

## **BSAC General Assembly**

**15<sup>th</sup> May 2024 9:00-16:00 CEST**

**Axelborg, Axeltorv 3, 1609 Copenhagen V, Denmark, in person only**

### **Report**

#### **1. Welcome by the Chair of the General Assembly Ingemar Berglund Apologies, quorum, AOB, and adoption of the agenda**

**The Chair of the General Assembly** welcomed all participants. He underlined that the past year had been very productive for the BSAC and he was satisfied with results achieved. He informed that the agenda includes the elections of the ExCom Chair, ExCom members and the General Assembly Chair. He reminded everyone that the BSAC is now operating under the revised Rules of Procedure.

There was a quorum in the meeting. The agenda was adopted without changes. The participants' list<sup>1</sup> is on the website.

#### **2. Presentation of Annual BSAC report (by the BSAC ExCom Chair) and financial statement for 2023-2024 (by the Executive Secretary)**

**The ExCom Chair** was given the floor to present the annual BSAC Report. He underlined that the 18<sup>th</sup> year of operation of the BSAC had been a very productive year. The BSAC held 8 Working Group meetings, 1 General Assembly, 4 ExCom meetings, 2 Workshops on the Baltic Multiannual Plan and on predators in the Baltic, 1 Webinar on climate change and several Focus Groups on the Rules of Procedure, the Technical Measures Regulation and the Recommendations on Energy Transition.

A record number of 25 recommendations were addressed to the Commission, Member States and BALTFISH, but also to STECF and HELCOM. In terms of horizontal issues, the BSAC produced recommendations on fishing opportunities for 2024 and the recommendations on Energy Transition.

In terms of internal functioning, the BSAC worked on the revision of its Rules of Procedure to align them with the latest Commission Regulation and to make a general review of the existing rules. The new Rules of Procedures were adopted in April 2024.

BSAC continued its cooperation with other organisations. The BSAC has maintained close cooperation with the BALTFISH Lithuanian and Polish Presidencies. The BSAC has contributed to the BALTFISH Joint Recommendations regarding fisheries conservation measures in five marine protected areas in the Baltic Sea, as well as BALTFISH Joint Recommendation on a salmon derogation from the landing obligation. The BSAC looks forward to maintaining good cooperation with the upcoming German BALTFISH Presidency. The BSAC has also maintained good cooperation with EFCA.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.bsac.dk/past-meetings/?meeting\\_search=general+assembly+in+person&meeting\\_year=2024&loc=](https://www.bsac.dk/past-meetings/?meeting_search=general+assembly+in+person&meeting_year=2024&loc=)

The BSAC ExCom Vice-Chair took part in the EFCA Advisory Board meetings on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023 and 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The BSAC ExCom held an ExCom in Vigo in June 2023. The Executive Secretary attended the launch of the EFCA patrol vessel in the port of Gdynia. The BSAC also continued to be involved in the HELCOM FISH Group and hosted many scientists during its meetings. In the past year, the BSAC representatives followed 52 external meetings, in person and online, to keep the 41 General Assembly members informed and promote BSAC positions and recommendations.

**The Executive Secretary** referred to the financial statement for 2023-24. The BSAC spent 82% of the eligible funding. The main underspending of over 30% occurred in the category: participation in meetings. In the new system, the unspent money will not be claimed back by the Commission. The expenditures had been approved by the auditor and after adoption by ExCom and General Assembly will be sent to the Commission in the end of May.

With reference to the question raised by a representative of the OIG on the serious overspending in the category: reimbursement of travel expenses of the ExCom Chair, **the Executive Secretary** explained that this overspending had been due to increased travels by the ExCom Chair and was covered by underspent money from members travelling less to BSAC meetings.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** proposed to use the money allocated to participation in meetings to increase the engagement of BSAC members in external meetings, and to reduce the centralisation of expenditures around the secretariat.

**A representative of anglers** underlined that the information on the relevant external meetings should be communicated to the BSAC members. In attending external meetings, the BSAC representative shall solely express the adopted opinions of the BSAC and not the views of its organisation.

**The Executive Secretary** explained that it is up to the Management Team to decide who will represent the BSAC in external meetings. If participation is limited, the priority is given to the Chairs.

**The ExCom Chair** stated that the BSAC representatives to external meetings present official positions, usually approved by the ExCom. He invited the members to inform the Secretariat if they are interested in representing the BSAC in a particular meeting.

**A fisheries representative from Poland** stated that the BSAC should be represented in external meetings by BSAC members who also have the expertise to take part in discussions.

**A representative of the OIG** underlined that in view of developments occurring in the Baltic, such as offshore wind farms, it would be beneficial for the BSAC to follow and be represented in relevant meetings.

**The General Assembly** adopted the BSAC annual report and financial statement for 2023-24.

3. **Reports from the working groups for the year 2023 - 2024 (by the Working Group Chairs)**
  - **Demersal Working Group, Chair Teija Aho**

The Working Group 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 2023 and the BSAC reply to the Commission questionnaire on implementation of the Technical Measures Regulation in November 2023. She informed that the BSAC is planning to hold another workshop on predators in the autumn. The WG also focused on the fishing opportunities, as well as the discussion of the Commission's Package (Action Plan), with a view to producing a BSAC recommendations. In February 2024, the Demersal WG, together with the Pelagic WG, hosted a special session on species interactions.

