

BSAC Executive Committee

24th January 2024 09:30-17:00 CET

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development,

Wspólna 30, 00-930 Warsaw, Poland: in person and online via Zoom

Report

1. Welcome by the BSAC ExCom Chair Jarek Zielinski

The ExCom Chair welcomed all in-person and online participants. He thanked the Secretary of State, Jacek Czerniak, as well the representatives of the Fisheries Department for their kind hospitality in providing the meeting room and assistance in organising the meeting. **The ExCom Chair** referred to the BSAC tradition to organise an ExCom meeting in the capital of the Member State which holds the BALTFISH Presidency.

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

There was a quorum for the meeting. The participants list is on the website¹. The agenda was adopted.

Under AOB was noted a point by a fisheries representative from Denmark, seeking support for the derogation to Article 13 of the Council Regulation 2024/257, referring to the measures on eel fisheries².

b. Adoption of the [report from the last ExCom meeting](#) (26th October 2023) and review of the action items

The ExCom Chair informed that comments had been provided by Wolfgang Albrecht, FISHERIEISCHUTZVERBAND.

The ExCom adopted the minutes of the ExCom from 26th October 2023. The report was uploaded to the BSAC website.

The Executive Secretary presented progress report on the implementation of the action points from the last ExCom meeting. He pointed out that most actions had been completed and some of them will be dealt with under the current ExCom agenda.

c. Two ExCom members to check the minutes

Michael Andersen, DFPO, and Sara Söderström, The Fisheries Secretariat agreed to check the minutes.

¹ [Past Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council \(bsac.dk\)](#)

² [Council Regulation \(EU\) 2024/257 of 10 January 2024 fixing for 2024, 2025 and 2026 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks, applicable in Union waters and, for Union fishing vessels, in certain non-Union waters, and amending Regulation \(EU\) 2023/194 \(europa.eu\)](#) By way of derogation from paragraph 3, point (d), for European eel of an overall length of 12 cm or more, the Member States concerned may allow fishing activities for up to a total of 30 consecutive or non-consecutive days, which shall apply to all fishers concerned in the relevant fishing area, during the main migration period. In that case, the Member States concerned shall determine an additional closure of an equivalent period of time during the main migration period or, subsidiarily, just before or after it. In case a Member State allows fishing for non-consecutive days, the fishing gear shall be taken out of the water between any period of non-consecutive days.

2. Information from the Secretariat

a. Status on expenditures for 2023-2024, membership application

The Executive Secretary informed the meeting that expenditures were on track and approximately 60% of the budget had been used until 31st of December 2023. The BSAC could end up the current financial year with an underspend of about 20.000 €, mainly due to lower than planned reimbursements under *Participation in meetings*. This is mainly due to the fact that many members join hybrid meetings online.

He informed on the change of the BSAC office premises due to PCB concentration exceeding the health threshold limit air pollution in Axelborg. The moving costs and the rent for the last three months had been reimbursed by the administration of the former premises. The new office is still in same location as DFPO and DPPO. This change has no implication on the budget as the rent will still be paid by the Danish Ministry. This is considered to be a temporary solution for 1 year.

The ExCom Chair referred to the membership application received from the Polish Association of Fish Processors (PAFP) to become a member of the General Assembly. The final decision on membership of the BSAC is decided on by common agreement between the Member States. No comments had been received by the deadline of 24th January 2024. Therefore, the PAFP becomes member of the General Assembly.

Adam Cichoń from PAFP informed that the Polish Association of Fish Processors gathers representatives of fish processing plants, suppliers of technology for the fish industry associations as well as fish market. The Association's objectives include, among others: promotion of Polish fish processing and the Polish fish industry on the domestic and foreign markets, taking a position on matters important to the fishing industry, in particular to fish processing, representing the interests and matters of fish processors. As the raw material for the processors comes mainly from the Baltic (herring and sprat), they are interested in matters related to Baltic fisheries.

A small scale fisheries representative asked the new BSAC member whether the processors are interested in processing the round goby.

The PAFP representative answered that the round goby had been processed in Poland under the communist times. However, this raw material is no longer available to the Polish processors. The processing plants would be interested in processing round goby on the condition that there is sufficient supply of this raw material, the price is attractive and the protein content high.

The ExCom took note.

b. Draft estimated expenditure and work programme for 2024-2025 Annex 1a, 1b and Annex 2a, 2b- sent to members

The Executive Secretary presented the draft budget and work programme, prepared by the Secretariat in collaboration with the Working Group Chairs and the ExCom Chair. He informed that the work programme follows the same approach as in previous year, taking into account the recommendations of the external evaluation of the BSAC, and the comments of the members during the year. The work programme and the draft budget had been sent to the BSAC members and the Member States and no comments were received. He referred to the context of the lump sum that gives more flexibility on the use of the

budget. The work programme includes 11 planned recommendations which in addition to meetings are the main deliverables under the lumpsum model. In 2024-2025, the BSAC will continue its dual approach with respect to the work programme, focusing on long term and short-term priorities. Once approved by the ExCom, the work programme will be sent to the Commission.

The Executive Secretary reminded the 2024 is an election year for the BSAC. At the annual General Assembly in May 2024, the BSAC will elect a new Honorary Chair and a Vice-Chair of the General Assembly, a new Executive Committee, a new Chair and Vice-chair of the Executive Committee and Chairs of the three Working Groups.

The Executive Secretary presented the draft budget for 2024-2025. The budget was increased by 2% inflation rate as compared to the previous one and there were some re-allocations between the budget lines (among others, travels of the Chair, meeting expenses) to follow the expected operational, without affecting the total budget.

A fisheries representative from Denmark applauded the work programme, which covers the current interests of the BSAC members. Referring to the upcoming elections to the Commission and the European Parliament, he asked whether any substantial amendments to the major legal acts such as the MAP are realistic.

The ExCom Chair stated that the BSAC will convey its work priorities to the new MEPs at the earliest possible occasion.

The Executive Secretary added that during the last AC Secretariats meeting, held on 17th January in Copenhagen, the ACs Secretariats agreed to organise a presentation of the AC work for the new MEPs in June 2024.

A representative of DG Mare referred to the fact that the Baltic Multiannual Plan requires that the Commission reports to the European Parliament and Council on the results and impacts of the plan every five years. The next report is due in mid-June 2024 and the stakeholders will be asked to provide feedback through a questionnaire.

However, the MAP will not be revised in the coming year.

The EBM WG Chair asked to change the recommendations on the Multiannual Plan for salmon to *recommendations on salmon management*, as it is very unlikely that the plan will be adopted in 2024.

The ExCom approved the draft work programme for 2024-2025 with 2 minor wording amendments.

