**The North Sea Advisory Council**

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| **NSAC PRIORITIES Nov 2019 - Oct 2020** |

The key priorities of the NSAC for November 2019 to October 2020 are:

**Landing Obligation**

After a full implementation of the Landing Obligation for demersal stocks in the North Sea in January 2019, the NSAC will keep considering possible mitigation tools available within the Joint Recommendation. New ideas and advice on methods to increase selectivity will be at the core of NSAC endeavours in order to significantly reduce unwanted catch and avoid potential choke situations. A comprehensive overview of inter-related policies, such as control, monitoring and enforcement, implementation of the newly adopted technical measures and distribution of quota, will help identify the cumulative impact of these on improvements in selectivity and avoidance of potential choke situations. Concretely, we will follow up work on the revision of Control Regulation, further develop our position on Fully Documented Fisheries and work on the Management of Prohibited Species. International quota swapping among Members States will be used in order to avoid potential choke situations.

Where improvement possibilities for gear-selectivity and unwanted catches’ survivability will have been exhausted, appropriate methods for disposal of excess and undersized fish will be examined**.** For ports and regions not having an easy access to fishmeal processing facilities alternative methods for use and / or disposal will be considered.

Continuous work with scientists, fisheries managers and other experts will help identify best practices and ways of improving the full implementation of the landing obligation.

**Fully Documented Fisheries & Control Regulation**

With an aim of ensuring compliance with the Landing Obligation, contribute to scientific data collection, improve management decision-making and increase compliance and transparency, we will work on developing our position regarding Fully Documented Fisheries. We will investigate possible ways in which Fully Documented Fisheries could be materialized in a considerate manner for the fishers, Remote Electronic Monitoring, CCTV cameras and an automatic image recognition being scrutinized as possible tools for monitoring discards.

We will keep monitoring the Control Regulation’s effectiveness in ensuring fisheries compliance with the Common Fisheries Policy. We will continue our work on identifying possible gaps and drawbacks in implementation and engage with all stakeholders to discuss its coherence with the current legislative framework.

**European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)**We will discuss how to optimize the use of EMFF funds to increase sustainability of fisheries in the North Sea area. We will contribute to the overall sustainability of the fishing sector by exploring possible ways in which applicants could use the EMFF financing for increased selectivity, monitoring and control of activities at sea as well as engagement of scientists on both, operational and management level.

**ICES Advice**In order to ensure a valuable feedback to ICES and better-informed management decisions, a more detailed response to ICES advice will be considered in the form of a response to specific stock advice.

**Technical Measures**

Conservation of fishery resources and protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures will stay in NSAC’s focus in the new period. Together with the Scheveningen Group, we will monitor the implementation of technical measures in line with CFP’s socio-economic and environmental objectives of sustainability.

**Multi-annual Management Plans / Recovery Plans**

We will continue our work with relevant Member States on negotiating multiannual management plans for shared species, including safeguards and remedial action where needed.

**TAC Setting Arrangements in the North Sea**

Implementation of the North Sea Multiannual Plan will be systematically reviewed and TAC setting arrangements assessed within the North Sea**.** Collaboration with Norwegian colleagues will help us find adequate solutions for all. Some species will need further examination in order to be able to provide advice on their management. The same is true for cod in the Kattegat area. The NSAC will continue to monitor the situation in cod management in the Kattegat and provide consensus advice if required.

**Brexit, implications for the NSAC**

According to the decision taken in 2018, following Brexit developments, the NSAC has transferred its headquarters to Zoetermeer, the Netherlands. A withdrawal agreement not having been reached in March 2019 the situation and future relations with our UK colleagues remain vague and unpredictable. We will engage with the Commission and the Member States to discuss the future of the NSAC and produce advice on transition and post Brexit arrangements for membership, structure and funding of the organisation. As information and details become available we will make recommendations on post-Brexit arrangements with the UK and Norway.

**Environmental Issues**

The construction of major offshore wind parks and their cumulative impact on fishing and the environment will be scrutinized. We will continue to work closely with wind park developers such as TenneT to stay abreast with their plans and provide stakeholder input to their proposals. We will also consider the noise impact of such developments on spawning and migratory patterns of fish as well as other marine species part of the North Sea ecosystem.

We will continue to participate in discussions related to management measures in Natura 2000 and other Marine Protected Areas. Considering the nature of this topics it is challenging to provide consensus advice on these issues but where possible this will be provided.