- **Pelagic Working Group, Chair Lise Laustsen**

The Pelagic Working Group continued discussing western herring during its meeting in September 2023, in the context of the reply from the Commission, received in July 2023. In its letter sent in January 2023, the BSAC recommended to use the EU Multiannual Plan (MAP) for the Baltic Sea to act as a rebuilding plan and to request ICES to put the EU MAP advice as its headline advice for 2024. In their reply, the Commission stated that ICES is an independent international organisation, and it can only base its advice on a management plan on condition that all parties concerned agree. This is not the case for this stock as there is one party that does not agree, in this case Norway. Therefore, ICES had to base its advice on the ICES advice framework. The WG discussed Bothnian herring during its meeting in September 2023 in the context of the foreseen Commission's request to ICES asking for additional research from ICES on central herring and Bothnian herring. An update on trial fisheries for stickleback was provided by an Estonian scientist during the Pelagic Working Group meeting in September 2023. The Pelagic WG and Demersal Working Groups held a joint meeting on species interactions in the end of February 2024. Scientific presentations were followed by Q&A sessions.

- **Ecosystem Based Management Working Group, Chair Nils Höglund,**

The EBM Working Group continued to work on offshore wind farms, initiated in October 2022. After its meeting in October 2023, the WG drafted a letter to the Commission as a follow-up on BSAC recommendations concerning the development of offshore windfarms, welcoming the non-recurrent request from the Commission to ICES on OWF and putting emphasis on the need to further investigate the cumulated effects of multiple offshore wind farms.

Following a discussion of the action referring to the eel, held in the framework of the EBM Working Group in October 2023, the BSAC decided to send a letter to the Commission requesting to include eel on the agenda of the Joint Special Group, as an important topic to be discussed by both fisheries and environmental ministries and stakeholders, and asking to publicly share the draft update of the Eel Management Plan guidance document. The Member States were also addressed to put stronger focus and a faster pace in implementing national eel management plans, in particular concerning the upstream measures, to improve the habitats and ensure river connectivity, for eel and other migratory species. The WG prepared recommendations on the Commission's package (Marine Action Plan + CFP Communication).

**A fisheries representative from Poland** drew attention to the fact that the recommendations prepared by the BSAC should be assessed not in terms of numbers, but their effectiveness. He underlined the expertise of the BSAC members to advise the

decision-makers. Therefore, as a matter of urgency, he called for the BSAC recommendations to have more impact at the EU level, to put the decisions taken by DG Mare, especially with regard to the technical measures, on the right track. He expressed the opinion that the BSAC should engage more with the members of the European Parliament to promote the BSAC advice.

**The ExCom Chair** stated that the representation of the BSAC at meetings is often restricted by a rigid formula imposed by the Commission, allowing one representative to take the floor for 2-3 minutes, to present a concise position. The BSAC had two meetings with the Commissioner before relevant Council meetings, to make the BSAC's voice more audible. He underlined that this will be a priority for the BSAC also in the future. In this context, he stated that despite an upward trend in the number of participants to working group meetings, too few members engage in the exchange of views. As working groups are the core bodies to develop the recommendations, active participation of members is crucial. He underlined that the BSAC also engages with the MEPs, unfortunately only 3 MEPS in the PECH Committee come from the Baltic countries. Therefore, during the current election campaign, the BSAC members should ask their national candidates to the European Parliament to join the PECH Committee, if elected.

**A representative of the OIG** was of the opinion that the BSAC should the strengthen coordination with other Advisory Councils to find solutions to common problems.

**The Executive Secretary** stated that the BSAC is working closely with other Advisory Councils. He also referred to the InterAC meeting, held twice a year and meetings between DG MARE and the AC Secretariats. The BSAC Secretariat also makes efforts to give input to joint recommendations drafted by the ACs.

**The EBM WG Chair** emphasised that very often efforts to produce joint recommendations by several ACs water down the message delivered to the Commission. In his view, the BSAC should focus on its own priorities and on seeking consensus in its advice.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** recalled that during the MIACO meeting in January 2024, an ICES representative agreed with the need to continue a dialogue with stakeholders on fisheries science to meet management needs, in particular on mixed fisheries, Bothnian herring, salmon and eel. He proposed to establish a science Working Group in the BSAC. He was supported by **a fisheries representative from Denmark**.

**Some fisheries representatives** agreed with the need to bring more BSAC members into the discussions. They suggested that in-person meetings could help in making people more active.

**A representative of fish processors from Poland** underlined that learning the scientific methodology scientific approach is important when discussing about resources. It would also help to discuss often contradictory scientific information and advice.

**The ExCom Chair** recalled that the BSAC had in the past discussed the possibility of organising a science workshop and the budget for such meeting is available.

**The Pelagic WG Chair** also highlighted that the last Joint WG held in February<sup>2</sup> featured interesting scientific presentations and discussions on the species interactions and invited members to refer back to those.