The ExCom adopted the draft budget for 2024-2025. **The ExCom** asked the Secretariat to send reminders for membership payments.

c. Revision of the Rules of Procedure - [BSAC letter](#), [COM answer](#), and [Latest ROP draft](#)

The BSAC Honorary Chair recalled that, in 2023, the Executive Committee launched an up-date of BSAC's existing Rules of Procedure (RoP). The General Assembly, on 17 May 2023, decided to postpone the approval of the draft RoP because of questions raised with regard to how apply Article 4 (7) of Regulation 2015/242. In August 2023, the BSAC wrote

to DG Mare asking to clarify the criteria for the application of Article 4(7)³. The Commission replied on 15th December 2023⁴ and the answer is rather vague.

The Honorary Chair underlined that the BSAC should find a way forward, to have its RoP aligned with existing legislation. He proposed to recommend to the General Assembly to approve the draft RoP in an Extraordinary meeting. He further proposed to give a new mandate for a focus group dedicated to examining ways to define the share of the small-scale fleets within the BSAC.

The ExCom Chair thanked the Honorary Chair for the update and for his work on this topic.

A small-scale fisheries representative proposed to use the ad-hoc definition of the concept of small-scale fishing in the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)⁵. He further stated that the Focus Group could continue the work on the indicators to attribute the “share” of small-scale fleets in the Member State for the way it should be reflected into the composition of the General Assembly and Executive Committee members, but for the sake of time, the use of the EMFAF definition would be the best way forward.

A fisheries representative from Poland referred to the fact that in the past the previous the EU Commissioner said that the entire Baltic fleet could be attributed to the small-scale fleet segment. In his view, there is a need for a clear definition of small-scale fleet in every EU sea basin to be included in the EU legislation. However, he could not agree to apply a definition used in the EMFF in the context of the representation of the small-scale fleets in the BSAC. He underlined that all sector organisations in Poland include small and large vessels, but they do not distinguish between the large-scale and small-scale members. He underlined that the application of Article 4(7) will have severe consequences as any division of the fleet may polarise and divide the fisheries organisations.

The ExCom Chair asked the ExCom to consider the use of the EMFAF definition, with the understanding that almost all fisheries organisations are built up by mixed fleets of both small-scale and larger-scale vessels using different types of gears.

A fisheries representative from Sweden expressed full support for the proposal of the Honorary Chair and the ExCom Chair to move forward with the revision of the Rules of Procedure. He underlined that it is of utmost importance to ensure that any organisation representing small and large vessels can still speak on behalf of its small-scale members.

A small-scale fisheries representative from Germany stated that in his view it is redundant to continue the discussions. The BSAC is obliged to implement Article 4(7) and should attempt to come up with its own definition of small-scale fleet as advised by the

³ “The number of representatives of a small-scale fleet should reflect the share of small-scale fleets within the fishing sector of the Member States concerned.”

⁴ “ it is the discretion of the respective Advisory Council to define and justify its own indicators to attribute the “share” of small-scale fleets in the Member States for the way it should be reflected into the composition of the General Assembly and Executive Committee members”.

⁵ “small-scale coastal fishing” defined as fishing activities carried out by: (a) marine and inland fishing vessels of an overall length of less than 12 metres and not using towed gear as defined in point (1) of Article 2 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1967/2006; (b) fishers on foot, including shellfish gatherers.

Commission. He underlined that the divisions in the fleet appear by nature and it is up to the fishers and the BSAC to reach agreement and compromise.

A representative of DG Mare referred to the fact that the Commission leaves a certain room for manoeuvre for the Advisory Councils in implementing Article 4(7) of Regulation (EU) 2022/204, to define and justify its own indicators to attribute the “share” of small-scale fleets in the Member States for the way it should be reflected into the composition of the General Assembly and Executive Committee members.

A fisheries representative from Denmark stated that the Danish fishers are willing to take a more flexible approach after having expressed their views on the matter and are ready to proceed with the adoption of the revised RoP. He underlined that they maintain the position that if an organisation consists of both large-scale and small-scale fleet members, it is also deemed to represent small-scale fishers.

The ExCom Chair concluded that there is general consensus to move forward with the adoption of the revised Rules of Procedure. He thanked the Honorary Chair, the Secretariat and all BSAC members who participated in the work of the Focus Group for their work and their flexibility.

The Executive Secretary stated that the RoP could be adopted during an extraordinary General Assembly, held online, in the end of March or beginning of April. The Focus Group should be given a new mandate by the ExCom. A “clean” draft RoP will be distributed to the BSAC members well ahead of extraordinary General Assembly.

The ExCom decided to recommend to the General Assembly to approve the draft RoP in an Extraordinary meeting. **The ExCom** decided to give a new mandate to the Focus Group dedicated to examining how to define the indicators to attribute the “share” of small-scale fleets in the Member States.

10. [EU Windpower Action Plan](#) presentation

Presentation by the Commission, reaction of Member States, discussion

A representative from DG ENER presented the Commission Wind Power Action Plan⁶, adopted on 24th October 2023. He highlighted the importance of wind energy in the EU and referred to the EU target for renewables in 2030: 42.5% of the energy mix – almost double the current share (22%). Until 2030, the share of wind based electricity will increase from 16% to 34%. He mentioned the difficulties faced by the wind industry. All largest EU wind turbine manufacturers reported operating losses in 2022. The European Commission, Member States and the industry have taken concerted actions to overcome these difficulties, such as acceleration of deployment through increased predictability and faster permitting, improved auction design, access to finance; creating a fair and competitive international environment, skills; and industry engagement and Member State commitments. The Commission has already put forward initiatives addressing some of the

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023DC0669&qid=1702455143415>

Presentation: https://www.bsac.dk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Presentation_European-Wind-Power-Action-Plan_EWP.pptx

key issues such as the Renewable Energy Directive, Emergency Regulation on permitting and Green Deal Industrial Plan.

The ExCom Chair thanked the representative of DG ENER for presenting the general view on the EU policy on wind energy and the Wind Power Action Plan. He asked whether there are specific actions taken in regional level, in the context of the Baltic.

The representative of DG ENER stated that the Commission aims at increasing cooperation in wind energy sector at regional and sea basin level.

The EBM WG Chair noted that the Action Plan focuses on the acceleration of the deployment in the field of wind energy, but does not consider the negative impacts of wind farms. He underlined that the rapid development of wind farms is related to several impacts and pressures on the ecosystem. The BSAC and other stakeholders have serious concerns, especially about cumulative effects of the offshore wind farms in the Baltic. Have these environmental impacts been considered in the action plan?

The representative of DG ENER stated that the action plan sets deployment targets to achieve the goals. The rules should be applied correctly. The environmental impact assessments (EIA) need to be carried out to avoid any negative impact on the environment. The Action Plan aims at ensuring sustainability in the development of wind energy.

The ExCom took note.