We will continue our discussions on reduction and disposal of marine litter (including abandoned, lost and otherwise discarded fishing gear) and noise in the marine environment and prepare advice where common objectives are identified. We will fuel and enrich our discussions by attending relevant informative events and workshops.

We will seek expert advice on sensitive species, such as seabird populations, in the North Sea, to identify possible causes for the decline in numbers, links with - and impacts from - fisheries.

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| **OTHER ISSUES OF INTEREST** |

**Continue to develop closer links with the Scheveningen Group**

The NSAC will continue to work closely with the Scheveningen Group of Member States. We will seek early engagement with the 2019 presidency (Belgium) with the aim of establishing communication channels and sharing their priorities in advance of January 2020. We will also seek feedback from all NSAC advice submitted to the group. We will continue to work with the Scheveningen Technical and High-Level Groups to share the knowledge and experience of the NSAC members.

**Working closely with scientists**

We will continue to work closely with the members of ICES and will aim at organising some of the NSAC meetings in Denmark, which will give ICES members greater opportunity to participate in and contribute to our discussions. NSAC members will stay encouraged to participate in relevant ICES working groups and STECF meetings. Together with ICES, the NSAC stakeholders will examine how to best contribute to improving stock assessment procedures and overall data collection.

**Develop closer links with Member States**

The NSAC will work on consolidation of contacts and collaboration with representatives of fisheries management of each Member State. We will ensure that they receive all NSAC advice and meeting invitations first hand. This will be increasingly important for issues such as quota distribution, where the Member States are directly affected.

**Developing closer links with the European Parliament**

NSAC will continue to provide members of the PECH Committee with copies of all NSAC approved advice. NSAC also want to remind the co-legislators that it remains available for any technical advice on the relevant legislative files. The NSAC encourages the participation of PECH and ENVI committees members and advisors or others at relevant NSAC meetings.

**Relationships with Norway and other third countries**

The NSAC will continually collaborate with Representatives of the Norwegian fishing industry, inviting them to Demersal Working Group and the Skagerrak & Kattegat Working Group meetings to have the opportunity to exchange information and ideas with the NSAC members. They will be invited to participate in other meetings should they be able to provide other relevant expert opinions or useful experience.

**Links to the European Commission**

The NSAC would welcome further engagement with colleagues at DG MARE with an aim to proactively contribute to the development of policy rather than to consultations alone. With this in mind, the NSAC would like to invite the new Commissioner to visit the NSAC in order to strategically determine future collaboration. Apart from that, the NSAC would like discuss with DG Mare how the NSAC can structure its meetings and discussions to facilitate greater involvement of the European Commission.

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| **PROVISIONAL PLANNING** |

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| **Title of the meeting** | **Date** | **Place** | **Issues to be discussed** |
| **Ecosystem Working Group** | **November 2020** | **Brussels** | **Wind farm developments Management measures for MPAs Environmental impacts on seabird populations Marine Litter** |
| **Executive Committee** | **January 2020** | **Berlin** | **Advice for Approval and forward plan Budget monitoring Emerging and strategic issues  Brexit and implications for the NSAC** |
| **Ecosystem Working Group** | **January 2020** | **Berlin** | **Wind farm developments Management measures for MPAs Environmental impacts on seabird populations Marine Litter** |
| **Demersal Working Group** | **February 2020** | **tbc** | **Implementation the Landing Obligation in 2019 ICES stock assessments** |
| **Skagerrak and Kattegat Working Group** | **February 2020** | **tbc** | **Control regulation Technical measures Fully Documented Fisheries** |
| **Demersal Working Group** | **April 2020** | **tbc** | **Implementation of the Landing Obligation TAC setting** |
| **Ecosystem Working Group** | **April 2020** | **tbc** | **Wind farm developments Management measures for MPAs Environmental impacts on seabird populations Marine Litter** |
| **Chairs Planning Meeting** | **May 2020** | **tbc** | **Forward planning for 2020-21 Legal structure post Brexit** |
| **Skagerrak and Kattegat Working Group** | **May 2020** | **Tbc** | **tbc** |
| **Executive Committee** | **June 2020** | **tbc** | **Advice for Approval Budget monitoring** |
| **General Assembly** | **June 2020** | **tbc** | **Annual Review Work plan and budget 2020-21 Approval of 2019-20 accounts** |
| **Demersal Working Group** | **July 2020** | **tbc** | **Presentation of ICES advice** |
| **Executive Committee** | **September 2020** | **tbc** | **Approval of Advice Approval of contracted services Budget monitoring** |
| **Skagerrak and Kattegat Working Group** | **October 2020** | **tbc** | **tbc** |