**The General Assembly** took note. **The General Assembly** approved the reports presented by the Working Group Chairs.

#### 4. Presentation of membership changes

**The Executive Secretary** presented the recent changes in the membership. The number of BSAC General Assembly members went down from 41 to 38. 4 members discontinued their membership, mainly due to financial issues, and one organisation applied to become member. He welcomed the Polish Association of Fish Processors onboard the BSAC.

**The representatives of the Polish Association of Fish Processors** gave a brief presentation. They 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<sup>3</sup>. They underlined their interest in discussing social consequences of the closure of cod fishery in the Baltic and decrease in herring and sprat TACs, as well as issues related to the impact of the new Control Regulation on fisheries and cooperation with scientific institutions. A written input had been sent by email and is inserted as footnote<sup>4</sup>.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** recalled that BSAC members have to operate in the context of the legal texts and first of all to achieve the objectives of the CFP.

#### 5. Presentation of Work Programme 2024 – 2025 (BSAC ExCom Chair)

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.bsac.dk/past-meetings/?meeting\\_search=BSAC+Joint+Demersal+Pelagic+Working+Group&meeting\\_year=2024&loc=](https://www.bsac.dk/past-meetings/?meeting_search=BSAC+Joint+Demersal+Pelagic+Working+Group&meeting_year=2024&loc=)

<sup>3</sup> The PAFP already had a presentation during the Executive Committee meeting in January 2024 and during the Extraordinary General Assembly in April 2024.

<sup>4</sup> *The Polish Association of Fish Processors signals the following items for future reference at appropriate time. The issues shall include:*

- Seal, porpoise, cormorant
- Requesting BSAC to prepare an analysis and opinion on the current condition of the EU sector of processing and trading of Baltic raw materials, especially in a situation without access to its own raw material outside the Baltic Sea
- Analysis of the socio-economic impact of the current reduction in sprat and herring catches
- Analysis of the socio-economic consequences of closing the targeted cod fishery
- Analysis of the socio-economic impact on trade and processing following the closure of the targeted fishery for central herring
- Analysis of the socio-economic effects of increasing the quota of Bothnian herring
- The effects of introducing derogation requirements to the MOT control regulation on the proportion of landings for consumption and for feed and oil by fleets - PL, LT, LV EST



## **Presentation of draft estimated operating budget 2024 - 2025, and appointment of certified auditor to audit BSAC annual accounts (Executive Secretary)<sup>5</sup>**

**The ExCom Chair** presented the Work Programme for 2024-2025. The work programme follows the same approach as in previous years, which includes taking account of recommendations of the external evaluation of the BSAC, and the comments of the members received during the year. He pointed out that the work programme contains the guidelines for the work of the BSAC in line with relevant Regulation. It also sets out the work priorities, among others fishing opportunities, fisheries management, ecosystem approach, species interactions and environmental policies, climate change and fisheries, fisheries and food security, recreational fisheries, socio-economic dimension of the CFP, regionalisation, cooperation, and communication. The work programme had been informally approved by the Commission and endorsed by the ExCom in January. In 2024-25, the BSAC plans to prepare 11 recommendations, to hold 2 workshops, 1 webinar and a stable number of internal meetings. A science workshop will hopefully also take place [note that this is not in the Work Programme].

**The Executive Secretary** presented the draft estimated operating budget for 2024-2025, elaborated to match the planned work programme. He indicated that the proposed budget is higher than in the previous year (applied 2% inflator to the Commission contribution leading to an increase of about 1,77% compared to last year). It is the second budget under the new system of a lumpsum where the grant allocated from one year to another is fixed but where there is more flexibility to move money around in the budget as long as the work programme is followed, to fit the ongoing changes. The budget also includes a few changes in the distribution of the budget between lines, to bring the budget closer to the expenses. These changes would not affect the total BSAC budget. The changes cover an increase in the ExCom Chair travel budget, a decrease in the allocation for meeting participation, an increase in the meeting expenses, due to hybrid settings and increasing costs of catering. The Commission had informally endorsed the work programme and the draft budget for 2024-2025.

**The ExCom Chair** underlined that some savings had been possible following the change in the currency of the BSAC bank account, from Danish Krone to EUR. He thanked the Executive Secretary for the work done with respect to administrative issues.

**The General Assembly** approved the Work Programme 2024-2025 and the estimated operating budget 2024 – 2025.

**The General Assembly** confirmed that the BSAC would continue with the same auditor, now working for a new company: RSM Danmark.

## **6. Appointment of a new Executive Committee 2024-2027** *Presentation of Executive Committee Members applicants*

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<sup>5</sup> The Secretariat recommends continuing with the same auditor in a new company: RSM Danmark, Ved Vesterport 6, 5. sal, 1612 København V

**The General Assembly Chair** gave a brief introduction and informed that the presentation of applicants had been sent to the BSAC members. He recalled that according to the Rules of Procedure, the Executive Committee members must behave in the best interests of the BSAC and are accountable to the General Assembly. He informed that, according to the Rules of Procedure, the General Assembly appoints the Executive Committee members put forward by the fisheries sector organisations and other interest groups for their respective parts of the Committee's 30 seats. The General Assembly appoints every 3 years the Executive Committee anew when it chooses a new Chair of the Executive Committee.