3. Reports from meetings and future meetings

The Executive Secretary presented short reports from meetings where BSAC was represented.

- **FG Technical Measures Regulation 13th November 2023** – [BSAC recommendation](#)

The BSAC set up a Focus Group⁷ to deal with the Commission questionnaire on implementation of the Technical Measures Regulation. The Focus group met on 13th November 2023 (online). It was chaired by the BSAC ExCom Chair.

- **1st Mission Arena in Gothenburg 14th November 2023**

The ExCom Chair attended the meeting. Blue Mission BANOS' 1st Mission Arena took place on **14-16 November** in Gothenburg (Sweden)⁸. The event engaged a wide range of stakeholders across the Baltic and North Sea in making the Blue Economy carbon-neutral & circular by 2030, in line with [EU Mission Ocean](#)'s objectives. The next meeting of the Blue Mission will take place in Tallinn.

- **Energy Transition Partnership workshop on finance 28th November 2023**

The ExCom Chair attended the meeting. The BSAC is a member of this partnership. The first meeting focused on mapping the current challenges in terms of financing, from funding research to the final adoption of technologies by fisheries and aquaculture operators as well as exploring the currently available opportunities and tools for the transition, such as public funding opportunities in the EU and MSs and the role of private financing. The meeting applauded the outcome of the BSAC Focus Group on Energy Transition. The

⁷ <https://www.bsac.dk/past-meetings/>

⁸ https://bluemissionbanos.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/ROADMAP-2030_Final_compressed.pdf

second meeting of the Partnership will take place in February 2024 and will be attended by the ExCom Chair.

- **EFCA vessel visit in Gdynia 29th November** – [BSAC report](#)

The Executive Secretary attended the meeting. EFCA had invited BSAC members along with control inspectors from various Baltic Member States to visit its new control vessel, the OPV Ocean Guardian, in Gdynia, Poland. EFCA Executive Director, Susan Steele welcomed the participants onboard the vessel. She explained that the vessel's mission in the Baltic. The participants were then given a tour of the vessel that is equipped for at sea inspections of fishing vessels, search and rescue, and other emergencies at sea such as environmental pollution.

- **Roundtable with Commissioner before December Council 7th December** [input](#)

The BSAC was represented by the ExCom Chair and Vice-Chair. **The BSAC Representatives** thanked the Commissioner for his invitation to this roundtable held before the December AGRIFISH Council meeting, and for dedicating specific time to Baltic stocks before the October Council this year. The speaking points for the BSAC representative were agreed by the ExCom.

- **Meeting with ICES: MIAC MIACO 18-19th January 2024**

The Executive Secretary referred to the MIAC and MIACO meetings held on 18th and 19th January 2024 in the ICES Headquarters in Copenhagen. The ExCom Chair and the Executive Secretary, as well as some BSAC members attended the meetings. The BSAC received answers to some questions submitted before the meeting. ICES will answer some questions in writing. The answers to the questions put forward by the BSAC will be considered in relevant WGs. During the MIACO meeting, the ICES representative explained that the main reason for the lack of mixed fisheries advice in the Baltic had been the lack of experts participating in the working group. This year an expert from the Baltic took part, but there will be no mixed fisheries advice for the Baltic in 2024. MIACO also dealt with stakeholder engagement, update on rebuilding scenarios, wind power roadmap and transparency of request. The Commission informed that a dedicated meeting will probably be organised on transparency of requests with the ACs before signing of the Commission-ICES grant agreement in February.

A fisheries representative from Poland regretted that in the MIAC meeting not enough time had been to the questions asked by BSAC. He referred to the answer received in the beginning of January 2024 from one of the ACOM Vice-Chairs by the BSAC to the question referring to the TABACOD project⁹. He could not agree that *the growth parameters of Baltic cod derived from the TABACOD tagging program (TABACOD project) were considered to be an overestimate of the eastern Baltic cod growth*. He also questioned the ICES comment that *tagged fish most likely included individuals of western Baltic cod*. He underlined that according to the project report, 88% of the tagged cod had been assigned to the eastern cod stock.

⁹ <https://www.bsac.dk/ices-answers-to-bsac-questions-from-june-2023/>

A fisheries representative from Denmark shared the disappointment concerning the time allocated for the discussion. He underlined that the current format of the MIAC meeting does not allow for a proper discussion of complex questions. He proposed to ask ICES to delegate a representative who will be able to answer all outstanding questions put forward by the BSAC to the Joint WG meeting in June 2024. A WG setting will allow for a proper in-depth discussion of all the outstanding issues.

A fisheries representative from Poland recalled that some questions sent by the BSAC to ICES in June 2023 still remain without adequate answers.

The ExCom decided that relevant BSAC WGs will address the replies received from ICES, and will invite relevant scientists to have an in-depth discussion regarding the outstanding issues raised by the BSAC to ICES.

The Executive Secretary also informed that the AC secretariats met on 17th January 2024 in Copenhagen and online. Among other issues, the meeting exchanged views on the membership fees in different ACs. **The Executive Secretary** concluded that the BSAC fees are among the lowest. With reference to the question asked by one of the BSAC members at the last ExCom meeting on how the ACs assess the performance of the CFP, the secretariats of different ACs drew attention to their replies to the Commission's questionnaire on CFP, available on their websites.

The Executive Secretary shared information on the upcoming external meetings, in which the BSAC representatives are expected to take part¹⁰:

- **STECF Expert Working Group on technical measures** (same week as the ExCom) – the Commission invited 2 observers per AC. The BSAC Executive Secretary presented the BSAC position on technical measures, based on the BSAC reply to the Commission's questionnaire on technical measures.
- **FISH X webinar Modernising EU Fishing Vessels with Digital Tools**, 26th January – online.
- **Inter-AC meeting, Brussels, 6th February** – the Commission proposed to the ACs to gather questions to be addressed to the Commission. The BSAC provided the questions on the new control regulation that were submitted by 2 members.
- **HELCOM FISH M meetings: salmon** 30th-31st January // **eel** 13th February
- **Energy Transition Partnership Workshop, Brussels** 28th February
- **HELCOM Stakeholder meeting (PROTECT BALTIC)**, Helsinki, 29th February – annual meeting and PROTECT project.
- **HELCOM meeting WG FISH**, Vilnius 12-14th March – the BSAC will aim at providing the species list that require more data to the meeting.
- **Workshop on the new Control Regulation** (tentative) – The Commission informed that it is not possible to discuss the new regulation with individual ACs. The BSAC aimed at organising a joint workshop with the NSAC. In view of the fact that the Control Regulation will be discussed at the InterAC meeting, the workshop is unlikely to happen.
- **European Maritime Days, Svenborg, Denmark**, 30-31st May – The ACs will hold a 1 hour workshop to promote the work of Advisory Councils.

