen? Has HELCOM set a new quantitative target for Baltic seals? If so, where can the justification for this be found in the context of ecosystem changes?

Reimbursement ceilings for hotels	MT will discuss the new ceilings	The ExCom members will be informed - pending
Demersal WG March 2026	Cod recovery plan; Note that the dates collide with the European Ocean Days, 2-6 March	Invite experts Change dates
Pelagic WG March 2026	Note that the dates collide with the European Ocean Days in Brussels planned for 2-6 March	Change dates?
EBM WG March 2026	Note that the dates collide with the European Ocean Days in Brussels planned for 2-6 March	Change dates?
Multi-Annual Financial Framework	Discussion in the BSAC	Possibly in the energy transition Focus Group
Invitation to the visit to the EFCA patrol vessels and presentation of modern surveillance methods	To be sent to stakeholders	
HELCOM additional questions on seals		Sent to HELCOM on 17 th November
BALTFISH CEG with BSAC on 29 th January 2026	Members to propose issues to be raised at the meeting	
Demersal, Pelagic, EBM WGs in March 2026	Members to propose issues to be raised at the meeting. Ask members to propose experts on cod recovery	
BSAC statement on the initiative to establish an Advisory Council dedicated to small-scale fisheries	To be drafted by the Secretariat and sent to ExCom for adoption	
BSAC advice to enhance the role and functioning of the Advisory Councils	BSAC to formulate a draft and to inform on the timeframe for consulting draft	

BSAC – ICES cooperation and communication – Follow up on letter sent to ICES		Presentation of ICES advice to the BSAC - pending, will come back before May 2026.
BSAC recommendation on the future of EU fisheries funding	Work do be initiated soon, possibly in the Focus Group on Energy Transition	
BSAC to join Energy Transition Partnership (ETP) <i>- decision of the Energy Transition Focus Group to promote the interests of the Baltic</i>	The agenda item was not discussed at the meeting and will be taken up at the next ExCom	
20 th Anniversary of the BSAC		Members asked to provide ideas on the place and content