This year, the General Assembly members received a document detailing all member applications to the ExCom. 18 seats are reserved for the Fisheries Group and 12 seats are reserved for the Other Interests Group. There are 3 vacant seats in the OIG.

**A fisheries representative from Denmark** informed that the Fishermen's Association of Bornholm and Christiansø was terminating and will leave the BSAC in 2025, thus leaving one vacant seat in the fisheries group.

**A small-scale fisheries representative** recalled Article 4.4. of the Commission Delegated Regulation 2022/204, allowing to expand the ExCom to 30 seats<sup>6</sup> to accommodate organisations of small-scale fishers.

**Two fisheries representatives** pointed out that the BSAC had already decided to expand its ExCom to 30 and some of these seats had been taken by small-scale representatives. It is up to the respective groups to decide who will take the vacant seats in the fisheries group and OIG.

**The General Assembly Chair** reminded the members that according to the new mandate, the Focus Group on the Rules of Procedure is to examine how to define the indicators to attribute the "share" of small-scale fleets in the Member States.

**The General Assembly** was invited to appoint the Executive Committee members put forward by the fisheries sector. **The General Assembly** was invited to appoint the Executive Committee members put forward by the Other Interests Group and to note that further 3 spots remain available should other OIG organisations want to join the Executive Committee.

**The General Assembly** elected the ExCom members<sup>7</sup>.

## 7. Appointment of the Executive Committee Chair and Vice Chair 2024-2027

**The General Assembly Chair** reminded the meeting that according to the Rules of Procedure, the Chair of the Executive Committee is appointed by consensus for a term of three years by members of the General Assembly. (and may be appointed for up to 3 terms of 3 years). The Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee is appointed by members of the

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<sup>6</sup> Article 4.4 of [COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION \(EU\) 2022/204](#): After consultation of the Commission, the general assembly may decide to appoint an executive committee of up to 30 members to ensure appropriate representation of small scale fleets.

<sup>7</sup> The list of BSAC ExCom members is on the website [Our Members - Baltic Sea Advisory Council \(bsac.dk\)](#)

Executive Committee for a term of three years from another member category than the one of the Chair of the Executive Committee. The Vice-Chair is a member of the Executive Committee and has a vote. The current incumbents Jarek Zielinski and Glenn Douglas had expressed the will to continue.

**Glenn Douglas** underlined that that it was an honour to be the BSAC ExCom Vice-Chair. The work in the BSAC is only possible with the input from BSAC members. Therefore, the BSAC continues to implement concrete steps for a wide and broader representation. Meetings in hybrid form have allowed for many more participants to take part in meetings while interpretation and per diem for small scale fishers also guaranteed incentives to follow these meetings. Meetings have also been organised in different locations to promote engagement of members (around the Baltic) and policy makers (in the capitals of the BALTFISH Presidency and in Brussels, the location of DG MARE, in Vigo where EFCA is located). In practice, this has translated into very comprehensive recommendations reflecting the various views of the membership, but also a record number of recommendations published in 2023. He stated that next year the BSAC will continue to ensure that the BSAC recommendations bring added value to decision makers. He appealed to the OIG for more engagement in this unique forum.

**Jarek Zieliński** stated that it was an honour to lead the BSAC ExCom. In his work so far, he had looked to improve the dialogue and enforcement of BSAC recommendations by the Commission. He had followed the recommendations of the external evaluation conducted in 2021, by further improving cooperation among the BSAC members and reinforcing collaboration with the Commission, the European Parliament, BALTFISH and other organisations. He thanked the Lithuanian BALTFISH Presidency and the Polish BALTFISH Presidency for good cooperation. He thanked everyone for good cooperation in the last 2 years.

**The General Assembly** appointed by consensus Jarek Zieliński as ExCom Chair and Glenn Douglas as Vice Chair for the next 3 years.

## 8. Appointment of the General Assembly Chair and Vice Chair 2024-2027

**Ingemar Berglund, the outgoing General Assembly Chair** informed that Christian Tsangarides, the current General Assembly Vice Chair has expressed his interest in continuing as vice-chair. **Ingemar Berglund** himself was stepping down.

**A fisheries representative from Poland<sup>8</sup>** presented the nomination of Vesa Karttunen from the Federation of Finnish Fisheries Associations to the post of General Assembly Chair [the nomination had also been sent by writing a few days before to the secretariat and transferred to the members]. He insisted that the Chair should continue to be called the Honorary Chair of the BSAC, as he is not only to act a facilitator of General Assembly meetings, but should also believe in the mission and work of the organisation and, if necessary, take other tasks in the BSAC. He recalled the former Honorary Chair, Steve Karnicki who acted as an excellent facilitator of all BSAC meetings during a period when

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<sup>8</sup> Representing National Chamber of Fish Producers



the BSAC did not have an ExCom Chair. In the name of his organisation, he recommended Vesa Karttunen, because they have known him for years and trusted him.