The ExCom took note.

¹⁰ [External Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council \(bsac.dk\)](https://www.bsac.dk/external-meetings)

7. Cooperation with HELCOM: Stakeholders input to the BSAP S40 “which species need more data and conservation measures?” – [BSAC report](#)

The Executive Secretary referred to the HELCOM WG FISH meeting, held on 1-3 November 2023 and the discussion on the implementation of actions of the BSAP. He pointed at BSAP action (S40)¹¹ aimed at identifying fish species for which there is a need for better data for identified purposes, such as setting threshold levels on which the BSAC representatives had declared support, in advance of IC WG FISH 3-2024, in the form of a list of proposed species with rationale included. The WGs could have longer discussion on this issue.

Jannica Haldin, HELCOM Deputy Executive Secretary at HELCOM presented¹² Action 40 of the BSAP aimed at identifying the fish species for which there is a need for better data. Action 40 is linked to Action B35¹³, aimed at operationalising a set of indicators for assessment of fish population health, including size and age distribution. She presented the criteria for achievement as well as rationale behind the actions. There are still gaps in recording and reporting of data for some fish species, including non-target fish species, in particular from small fishing vessels and recreational fishermen. Such data is, however, needed in order to facilitate identification and implementation of measures to achieve good environmental status. The action will identify for what purpose the data is to be collected (e.g. indicator evaluation but can also be other purposes), will define the type, amount and format of the needed data, identify a list of relevant species based on ecological relevance and potentially prioritise the species based on policy relevance. By 2025, dedicated programmes and projects will be used to facilitate recording and reporting of data for these species by 2025 to support the identification and implementation of measures to achieve good environmental status. Jannica Haldin referred to the cooperation with the BSAC on this issue. WG FISH 2-3023 acknowledged the need to consider the purpose and use of data to be collated, acknowledged the direct relevance of the input collected in the post-HOLAS 3 review for identifying a list of species and recommended organising a dedicated session during IC WG FISH 3-2024 with the view of coming to an agreement on the list of species at IC WG FISH 4-2024. IC WG FISH 2-3023 welcomed that input by the BSAC to support the implementation of the action can be provided in advance of IC WG FISH 3-2024, e.g., in the form of a list of proposed species with rationale included. The next steps will include a post-HOLAS 3 review process input and gap analysis.

The ExCom Chair thanked the HELCOM representative for the presentation and for recognising the role of the BSAC in the implementation of the BSAP.

A fisheries representative from Poland asked whether the goal of this action is to further restrict the trawl fishery in the Baltic. He asked whether HELCOM cooperates with any gear

¹¹ **Action S40:** Identify by 2024 fish species for which there is a need for better data for identified purposes, such as setting threshold levels. Utilize dedicated programmes and projects to facilitate recording and reporting of data for these species by 2025 to support the identification and implementation of measures to achieve good environmental status.

¹² https://www.bsac.dk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/BSAP-Action-S40_for-BSAC.pptx

¹³ **Action 35:** By 2024 operationalize a set of indicators for the assessment of fish population health, including size and age distribution, where applicable, and, by 2029, for any remaining relevant species.

experts in implementing the actions of the BSAC and which objectives from the 2017 BSAP had been reached.

The HELCOM representative replied that national representatives provide information on national work to HELCOM working groups and should be contacted for any feedback on HELCOM's work. The purpose of data collection in the framework of Action S40 is not to close any fishery, but to guarantee sustainable fishing operations. Fishery closures are not the measure preferred by HELCOM FISH WG. The FISH group considers various measures, also in terms of their effectiveness.

A representative of the Polish administration, and Polish representative at HELCOM, explained that HELCOM provides important input to the fish stock assessments, whereas fisheries measures had been proposed by BALTFISH, with the aim to protect harbour porpoise.

A representative of Polish processors asked about a methodology of data collection used by HELCOM and which species will be targeted.

The HELCOM representative replied that HELCOM will identify the species to support the identification and implementation of measures to achieve good environmental status after receiving input from stakeholders, including the BSAC. She pointed out that many identified data gaps refer to small-scale fisheries and non-target species. She underlined the lack of data from recreational fisheries and the fact that for some species the **recreational** catches tend to be more important **than** the **commercial** ones. There could be other gaps, that is why HELCOM had reached out to stakeholders. As concerns the targets of the BSAP set in 2007, she referred to the fact that HELCOM carried out an analysis of the implementation of the BSAP when elaborating the new BSAP in 2021. She mentioned successful outcomes such as the MPAs and red list of species. HELCOM carries out regular tracking of the implementation of the BSAP measures.

The representative of recreational anglers asked the HELCOM representative to give specific examples where and for which species the recreational catches are more important than commercial catches. He underlined that under the current fishing opportunities, anglers are not allowed to fish cod anymore. With reference to data collection from recreational fisheries, he asked whether HELCOM is interested in the sea phase or river phase, or all recreational catches. He underlined the lack of attendance of anglers in the relevant HELCOM meetings and asked HELCOM to put resources to guarantee a genuine representation of recreational fishers during its meetings on fisheries to achieve proper decision-making.

The HELCOM representative promised to come back with a more precise information and references on the impact of recreational fisheries. She underlined that HELCOM relies on the information and the quality of data submitted by its Contracting Parties.

A representative of small-scale fisheries referred to the new data collection requirements stemming from the new Control Regulation. He asked whether HELCOM acknowledges poor implementation of the landing obligation in the Baltic and high level of uncertainty and misreporting as concerns the catch composition in pelagic fisheries.

The HELCOM representative replied that HELCOM FISH WG has developed a plan for collecting data. The new requirements can be used to leverage data collection and quality, but it is up to the Member States to implement the Regulation.

The ExCom Chair thanked the HELCOM representative for attending the meeting and asked the members to send any questions and comments to the input of BSAC into the implementation of Action S40 in writing to the Secretariat.

The ExCom took note.

9. European Commission presentation on upcoming requests to ICES– [BSAC letter](#)

The ExCom Chair referred to the letter sent to DG Mare in reply to the DG Mare letter sent on 10th of November 2023¹⁴. The BSAC asked for more transparency and clarity in relation to the ongoing requests, in particular the Baltic herring stocks. The Commission sent a reply.

The representative of DG Mare stated that the Commission fully acknowledges the need for stakeholder involvement and is ready to cooperate. At the same time, the stakeholders need to understand the constraints of the process. The Commission needs to follow its proper timeline in order not to create bottlenecks. In its reply to the BSAC, the Commission highlighted the transparency of the advice process since the requests and the advice are available on the ICES Advice Activities Forum. The requests refer to the implementation of the legislation in place, namely the MAP and CFP. For some complex issues such as mixed fisheries, the Commission is obliged to discuss the requests with ICES and experts. Including stakeholders at an early stage of the request process would need to be balanced against the time requirements. The InterAC meetings held in the beginning of the year seem to be the right place to discuss these requests with the ACs. However, it will not always be possible to implement all the concerns. The Commission considers that socio-economic impacts are important but cannot deviate from the MAP and the implementation of the agreed regulation. The Commission is willing to have in-depth discussions at InterAC to establish some principles already this year for the advice to ICES and STECF and to hear other ACs views.

