



Fisheries control authority delegates from the Baltic Sea Member States (Baltfish, chaired by Germany), the Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BSAC), representatives from the European Commission (DG Mare), a member of the European Parliament and representatives from the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) met in Hamburg on 9th March 2017 at a Joint Workshop to examine the state of play for the implementation of the landing obligation with respect to the major commercial species of the Baltic Sea: cod, salmon, herring, sprat and plaice. The landing obligation (LO) is a provision of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) which forbids fishermen to discard at sea any unwanted catches of these species, including all catches below minimum conservation reference size.

The workshop took stock of the first two years of the LO in the Baltic Sea, as well as the reporting obligations and recording of catches, compliance issues, discard data and scientific advice, the current situation and future needs.

It also dealt with the main issues encountered, such as the recent introduction of plaice, the handling and storage of catches onboard and their landings, focusing on difficulties.

The technical measures and possible ways of reducing unwanted catches, including an overview of the gear trials in the Baltic Sea, were thoroughly discussed by both representatives of the industry and NGOs.

The meeting agreed that for the efficient and speedy implementation of the LO, it is necessary to speed up the adoption of the Technical Measures Framework Regulation.

Baltfish recognised the promising efforts made by some Baltic Sea Member States to design innovative selective trawl gears which will dramatically reduce catches below minimum conservation reference size.

The participants at the meeting noted that a certain discarding level was still prevailing in the Baltic Sea and concluded that any improvements would depend on an increased engagement of the industry as well as the possibility to develop innovative gear.

Mr. Hermann Pott, chair of the Baltfish Control Expert Group, declared: *“This joint workshop is a good example of cooperation between the stakeholders and the Member States, with the support of the European Fisheries Control Agency to get closer to the satisfactory implementation of the landing obligation.”*