**Vesa Karttunen** introduced himself to the General Assembly. He underlined that his organisation, the Federation of Finnish Fisheries Associations has been the member of the BSAC from its start, and the first Honorary Chair came from his organisation. Federation tries to keep coastal communities alive. He presented himself as a pragmatic and straight forward person, who aims at seeking compromises.

**Two representatives of the OIG from Finland and a fisheries representative from Denmark** supported the nomination.

**The General Assembly Chair** recalled that in accordance with Article 4.2 of the Delegated Regulation 2022/204<sup>9</sup> and the Rules of Procedure, in case the Chair is designated amongst representatives of member organisations, at least one of the Vice-Chairs shall be designated amongst the members of the category of sector organisations and other interest groups, other than the one to which the Chair belongs. He underlined that the General Assembly Chair is to be impartial in facilitating meetings.

**A fisheries representative from Poland** underlined that Article 4.2 refers to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Advisory Council and does not specify whether it is the Chair of the General Assembly or ExCom. In his view, this Article is misleading and it is not necessary to elect another Vice-Chair of the General Assembly.

**Some participants** insisted on the need to follow the existing rules and elect second Vice-Chair of General Assembly.

**A representative of the OIG from Finland** nominated Matti Ovaska, WWF to the post of the Vice-Chair of the General Assembly.

**Matti Ovaska, WWF** thanked the BSAC members for the trust and accepted the nomination.

**The General Assembly** appointed by consensus Vesa Karttunen as General Assembly Chair and Christian Tsangarides and Matti Ovaska as General Assembly Vice Chairs for the next 3 years.

## 9. AOB and closing remarks by the General Assembly Chair of the BSAC

**The outgoing General Assembly Chair** thanked all the BSAC members for their excellent work and collaboration in the last three years, for achieving good results and for the trust in him.

## 10. Special session on recreational fisheries

### Introduction by the Executive Committee Vice-Chair, Glenn Douglas

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<sup>9</sup> Article 4.2 of the Regulation 2022/204: The Advisory Council shall designate, by consensus, a chairperson and at least one vice-chairperson. The chairperson may originate from outside the membership of the Advisory Council. In case the chairperson is designated amongst representatives of member organisations, at least one of the vice-chairpersons shall be designated amongst members of the category of sector organisations and other interest groups referred to in Article 2 to which the chairperson does not belong. This principle shall also apply, where possible, to working groups' chairpersons.

**The ExCom Vice-Chair, Glenn Douglas** referred to the BSAC Work Programme, which includes work on recreational fisheries. He stated that the implementation of the new Control Regulation imposes some changes for recreational fisheries, including reporting requirements. He recalled the BSAC [White Paper and the agreed](#) recommendations regarding recreational fisheries<sup>10</sup>. He underlined that recreational fishers voluntarily support the recovery of several fish stocks as well as environmental restoration, which includes now traditional restoration of rivers, but also restoration of marine and coastal environment. Recreational fisheries should be clearly defined in order to allow for better management.

He also recalled the workshop on recreational fishery for cod in the Baltic organised with BALTFISH in January 2018<sup>11</sup>. 46 participants were provided with background information on the recreational fishery and on the work being done to further include data from the recreational fisheries. (DTU Aqua, Thünen Institute, SLU, CCB and EAA). The workshop concluded<sup>12</sup> that *recreational fishing is an important part of the Baltic fishery. It exploits the same resources and stocks as commercial fishing and it brings significant and important economic benefits to local communities around the Baltic. Given that recreational fishing exploits the same resources as commercial fishing, the volume of recreational catches should be estimated and included in the scientific assessment of the stocks and when it has an important impact. The data on recreational catches collected by the Baltic Member States in the framework of the National Fisheries Data Collection Programmes is patchy and requires further efforts to fill data gaps. Where relevant for management purposes, to further discuss rules for recreational fishing in the Baltic, including reporting schemes meeting end user needs.*

*Regulatory measures should be harmonised, where relevant.*

He underlined that the objective of this special session is to present the scientific work on recreational fisheries carried out by ICES but also give a picture of what is recreational fisheries in the Baltic, focusing on particular fishing techniques for salmon (trolling techniques). **Kieran Hyder, CEFAS**, Vice Chair of ICES WG on Recreational Fisheries Surveys and **Harry Strehlow** from the Thünen Institute had been invited.

**ICES work on recreational fisheries: ICES Working Group on Recreational Fisheries Surveys (WGRFS)<sup>13</sup> and Workshop on Recreational Fisheries in Stock Assessments (WKRFSa)<sup>14</sup>, Kieran Hyder, CEFAS, Vice-Chair of ICES WG**

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<sup>10</sup> “The BSAC takes note that the recreational fishermen are also affected by measures such as fishery closures. Members of angler organisations voluntarily support the recovery of several fish stocks including cod, salmon and eel in the Baltic. Therefore, in the view of the BSAC, recreational fishermen should also benefit from the EMFAF, for example in terms of reporting, environmental restoration, research and data gathering.

- The BSAC agrees that recreational fishing should be part of the CFP.
- Recreational fishing sectors shall be clearly defined within the CFP.
- EMFAF funding should be made available for certain aspects of recreational fishing.”