The ExCom Chair explained that the BSAC concerns refer to the process of formulating a request. He underlined that the InterAC is not always the best place for discussing specific issues as it does not allow all AC members to actively participate and gives particular ACs very little time for interventions. A prompt consultation of requests could be done through relevant working groups in the ACs.

A representative of the Polish administration shared the BSAC concerns related to the clarity of the Commission's requests to Commission's ICES and the rationale behind the letter sent to the Commission and agreed to the need for more transparency in preparing requests.

A fisheries representative from Poland underlined that the BSAC members want to take an active part in formulating the requests to ICES, as these requests result in an advice which has direct consequences on the fisheries management.

¹⁴ <https://www.bsac.dk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Reply-to-BSAC-on-Baltic-FO-2024-and-ICES-advice.pdf>

A representative of DG Mare stated that a dedicated InterAC meeting may be organised on the topic, to give sufficient time for discussions. She underlined that in some cases, the Commission must act fast to prepare a request for non-recurrent, special advice and therefore the consultations with the ACs may not be possible as it is extremely important to follow the timeline for requests set by ICES. Recurrent requests follow the general principles and are published on the ICES webpage.

A representative of small-scale fisheries referred to the Joint Statement on the request to ICES to conduct scientific analyses of the size and age structure of central Baltic Sea herring and Gulf of Bothnia herring and identify possible measures to address this issue agreed by several Member States at the AGRIFISH Council in October 2022. After 15 months the advice has still not been delivered. He also referred to the ICES stakeholder strategy and the fact that NGOs and representatives of the small-scale fleets had not been included in the work on this strategy.

A representative of DG Mare replied that ICES had informed the Commission that it is not in a position to deliver the advice on the size and age structure of central Baltic Sea herring and Gulf of Bothnia herring and therefore the Commission did not submit the request to ICES.

The EBM WG Chair pointed out that the requests should not be discussed in the InterAC meetings as the topics raised will not be relevant to all the ACs and the BSAC representatives to these meetings do not always have the mandate to discuss upcoming ICES requests.

A fisheries representative from Denmark drew attention to the fact that the Commission is restricted by its legal obligations towards the existing legislation, such as the CFP and therefore some important questions cannot be raised through the Commission. He would welcome a forum for discussion with the Commission not only on requests to ICES but also on scientific implications of the legal framework such as the MAP or the CFP.

A representative of DG Mare stated that in general the Commission does not engage scientific institutions such as ICES in discussions on fisheries management. She indicated that the InterAC is a place where the Commission can present its general principles and receive feedback from stakeholders. It can further be considered if it is the best forum to discuss scientific requests to ICES. But it is a place where questions related to the policy and management can be asked. She stated that a presentation referring to the work related to requests to ICES could be of interest to the ACs. Most requests are related to the implementation of the legal framework. She repeated that a realistic and pragmatic approach should be applied to the consultations. Stakeholders are welcome to raise questions related to specific advice.

A representative of small-scale fisheries underlined that InterAC meetings do not meet the expectations of stakeholders in terms of consultations. He drew attention to the effective work of regional fisheries committees in the United States as a good example to follow.

A fisheries representative from Poland commented, that if ICES is not in a position to deliver the advice, the Commission should seek advice in another scientific institution.

A representative of DG Mare stated that the Commission is ready to discuss how to improve the transparency of the scientific requests to ICES is the best possible setting.

The Executive Secretary drew attention to the Commission-ICES grant agreement¹⁵ signed every year and awarded for delivering ICES scientific advice, which contains a list of ICES advices to be delivered to the Commission.

The ExCom Chair proposed to continue the discussion on the transparency of requests in the framework of the WGs.

The ExCom took note.

11. Cooperation with the European Parliament: brief Presentation of [the report on the state of play in the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy and future perspectives](#), MEP Mato (by Secretariat)

The Executive Secretary presented the report on the state of play of the CFP and future perspectives, prepared by MEP Mato and approved by the Parliament plenary on 18th January 2024¹⁶. The report aims to provide political guidelines for any future review of the CFP. It poses some questions on the implementation of the current CFP, on whether the current CFP objectives and tools are still relevant to tackle current and future challenges and on whether certain aspects should be reformed, reviewed, adapted or improved. It focuses mainly on the conservation of fish stocks and fisheries management, also building on specific reports already adopted in recent years on issues such as maximum sustainable yield, landing obligations and quota allocation.

Among others, the report regretted that, since 2014, the implementation of the CFP has not given sufficient consideration to socio-economic aspects or the availability of food supply or the ecosystem-based approach, all of which are needed to ensure sustainable management of stocks. The report refers to the role of stakeholders and of Advisory Councils in building good policies.

The ExCom took note.

4. Relating to the Work Programme 2023-2024

Update on what's planned until 31st March 2024 (end of current year)

a. Demersal Working Group – next meeting 27th February 2024

In the absence of the Demersal WG Chair, **the Executive Secretary** presented an update on the work of the Demersal WG under the current work programme. The WG continued the work on selectivity to avoid unwanted catches of cod and the work related to the technical measures through the BSAC reply to the consultation of the Commission on the legal acts introducing a new mandatory trawl gear device in July and with BSAC reply to the Commission questionnaire on implementation of the Technical Measures Regulation in November. The Pelagic WG and Demersal WG will hold a joint meeting on species interactions in the end of February.

b. Pelagic Working Group – next meeting 28th February 2024

¹⁵ https://www.ices.dk/about-ICES/Documents/Cooperation%20agreements/EU/2023_Grant_DGMARE-ICES_web.pdf

¹⁶ Background information: <https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/summary.do?id=1765387&t=d&l=en>

The Pelagic WG Chair referred to the work related to the western Baltic herring management. The WG addressed this issue in October 2023. The Working Group decided to ask the BSAC ExCom to invite the Norwegian authorities to one of the BSAC meetings, in order to discuss the matter of the management of western herring and the possibility to establish a rebuilding plan. The WG addressed *Bothnian herring management* at its last meeting. In March 2023 the Commission had informed the BSAC that a special request for Bothnian Bay and central herring is being discussed. The Commission informed that the request had not been submitted due to the fact that ICES was not in a position to give advice. ICES informed that they are still scoping with experts and ACOM on how to approach this issue. The WG dealt with an update on stickleback and trial fisheries in the Baltic. Lauri Saks, University of Tartu, Estonia gave a short presentation on the progress and results obtained in trial fisheries for stickleback. The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) informed the BSAC Secretariat that they do not have any new results from trial fishery. Technical University of Denmark (DTU) informed that due to a combination of regulatory and financial issues the activities involving Danish experimental fisheries for stickleback have been low in 2023, so there is really nothing to report.

