



BALTFISH – a final report

BALTFISH was initiated 2009 as a flagship project within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, EUSBSR. Initially it received funding from Interreg, but since the member states realised that the aims and activities of BALTFISH could be reached and financed through their own sources, the funding was reimbursed to Interreg and the project activities were included in the ordinary cooperative work of the ministries.

Memorandum of Understanding

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in December 2013 by the ministers in the eight member states in the Baltic Sea Region, and thus changing the status of BALTFISH from a flagship project to a permanent fisheries forum.

The MoU states that the aims of BALTFISH is:

- to strengthen and improve the Members States coordination and cooperation in fisheries management in the Baltic Sea
- to develop cooperation with other key stakeholders relevant to the Baltic Sea Fisheries
- to constitute a forum for exchanging ideas, views and information to facilitate joint actions and various concrete projects aiming at achieving sustainable fisheries in the Baltic Sea Region.
- to base its' activities on the principles for regionalization as provided in the Basic Regulation of the EU Common Fisheries Policy and in particular Article 18.

Two levels

BALTFISH works on two levels. There is a high-level group (HLG) composed of the Member States fisheries directors and invited officials from the European Commission. There is also the BALTFISH Forum Seminar composed of representatives from Member States, the European Commission and the Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BS AC) as well as representatives from other relevant stakeholders in the Baltic Sea fisheries.

The function of the BALTFISH HLG

The Presidency of the BALTFISH rotates among the Member States for a one year period starting every year on the 1st of July. (EE 2012/2013, LV 2013/2014, LT 2014/2015, PL 2015/2016, DE 2016/2017, DK 2017/2018, SWE 2018/2019 and FIN 2019/2020), repeating the cycle after the first half of 2020. The Presidency, in agreement with the Member States, proposes dates for the meetings and suggests an indicative agenda.

The BALTFISH HLG forms its opinion by consensus among Member States. The consensus opinion is called a BALTFISH common position or a joint recommendation as appropriate. BALTFISH HLG prepares common positions and joint recommendations for legislative and other proposals from the European Commission or for their transposition at national level by Member States themselves.



The High Level Group relies on good cooperation, transparency, and information exchange with BS AC as well as with ICES, HELCOM and other relevant stakeholders in the Baltic Sea fisheries. The HLG can also invite relevant stakeholders to participate on an ad hoc basis. Stakeholders in the Baltic Sea fisheries may address their positions and proposals to the Presidency. Where appropriate, proposals will be disseminated to other Member States and if relevant they will be put on the agenda for future meetings with the HLG or the BALTFISH Forum Seminar.

The HLG may decide to establish ad hoc working groups chaired by the Presidency or any other Member State on specific issues that need in-depth work of experts as well as to organise specific BALTFISH Forum Seminars and meetings. So far (January 2017) a Technical Working Group, a Control Expert Group and a Working Group on EMFF has been formed to discuss topics within their respective area of competence..

The BALTFISH HLG usually meets 3-4 times every year. The ad hoc working groups have met as appropriate. The main themes under 2014, 2015 and 2016 have been:

- the gradual introduction of a discard ban in the Baltic Sea. (All commercial species in the Baltic Sea covered by a TAC (except Plaice) was covered by a discard ban from January 2015, Plaice from January 2017)
- the development of a discard plan for the Baltic Sea. (A discard plan was agreed and adopted as a delegated regulation (EU) 1396/2014 for the years 2015-2017),
- the establishment of a multiannual management plan for cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea. (A multiannual plan was adopted as regulation (EU)2016/1139 in July 2016),
- the establishment of TAC- and quotas in the Baltic Sea for the years 2015, 2016 and 2017 (TAC- and quota regulations was adopted in October 2014, 2015 and 2016)
- Technical Conservation Measures in the Baltic Sea.
- In 2016 BALTFISH HLG had the following meetings:
 - the 19th of April 2016 in Warsaw, Poland,
 - 27th of June in Luxembourg (Luxembourg),
 - 31th of August 2016 in Frankfurt am Main (Germany)
 - the 9th of October 2016 in Luxembourg (Luxembourg).
- In 2017 the BALTFISH HLG will continue to discuss Technical Conservation Measures, but also the establishment of a new discard plan in the Baltic replacing the one valid until the end of 2017 and finally the establishment of TAC- and quotas for 2018.
- The first BALTFISH HLG for 2017 is planned in Berlin, Germany in April 2017.

The role of the BALTFISH Forum Seminar

The Presidency in agreement with the Member States proposes dates for the meetings of the BALTFISH Forum Seminars which are usually held in the Member State holding the Presidency. Discussions and presentations in the BALTFISH Forum Seminars provide feedback and stakeholders' expertise to assist the HLG in preparation of common positions and joint recommendations of BALTFISH.



The BALTFISH Forum Seminars have been arranged at several occasions, usually twice a year (some years more). The themes have in general followed the main themes discussed in the BALTFISH HLG. The first BALTFISH Forum Seminar for 2017 is planned in Berlin, Germany in April 2017.

- In 2016 Baltfish Forum Seminar was convened on:
 - the 18th of April 2016 in Warsaw, Poland
 - the 30th of August 2016 in Frankfurt am Main, Germany.
- The main topics for discussion during 2016 was Technical Conservation Measures (including measures to improve the situation for the Baltic Cod stocks) and the establishment of TAC- and quotas in the Baltic Sea for 2017.