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.bsac.dk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/BALTFISHBSACWorkshoprecreationalfisheries290118FINAL.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Meeting in 2018. 29<sup>th</sup> January Report: [\[Modtagerfelt\] \(bsac.dk\) Past Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council \(bsac.dk\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> [WGRFS \(ices.dk\)](#);

<sup>14</sup> [WKRFSa \(ices.dk\)](#)

Kieran Hyder presented<sup>15</sup> the ICES work on marine recreational fisheries (MRF). He summarised the importance of and highlighted the legislation related to MRF in Europe. In Europe, 9 million people take part in recreational fishing, and it is of large economic and social value, playing an important role in removing biomass from stocks. Recreational fisheries are hugely diverse, generally data poor, and often not well represented in fisheries management. Recreational fisheries have important social and economic benefits, but can impact fish stocks and the environment. A lack of data has made it more difficult to include recreational fisheries in fisheries management and the varied motivations of fishers makes their response to management measures hard to predict and so is the level of compliance. Recreational fishers target a wide range of species, from the same stocks as commercial fishers, creating conflicts between them. Kieran Hyder presented the legislative instruments for marine recreational fisheries, among others the CFP, Control Regulation, multiannual plans.

ICES provides advice on MRF. The Commission-ICES grant agreement includes MRF<sup>16</sup>. The ICES Working Group on Recreational Fisheries Surveys (WGRFS) gathers 135 experts in recreational fisheries from 33 countries. WGRFS supplies recreational fishery data and estimates for ICES stock assessment and advisory processes, operating within its quality assurance framework and responding to the requirements of the EU Data Collection Framework (DCF) and other drivers. The resolutions include: collating and reviewing quality data, identifying data gaps, assessing validity of traditional knowledge, new survey designs, novel methods, providing guidance to ad hoc requests from ACOM (Baltic – approaches to data collection), evaluating use of economic, social, & communication to support management, reviewing outcomes of the workshops organised by the group. The WG deals with broader issues, such as governance, survey methods, quality assurance tool to understand potential biases, regional coordination (data storage), catch and release as important part of recreational fisheries (including post release mortality), stock assessment, novel methods (apps and social media), human dimensions (social impact) and communication and engagement. The end users include ICES assessment groups, other ICES WGs, Commission, RCGs, national policy makers, angling community. The outputs include stock assessments, species lists by region, quality assurance, data access and storage, papers and reports, conference sessions.

Kieran Hyder underlined that effective governance of MRF in Europe is needed to maximise the societal benefits of its fisheries. He presented the current state of measures

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<sup>15</sup> [Past Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council \(bsac.dk\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> *Where recreational fisheries take a significant part of the catches, the catch scenarios shall be calculated assuming that changes in fishing mortality are caused by the commercial fishery alone, the recreational fishery alone and a combination of the two. In these cases, the gears responsible for significant recreational catches should be identified, and when possible, some estimate of the magnitude or relative proportion of their catches should be also provided. In addition, in the light of available information, ICES will review and incorporate where possible, in its stock assessments recreational fisheries management measures and options agreed and/or implemented which are made known to ICES following a request for information by ICES and will comment on their contribution to reaching MSY objectives for the stocks concerned. Where recreational fisheries take a significant part of the catches, the catch scenarios shall be calculated assuming that changes in fishing mortality are caused by the commercial fishery alone, the recreational fishery alone and a combination of the two.*

and the future vision, including the need to embed the MRF opportunities in the next revision of the CFP, establishing fair and equitable distribution of resources in CFP, holistic data collection, good governance and transparent involvement of stakeholder to foster compliance.

Many species targeted by MRF are data limited. The Working Group on Recreational Fisheries Surveys (WGRFS) has started to develop approaches to prioritize stocks where recreational catches are important and should be included in stock assessments and advisory processes. The recent workshop developed framework and highlighted challenges, including communication, data quality and transparency, co-design of data collection, process of allocation of TAC, funding methods for inclusion and allocation. ICES is working on draft roadmap (DAISY), based on data, advice, integration, science and yearly advice cycle.

#### Discussion:

**A fisheries representative from Poland** welcomed the efforts to include recreational fisheries into the ICES advisory and stock assessment processes. He stated that in the past recreational cod fishing had made up a greater part of the total fishery and had a substantial impact on the stock. He underlined the importance of commercial fisheries in terms of the value of fish caught should not be neglected. According to FAO, the value of fish caught by commercial fisheries increases five times.

**Kieran Hyder** answered that the challenges in commercial and recreational fisheries differ. He underlined that both sectors are important and both have economic values. Both have to be managed well to achieve sustainability. Management measures need to be considered on a case-by-case basis to come up with solutions. He noted that commercial and recreational fisheries have competing objectives, which may require trade-offs between sectors.

**A fisheries representative from Germany** thanked the ICES representative for an excellent overview of recreational fisheries. He drew attention to the fact that in the past the recreational catches had not been included in the fishing mortality estimates. He asked whether the science is ready to face the challenges of data collection from recreational fisheries.