A *joint Demersal-Pelagic WG* on 27th February 2024 was proposed to look at species interaction between sprat, herring and cod, that will look at both the CFP Communication actions and at the species interactions.

c. Ecosystem Based Management Working Group – next meeting 8th March 2024

The EBM WG Chair informed that on 8th March 2024 the EBM WG will discuss the CFP communication and the species list for HELCOM. A presentation by ICES on the age distribution of commercial fish species is foreseen. He explained that BALTFISH could hopefully take part in the HELCOM FISH M meeting in February. He expressed hope that the work on eel could continue under the Joint Special Group.

Follow up workshop on seals and cormorants

The Executive Secretary referred to the BSAC workshop on predators in the Baltic Sea (cormorants and seals) held on 27th October 2023. He recalled that the objective of the workshop was to gain feedback on the legal rules and management measures related to seals and cormorants, on the status of populations, monitoring and interactions of seals and cormorants with fish stocks and fisheries. The workshop concluded with 4 presentations from the perspective of the BSAC members. Presentations, background documents and the report are available on the BSAC website¹⁷. In view of the massive interest, the ExCom Chair proposed to continue discussions on this very important issue and to share the questionnaire hereunder to prepare for a second workshop. The answers confirmed members' interest in organising another workshop, in the autumn 2024, in Copenhagen (hybrid meeting) to look at different proposition for a BSAC recommendation on the topic: it should consider impact on fish stocks and ecosystems, science and advise needs, and management at regional level.

¹⁷ <https://www.bsac.dk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/BSAC-workshop-predators-27October-REPORTfinal.pdf>

The ExCom Chair referred to the fact that ICES experts are working on models to include the impact of seals and cormorants on fish stocks in the advice¹⁸.

The EBM WG Chair referred to the upcoming Commission's consultation on the trade in seal products, expected to take place in the 2nd quarter 2024 in which the BSAC should participate. He underlined that the BSAC should aim at producing recommendations on realistic measures for seals and cormorants, even if views of the BSAC members on the way forward are diverse and consensus will be impossible to reach on several measures.

A fisheries representative from Denmark stated that the BSAC should certainly continue the discussions on the impact of seals and cormorants to propose possible solutions and mitigation methods to decrease the conflict with fisheries. He underlined that the discussions should include scientists as the impact of seals and cormorants should be taken into account in scientific advice. He stressed that the longer we wait the longer we have to live with superfluous advice.

A small scale fisheries representative from Germany underlined the urgency to take action with respect to seals and cormorants, especially under the current state of the Baltic fish stocks, before the Baltic fisheries ceases to exist. He presented the view that not all negative changes to the fish stock should be attributed to climate change.

The ExCom Chair proposed to the WG Chairs to discuss the formulae of the meeting during the upcoming meetings.

The ExCom took note of the updates presented by WG Chairs and the Secretary.

5. European Commission consultation [on proposed changed to the Multiannual Plan \(MAP\): finalisation of BSAC's recommendations](#)

The ExCom Chair referred to the On 6th December 2023, the European Commission tabled a proposal for a Regulation amending the [Multiannual Plan for the Baltic](#)¹⁹ (the MAP) and [opened a public consultation](#) on the proposal until 31st January 2024. The BSAC members were consulted.

The Executive Secretary presented the draft BSAC recommendation²⁰. The European Commission proposal focuses on the 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). The proposal explains that Article 4.6 of the Baltic MAP might be inconsistent with other Articles

¹⁸ ICES work on seals: *Work is ongoing on updating data on seal stomach content assessing the effect on cod biomass, ICES experts are working on models and collecting new evidence to further quantify the importance of cod in seal diet.*

ICES work on parasites in cod: *Parasite infestation of cod is also a driver of natural mortality. It is however unclear if it is a cause or an effect of poor condition of cod. Science is investigating these complex issues (eutrophication, climate change, O2 and seal abundance) and it is impossible to quantify the ecological effects.*

¹⁹ The proposal also covers the Multiannual Plans for the North Sea and the Western Waters.

²⁰ [Past Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council \(bsac.dk\)](#)

of the MAP in specific situations²¹. Therefore, the Commission proposes to delete Article 4.6 of the MAP.

He noted that the BSAC members had been consulted in two rounds. He recalled that the BSAC had provided feedback on the Baltic MAP through a reply to the Commission's questionnaire, submitted during its first assessment in year 2019. The BSAC presented its comments to the Baltic MAP in the BSAC White Paper, published in 2022, and discussed it in a dedicated workshop held by the BSAC on 17th May 2023.

He underlined that the BSAC had not been formally consulted on this proposal before the opening of the public consultation and no formal discussions within the BSAC had previously taken place, despite the inference of such discussions under the heading "stakeholder consultations" in the proposal. In its reply to the consultation, the BSAC complains about a very limited consultation time.

He referred to the draft recommendations: The BSAC recommends to delete Article 4.6 of the MAP in line with the European Commission's proposal. This will address the inconsistency in the legal framework and clarify the guidelines for setting fishing opportunities. The proposed deletion is clearly needed to move discussions away from legal quarrels and instead focus on obtaining healthy fish stocks and environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable fishing opportunities. Some small-scale fisheries representatives²² recognise the issues with the 5% rule but are disappointed by the Commission proposal that does not resolve the question of what to do once stocks are under $MSY B_{trigger}$ and B_{lim} . They find the proposal to be confusing further the interpretation of the Baltic MAP which risks worsening the health of stock biomass. They see clear issues with the 95% rule and the scientific calculations upon which it is based on and note that ICES does not use B_{MSY} as the baseline for assessing which level of fishing mortality corresponds with MSY. The key is to ensure that stock biomass is at healthy levels (above B_{MSY}). Finally, they remark that the proposal does nothing to ensure that the socioeconomic possibilities for the fishery are improved.

A BSAC minority group²³ strongly opposes the European Commission proposal. They point out that the deletion of the 5% rule will remove the safeguard when targeted fishery must be stopped and therefore worsen the state of the stock. This is because the safeguards and remedial measures set out in Article 5 are insufficient to prevent fish stocks from collapsing to critical levels. Furthermore, they highlight that the proposal is inconsistent with the objectives of the CFP²⁴ and create further confusion in relation to Article 5 as to "when"

²¹ The application of Article 4.6 may result in a situation that would be inconsistent with the other rules of the MAPs governing the fixing of fishing opportunities and have potentially severe socioeconomic implications. On the one hand, the 5% rule may mean that fishing opportunities cannot be set and the targeted fishery must be suspended. On the other hand, the safeguard provisions in the MAPs require the adoption of remedial measures to bring the stock above $B_{trigger}$, based on a case-by-case assessment on the appropriateness for choosing such measure, in accordance with the criteria set out in the MAPs. Moreover, the MAPs refer to the possibility, and not the obligation, to suspend the targeted fishery.

