

Valerie Tankink, Head of Unit D3,  
D.G. for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries  
European Commission  
Rue de la Loi 200  
B-1049 Brussels  
Belgium

Sent by e mail to: [mare-ac@ec.europa.eu](mailto:mare-ac@ec.europa.eu)

Ref: BSAC/2024-2025/11

Copenhagen, Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024

**Subject: "Fishers of the Future" EU-wide participatory foresight project**

Dear Ms Tankink,

The Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BSAC) welcomes DG MARE's "Fishers of the Future" initiative which aims at examining the future role of fishers in society up to 2050. It can provide valuable socio-economic data on the EU fisheries and improve the knowledge regarding the structure of the sector.

A survey had started this study, and it was shared with the BSAC members at the start of the year. We received critical feedback from both our fisheries and OIG members. For them, the survey missed most of the significant drivers and problems that relate to ecosystem and fish stock health, such as climate change, collapsing fish stocks, deteriorating state of the sea, green transition, issues related to the access to fishing grounds, intra-sectoral competition, lack of participation and self-determination in local/regional management. The survey also lacked the possibility for alternative answers (simplest one being "other" and open answers), leading to biases in answers (like an overweighted insistence on "future war threats"). More open questions are needed to get understanding of what fishers really feel are problems for the future of the fisheries.

The BSAC representatives also took part in the first workshop held on 19<sup>th</sup> March in Brussels and online and voiced concerns about the tone and the approach taken by the consultancy companies leading the project<sup>1</sup>, sometime presenting fisheries solely as an environmental hazard. Concerns about the survey presented hereabove also led to unease with the credibility of the "fishers profiles" presented then.

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<sup>1</sup> Tetra Tech, Poseidon Aquatic Resource Management, and Ipsos

The BSAC is aware that other organisations have been raising similar and additional issue about the project and that some steps are being taken to answer to those. The BSAC members would advise that a longer time frame is given to work on this key topic. In the context of the Baltic Sea basin, such an interesting study should also be broadened to encompass all kind of fishing, including recreational fishing.

Furthermore, surveys should avoid biases and make sure to cover all sea basins, all fisheries sectors and capture intra-sea basin specificity. On this last point it is worth mentioning the diversity of the fishing fleet in the Baltic and the huge discrepancy in the way it is structure and operate across the region.

Finally, the BSAC would like to reiterate its interest for this work and signal that it has scheduled to work on the topic of fishers generational renewal this year, which fits well with this project looking towards the future.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter. We look forward to your feedback.

Yours sincerely,



Jarek Zieliński  
BSAC Executive Committee Chair