**Kieran Hyder** underlined the need to collect data and work together to come up with the best solutions. Positive outcomes to support management have been seen already. He emphasised that **citizen science** is a growing field involving the public in scientific research and has a great potential to inform fisheries management .

**The ExCom Vice-Chair** confirmed the importance of citizen science in providing solid and robust data on recreational catches.

**A fisheries representative from Finland** pointed to the need to use equal basis for calculating the value of commercial and recreational fishery. He drew attention to the fact that, given the amount of recreational catches, data from recreational fisheries should be better taken into consideration in stock assessment.

**Kieran Hyder** agreed that the value of recreational fisheries is not easily comparable with the value of commercial fisheries, as the sale of recreationally caught fish is forbidden. He stated that the provisions of the new control regulation, including mandatory reporting of

recreational catches will be a challenge to enforce. Data quality can also be an issue. A list of registered anglers practicing in MRF would make data collection much simpler in terms of engagement.

**A representative of the OIG** referred to the report on recreational fishing published by Coalition Clean Baltic in 2017<sup>17</sup>. He drew attention to severe gaps and inconsistencies in data from recreational fisheries. There is a great scope for improvement in data collection, requiring increased harmonisation and coordination across the region, in order to make the data comparable. He asked the ICES representative how these inconsistencies are dealt with by scientists.

**Harry Strehlow** stated that German data on recreational fisheries has been collected since 2002 in Germany and used by ICES in the western Baltic cod assessment at the benchmark in 2015. In 2019, recreational catches from Sweden and Denmark were also included in the assessment as the main contributor to the recreational fishery for this stock. Data on recreational catches is used in the assessment on a case-by-case basis. If a long enough time-series of recreational catches is available, data can be included directly in a stock assessment model.

**The ExCom Vice-Chair** drew attention to the fact that under the current Regulation includes a blanket ban on the catch-and-release method in SDs 22-31. However, according to some opinions, under the current fishing opportunities, this practice could provide an opportunity for anglers to continue fishing.

**Kieran Hyder** stated that the implementation of most of the management measures for recreational fisheries, such as bag limits, increase of the minimum landing size, closed seasons increases the level of incentives for catch-and-release. He referred to the fact that catch-and-release is not allowed in some countries, such as Germany unless there are regulatory requirements in place.

**A representative of the OIG** stated that data from recreational fisheries had substantially contributed to the assessment of sharks and rays.

### **Overview of recreational fisheries in the Baltic, focus on salmon and trolling for salmon, Harry Strehlow -Thünen Institute**

**Harry Strehlow** presented the overview of recreational fisheries in the Baltic<sup>18</sup>. He stated that recreational fishing has a high value, including a large number of fishers as well as potential considerable catches, which impact the management objectives (e.g. MSY). Given the current state of Baltic and poor ecological condition, as well as low productivity of fish stocks, there are huge transformation processes going on in terms of commercial fisheries. Thus, the recreational sector may become the main user of the Baltic resources in the future.

European Member States are obliged to collect recreational fisheries data under EU legislation (Data Collection Framework). There are several challenges related to data collection, such as lack of central registry in several Member States, no regular catch

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<sup>17</sup> [ccb-recreational-fishing-report-short-version-2018-02-27.pdf \(cdn-website.com\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Past Meetings - Baltic Sea Advisory Council \(bsac.dk\)](#)



reporting, very diverse sector, low participation rates, challenging statistics and high costs of surveys.

The new Control Regulation will introduce mandatory electronic reporting of recreational catches from 2026. This might not help to close data gaps, because the provisions are based on minimum data requirements leading to fragmented and data-poor situation, deteriorating participation and involvement of anglers in data collection and creating risks of the rejection of top-down regulations and declining compliance.

Harry Strehlow presented the conclusions on data collection. Legislative frameworks should complement each other, recreational fishing surveys should be conducted. Triangulation of approaches will be useful (on-site & off-site) and should ideally include economic value and social benefits. Licensing would help to develop surveys.

Harry Strehlow referred to the economic impact of recreational fisheries. In 2017, the total economic impact of recreational fisheries in the Baltic amounted to 1.558 billion € and generated 14,473 jobs. In 2017, in Germany, the total output of marine recreational fisheries amounted to 413 million €, a gross value added of 214 million € and generated 3,977 jobs. In Germany, commercial fisheries in 2018 had a sales value of 357 million €, a gross value added of 201 million € and supported 1150 jobs. These figures were given to get a perspective, not for direct comparison. On regional economic impact Harry Strehlow concluded that economic impact of marine recreational fisheries is significant and should therefore be considered a sector targeted for development. Maintaining fishing opportunities is critical to sustaining local jobs and the local economy. The economic contribution of anglers to the local economy should be considered in future management decisions.