²² LIFE

²³ WWF, CCB, FANC, FISH, EAA, SSNC, BalticWaters and DAFV

²⁴ Art. 9(1) states that MAPs "shall contain conservation measures to restore and maintain fish stocks above levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield in accordance with Article 2(2)". Art. 10(1 g) states that MAPs shall

and “what” appropriate “remedial measures” must be required. Finally, they underline that clear and legally binding safeguards, including an obligation to a temporary stop of targeted fishery, are needed. In their view, Article 5 in its current form does not provide explicit details on what is an appropriate point to adopt a fishery closure.

In conclusion, the BSAC expresses the opinion that the inconsistencies in the MAP, identified in the Commission’s proposal to delete Article 4.6, add themselves to the issues already identified and further support the BSAC recommendation to revise the MAP in order for it to allow for a more adaptive management in the following years. The BSAC welcomes the upcoming evaluation of the MAP planned by the European Commission in 2024 and stands ready for further discuss this issue.

A representative of DG Mare explained that in the proposal to delete the 5% rule in the MAPs, made by the Commission on 6th December 2023, the Commission refers to the fact that the 5% rule had been discussed with stakeholders, notably the BSAC and BALTFISH. Consultations are carried out before drafting a formal proposal and this was not the case. The stakeholders had been asked to provide feedback to the proposal. The proposal was submitted to the Council and the European Parliament. He clarified that the Commission is not planning to evaluate the MAP. The Baltic MAP requires that the Commission reports to the European Parliament and Council on the results and impacts of the plan every five years. The next report is due in mid-June 2024 and the BSAC will be asked to provide feedback through a questionnaire.

He explained the co-legislative procedure used to adopt the proposal²⁵. The proposal is now in the hands of the PECH Committee. Due to the fact that there are divergent views on the proposal among the MEPs and the upcoming elections to the European Parliament, the inter-institutional discussions between the Council and the European Parliament will probably not start before September. The proposal will therefore most probably not be adopted before the next AGRIFISH Council fixing the fishing opportunities in the Baltic.

Fisheries representative from Poland and Denmark expressed their deep disappointment at the strong opposition to the proposal to delete Article 4.6. of some BSAC members. They expressed the opinion that the position of these organisations is profoundly wrong and puts in doubt their positive approach to fisheries.

A representative of the Polish administration informed that Poland supports the proposal to delete Article 4.6 from the Baltic MAP.

A representative of the Danish administration similarly expressed support for the proposal.

The ExCom Secretary informed that the Secretariat will make some minor amendments to the text²⁶ of the reply.

include “safeguards to ensure that quantifiable targets are met, as well as remedial action, where needed, including for situations where the deteriorating quality of data or non-availability put the sustainability of the stock at risk”.

²⁵ Co-legislative procedure: the European Commission submits a proposal. The European Parliament (EP) and Council of Ministers (Council) will either approve or amend the proposal. If EP and Council cannot reach an agreement on the proposed amendments both can amend the proposal a second time. If they still cannot reach an agreement they enter negotiations. After these are concluded both institutions can either vote in favour or against.
[Ordinary legislative procedure \(COD\) - EU monitor](#)

²⁶ Amendments to the BSAC reply: replace *evaluation* by *report*

The ExCom adopted the BSAC reply to the Commission on the proposed changes to the Baltic MAP with some amendments. The reply will be sent to DG Mare on 31st January 2024.

6. Cooperation with BALTFISH

The representative of the Polish BALTFISH Presidency gave an update on the work programme. He informed that the joint BALTFISH technical group met on 9th January and briefly discussed eel. The Member States had presented their views, but no decision was taken with respect to the derogation for closed periods. The next meeting focused on eel will take place at the end of January. He informed that any next steps in relation to the salmon management plan depend on the draft proposal from Finland.

Harbour porpoise

Another representative of the Polish BALTFISH Presidency informed that the meeting on 10th January 2024 included presentations of new scientific studies and discussed the possible next steps with regard to measures to protect harbour porpoise in the Baltic. The discussion focused on the measures that could be applied to the declining harbour porpoise population in the western part of the Baltic. Another meeting is planned in March to decide on the way forward.

In reply to a question asked by a fisheries representative from Poland on the grounds for concluding that this population is declining and there is a need for additional protection measures, the representative of the Polish Presidency replied that according to the results of the monitoring and research carried out in recent years, the harbour porpoise population numbers in the western part of the Baltic indicate a decrease. She explained that there are two distinct harbour porpoise subpopulations in the Baltic: one in the Baltic proper (estimated number of individuals 400) and another one in the western part of the Baltic (Belt Sea). She referred to the fact that scientists have good reasons to say why this subpopulation is declining²⁷. The fishing effort had been significantly reduced, therefore there are other factors at play. She stated that protection measures for harbour porpoise in the Baltic proper had already been implemented.

A small-scale fisheries representative from Germany confirmed that there are other reasons for the decline of the harbour porpoise in western part of the Baltic than fisheries since the fishing effort during the COVID pandemic had been close to zero.

A fisheries representative from Denmark referred to the fact that harbour porpoise subpopulation in the western Baltic had been assumed to be growing for long time, and now a small decrease had been estimated during recent surveys. He expressed hope that BALTFISH can use an ecosystem approach towards the protection of harbour porpoise, and not base the measures on the need to protect one element of the ecosystem.

Eel

The representative of the Polish BALTFISH Presidency informed that BALTFISH will meet to further discuss eel management in the end of January. He referred to the derogation laid down in Article 13 (4) of the Council Regulation 2024/257, adopted on 10th

²⁷ <https://www.ascobans.org/en/document/scans-iv-1> the latest, preliminary results of monitoring of the western subpopulation of harbour porpoise, SCANS IV (September 2023)

January 2024²⁸. The dates for additional closure of eel fishery must be agreed by all Member States²⁹.

A fisheries representative from Denmark stated that the Danish fishers support the possibility to have a derogation allowing eel fishing. He underlined that a derogation for a small fishery means that some business can stay viable. However, in the Baltic, unlike the North Sea, all Member States must agree on the dates of the additional closure required in the derogation. He pointed out that not applying the derogation would mean that the last remaining eel fishers in Denmark will not be able to work anymore. In consequence, if there is no eel fishery, the fishers will cease all monitoring activities and the last source of data will disappear.

A representative of Polish processors supported the position of the Danish fishers on the derogation allowing fishing for eel. He underlined that fishing should not be banned as fishers help to monitor the stock and help in restocking activities. He referred to the impact of seals on Baltic fish stocks and asked BALTFISH to discuss possible management measures to be implemented in the Baltic.

The representative of the Polish BALTFISH Presidency asked the BSAC members to send the proposals for the additional closure for eel, as laid down in the derogation³⁰ by 29th January. The Polish Presidency will pass these proposals to the BALTFISH Member States for consideration.

A representative of DG Mare referred to the fact that the 6-month closure period must cover the main migration period, including the migration peaks.

A small-scale fisheries representative from Germany underlined that non-fishery-related sources of mortality of eel, in the order of their influence on the eel stock, should be dealt with at first.

Landing obligation compliance report

The representative of European Fisheries Control Agency informed that the EFCA draft report on the evaluation of the compliance with the landing obligation (LO) in the Baltic for 2019-2021 is now ready. The draft report will be adopted by the BALTFISH HLG. He asked the BALTFISH Presidency to consider the way forward with the report.

²⁸ [Council Regulation \(EU\) 2024/257 of 10 January 2024 fixing for 2024, 2025 and 2026 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks, applicable in Union waters and, for Union fishing vessels, in certain non-Union waters, and amending Regulation \(EU\) 2023/194 \(europa.eu\)](#) By way of derogation from paragraph 3, point (d), for European eel of an overall length of 12 cm or more, the Member States concerned may allow fishing activities for up to a total of 30 consecutive or non-consecutive days, which shall apply to all fishers concerned in the relevant fishing area, during the main migration period. In that case, the Member States concerned shall determine an additional closure of an equivalent period of time during the main migration period or, subsidiarily, just before or after it. In case a Member State allows fishing for non-consecutive days, the fishing gear shall be taken out of the water between any period of non-consecutive days.

²⁹ in ICES subarea 3 (Baltic Sea and Skagerrak-Kattegat) and for silver eel, closure periods should be agreed by all the Member States concerned (i.e. Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden), so as to ensure an effective protection of silver eel on its migration from the Baltic Sea into the North Sea [2023-12-10-non-paper-updates-2024-fishing-opportunities-regulation-com-587-eel_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

³⁰ The proposals should be sent by 29th January to Pl.Baltfish@minrol.gov.pl

The representative of the Polish BALTFISH Presidency stated that the Presidency will ask the BALTFISH Control Expert Group to meet as soon as possible to decide on the next steps with the draft report.

The ExCom Chair proposed to hold a joint EFCA – BALTFISH - BSAC workshop to discuss the results of the evaluation.

The EFCA representative underlined that a joint EFCA – BALTFISH - BSAC workshop can only take place after the adoption of the report by BALTFISH HLG.

A small-scale fisheries representative appreciated the fact that the LO evaluation report will soon be presented to the public and underlined that IUU fishing in the Baltic is still a substantial problem and should be included in the agenda of the next BALTFISH Presidency.

The ExCom agreed to hold a joint EFCA – BALTFISH - BSAC workshop following the meeting of the Control Expert Group and BALTFISH HLG, to discuss the results of the evaluation.

8. European Commission presentation on size-species selectivity: preparing Demersal and Pelagic WG

The Executive Secretary informed that the Commission had not been able to make the presentation on size-species selectivity. He stated that such presentation could take place at another BSAC meeting.

The Executive Secretary referred to the STECF expert working group (EWG 23-15), held on 22nd – 26th January 2024, on the implementation of the Technical Measures Regulation, to which 2 representatives of each AC had been invited to attend. The Executive Secretary presented the BSAC work on technical measures.

A fisheries representative from Denmark regretted that the representatives from Advisory Councils had not been allowed to follow the entire meeting. In his view, this fact questions the balanced approach to stakeholders' involvement advocated by the Commission.

12. AOB and closing of the meeting by the ExCom Chair

The ExCom Chair thanked all participants for good discussions.

Action items

Theme	Action
Work programme for 24-25	The draft WP was accepted by ExCom with 2 minor wording amendments (MAP report, Salmon management).
Draft budget for 24-25	The draft budget was accepted. Members will be reminded on missing payments.
Revision of the Rules of Procedure	The ExCom agreed to recommend the GA to hold an extraordinary meeting in a view of approving the new Rules of Procedures. This could take place in late March or early April 2024, online. The ExCom agreed to give a new mandate to the FG dedicated to examining ways to define indicators regarding the share of small scale.

Follow-up on MIAC MIACO	The WG were to address the responses received from ICES before MIAC-MIACO meetings, in particular trying to have a discussion with the relevant scientists regarding inclusion of the TABACOD project results.
Cooperation with HELCOM S40	Members were to send their views on the questions from the HELCOM FISH WG. These views will be discussed at the pelagic and demersal WG in February with the aim to send a BSAC recommendation in time for the next HELCOM FISH meeting.
European Commission requests to ICES	The Commission informed about the idea of holding an Inter-AC meeting specifically to discuss requests to ICES and STECF and the elaboration process.
Pelagic-demersal WG	Pelagic WG: will make contact with NO authorities for WBSS Herring. Demersal WG: discuss seal-cormorants workshop future setting. Both WG: work on species interactions, prepare answer to HELCOM S40, CFP Communication actions
EBM WG	Will discuss CFP Communication actions, answer to HELCOM S40, eel, ICES advices on size-age structure of stocks.
Seal-cormorants workshop	To take place in 2024, capitalizing on the COM consultation on the trade in seal product scheduled for 2 nd quarter of 2024.
Consultation on the MAP Change in article 4.6	BSAC response was agreed with 2 minor editorial changes (feedback, report on the implementation).
Cooperation with BALTFISH	BALTFISH Presidency asked if BSAC members could send in their own views regarding the best time for the eel closures.
Discussion with the Commission on selectivity	Was postponed to the next appropriate meeting.

Additional references for the report:

- **Links to the press releases on MATO report:** *You can find a summary of the report here (before the vote, but the text as adopted in plenary remains basically the same):* <https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/summary.do?id=1765387&t=d&l=en>
Press release (before the vote, but the text as adopted in plenary remains basically the same): <https://www.eppgroup.eu/newsroom/make-europe-s-fisheries-fit-for-the-future>
Gabriel Mato's intervention in the European Parliament Plenary (only available in Spanish for the moment): Part 1: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-9-2024-01-18-INT-4-053-0000_ES.html
Part 2: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-9-2024-01-18-INT-4-081-0000_ES.html

You can watch the plenary debate here:

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/vod.html?mode=chapter&vodLanguage=PT&internalEPId=1705568603980&providerMeetingId=d39e837e-3d11-47ed-5bd0-08dc11b56bb8#>



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