Salmon: Harry Strehlow presented a comparison between recreational and commercial salmon catches. In the past, commercial catches were much higher than recreational catches. In 2023, the recreational catches are almost equal to the commercial catches. However, the recreational catches will be declining, due to the implementation of a bag limit in 2022. Under the present regulations, only recreational salmon trolling in the Baltic Main Basin is allowed and daily bag limit is one adipose fin clipped salmon per day and angler. This activity has high economic value. In Germany, the monitoring is carried out using remote cameras, located at the entrance to the ports. A post-release study to investigate post-release survival rates in the open sea trolling fishery was conducted by the Thünen Institute, Germany, in collaboration with Sweden (SLU). Fish caught in the trolling fishery are tagged with pop-up satellite tags and light, water temperature and depth is monitored for up to 45 days. Preliminary findings indicated high survival of released fish. Discrete choice (DCE) study and questionnaire on management preferences of salmon trolling anglers was also conducted in collaboration with Denmark (DTU Aqua + SDU). Preliminary findings indicated that anglers prefer higher catch rates of 2 salmon per day (wild and reared), but not more. Anglers also prefer a higher bag limit of 2 salmon per day, but not more. Harry Strehlow underlined that maintaining salmon trolling opportunities is of key importance to sustain the sector.

The presenter referred to the recommendations for BSAC. In the light of the ongoing evaluation of the CFP and the governance evaluation conducted by WGRFS, a policy reform is needed that explicitly recognises recreational fisheries as a specific fisheries

sector that has different objectives and dynamics than commercial fisheries. On an operational level this requires involving the ACs to provide the institutional structure and overcome the fragmented MRF governance. The ACs will have a bigger role to play in the future, representing preferences of every sector. Policy should follow multiple objectives such as the provision of food and recreational opportunities.

**A representative of the OIG** referred to different management measures applied to recreational fishing in respective Member States. In his view, a regional plan for recreational fisheries would help to manage the sector more effectively. He also asked whether the studies on post-release mortality indicating high survival were representative.

**Harry Strehlow** stated that the current CFP does not provide a clear mandate on how to regulate the recreational fishing and divide the fishing opportunities between the sectors. He underlined that the role of the Advisory Councils is very important in proposing a more regional approach to the CFP. As to the representativeness of the data on post-release mortality, he stated that the likelihood of survival is low if fish are highly impaired. There is however room to improve already high survival rates of released fish through improved handling practices.

**A fisheries representative from Poland** disagreed on the importance given to recreational fishing over commercial fishing. Once again he referred to the higher value of fish caught in commercial fisheries. He insisted on the need to present full data on commercial fisheries when making a comparison with recreational fishing, as to avoid any manipulation with the figures.

**Harry Strehlow** explained that the value of commercial fisheries was by no means underestimated in his presentation. The difference between the sectors is clear. Commercial fisheries provide food, whereas recreational fishing is conducted for satisfaction. The economic value cannot be directly compared and through the presented figures he tried to show that the recreational sector is not marginal. The figures given in the presentation referred to German marine commercial and recreational fisheries.

**A representative of the OIG** pointed to the recent developments in Finland. Following amendments in national legislation, monitoring and reporting of recreational fishing will become mandatory as of January 2025. He also referred to the post-release mortality of fish and asked whether there are methods to explore the post-release mortality of fish migrating to the rivers, as this mortality seems to be evidently higher in warm waters than in the sea.

**Harry Strehlow** stated that satellite tagging had been used for the first time in the survey conducted in collaboration with SLU and preliminary findings indicated high survival of fish. Future studies are planned using MiniPATs (a pop-up archival transmitting tag) to track large scale movements including migration into the rivers to improve knowledge on long-term post-release survival and sub-lethal effects.

**A representative of the OIG** asked whether German trolling anglers accept the obligation to release salmon.

**Harry Strehlow** stated there is still a need for more communication campaigns to make anglers understand the rationale behind the regulations and increase compliance.

**The ExCom Vice-Chair** thanked Kieran Hyder and Harry Strehlow for their presentations.

## Concluding words by the Executive Committee Vice-Chair, Glenn Douglas

The ExCom Vice-Chair thanked Kieran Hyder and Harry Strehlow for their presentations. He thanked all participants for discussions enlivened by controversies.

*The revised Rules of Procedure (printed version) were distributed to the participants.*

### Action Items

Topic	Details	Action
Annual BSAC report and financial statement for 2023-2024	Adopted	to be sent to the Commission by 31/05/2024
Work Programme 2024 – 2025, draft estimated operating budget 2024 – 2025, , and appointment of certified auditor to audit BSAC annual accounts	Adopted both WP and budget. Adopted the recommendation of the Secretariat to appoint the certified auditor from RSM Danmark.	
Appointment of a new Executive Committee 2024-2027	Appointed the Executive Committee members	Secretariat to update email list, and website.
Appointment of the Executive Committee Chair and Vice Chair 2024-2027	<i>Appointed for a second mandate Jarek Zielinski (Chair) and Glenn Douglas (Vice Chair)</i>	Secretariat to prepare letter to the elected Chairs and Vice Chairs
Appointment of the General Assembly Chair and Vice Chair 2024-2027	<i>Appointed for a first mandate Vesa Karttunen (Chair), for a second mandate Christian Tsangarides (Vice Chair), and for a first mandate Mati Ovaska (Vice Chair)</i>	Secretariat to prepare letter to the elected Chairs and Vice Chairs