



TEXTS ADOPTED

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The multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea and ways forward

European Parliament resolution of 21 May 2026 on the multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea and ways forward (2024/2127(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), Articles 4, 43(3) and 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), and Article 37 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC¹ (CFP),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 establishing a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2187/2005 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1098/2007² (Baltic MAP Regulation),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2020/1781 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2020 amending Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 as regards fishing capacity reduction in the Baltic Sea, and Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 as regards permanent cessation of fishing activities for fleets fishing for Eastern

¹ OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/1380/oj>.

² OJ L 191, 15.7.2016, p. 1, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/1139/oj>.

Baltic cod, Western Baltic cod and Western Baltic herring³,

- having regard to Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive)⁴,
- having regard to Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora⁵,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EEC) No 2115/77 of 27 September 1977 prohibiting the direct fishing and landing of herring for industrial purposes other than human consumption⁶,
- having regard to Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds⁷,
- having regard to its resolution of 27 April 2021 on chemical residues in the Baltic Sea, based on Petitions No 1328/2019 and 0406/2020⁸,
- having regard to its resolution of 18 January 2024 on the EU Action Plan: protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries⁹,
- having regard to its resolution of 4 December 2008 on the adoption of a European Cormorant Management Plan to minimise the increasing impact of cormorants on fish stocks, fishing and aquaculture¹⁰,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 November 2024 on EU actions against the Russian shadow fleets and ensuring a full enforcement of sanctions against Russia (2024/2885(RSP))¹¹,
- having regard to the EU's biodiversity strategy for 2030, set out in

³ OJ L 400, 30.11.2020, p. 1, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2020/1781/oj>.

⁴ OJ L 164, 25.6.2008, p. 19, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2008/56/oj>.

⁵ OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/1992/43/oj>.

⁶ OJ L 247, 28.9.1977, p. 2, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/1977/2115/oj>.

⁷ OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2009/147/oj>.

⁸ OJ C 506, 15.12.2021, p. 9.

⁹ OJ C, C/2024/5735, 17.10.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/5735/oj>.

¹⁰ OJ C 21 E, 28.1.2010, p. 11.

¹¹ OJ C, C/2025/809, 11.2.2025, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/809/oj>.

the Commission communication of 20 May 2020 entitled ‘EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 – Bringing nature back into our lives’ (COM(2020)0380),

- having regard to the Commission communication of 5 June 2025 entitled ‘The European Ocean Pact’ (COM(2025)0281),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 21 February 2023 entitled ‘EU Action Plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries’ (COM(2023)0102),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 6 June 2025 entitled ‘Sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2026’ (COM(2025)0296),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 29 January 2025 entitled ‘A Competitiveness Compass for the EU’ (COM(2025)0030),
- having regard to the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area of 1992 (the Helsinki Convention), which entered into force on 17 January 2000, and to the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, also known as the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM),
- having regard to the Baltic Sea Action Plan, and to the HELCOM findings on sea-dumped chemical munitions,
- having regard to the judgment of the Court of Justice of the EU of 11 January 2024 in the case C-330/22, *Friends of the Irish Environment CLG v Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Ireland*¹²,
- having regard to the background analysis requested by Parliament’s Committee on Fisheries entitled ‘The multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea – A change in management needed’, published by its Directorate-General for Cohesion, Agriculture and Social Policies in August 2025¹³,
- having regard to the study of September 2025 by the European Parliamentary Research Service entitled ‘Evaluation of the Baltic Sea Multiannual Plan Regulation – European Implementation Assessment’,
- having regard to the report of 29 September 2025 by the European

¹² ECLI:EU:C:2024:19.

¹³ Background analysis – ‘The multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea – A change in management needed’, European Parliament, Directorate-General for Cohesion, Agriculture and Social Policies, Policy Department for Regional Development, Agriculture and Fisheries, August 2025.

Environment Agency entitled 'Europe's environment and climate: knowledge for resilience, prosperity and sustainability',

- having regard to the report of 31 October 2023 by HELCOM entitled 'State of the Baltic Sea 2023 - Third HELCOM holistic assessment 2016-2021',
- having regard to the commitments of states under the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely SDGs 3, 6 and 14,
- having regard to the report of 26 November 2024 by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) entitled 'Baltic Sea ecoregion - Ecosystem Overview', ICES Advice 2024, Section 7.1,
- having regard to the 2022 report by ICES entitled 'Workshop on ICES reference points (WKREF1)'¹⁴,
- having regard to the 2022 report by ICES entitled 'Workshop on ICES reference points (WKREF2)'¹⁵,
- having regard to the 2023 report by ICES entitled 'Workshop on guidelines and methods for the design and evaluation of rebuilding plans for category 1-2 stocks (WKREBUILD2)'¹⁶,
- having regard to the report of November 2025 by the Commission's Joint Research Centre entitled 'Scientific Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) - The 2025 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet (STECF-25-03 & STECF-25-07)',
- having regard to the report of September 2019 by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change entitled 'Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate',
- having regard to the report of September 2025 by the Copernicus Marine Service entitled '9th edition of the Copernicus Ocean State Report',
- having regard to the report of 24 September 2025 by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research entitled 'Planetary Health Check 2025: A Scientific Assessment of the State of the Planet',
- having regard to the 2016 UN Environment Programme (UNEP) report entitled 'Options for Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EBA) in Coastal Environments: A Guide for environmental managers and planners',
- having regard to Resolution 1612 (2008) of the Parliamentary

¹⁴ ICES Scientific Reports. 4:2.

¹⁵ ICES Scientific Reports. 4:68.

¹⁶ ICES Scientific Reports. 5:112.

Assembly of the Council of Europe on chemical munitions buried in the Baltic Sea, and to the accompanying report of 28 April 2008,

- having regard to the joint statement by the Commission's Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and ICES of 18 September 2025 entitled 'Adaptive science and coordinated governance for cross-sector action towards Baltic Sea recovery',
 - having regard to the report of 28 April 2025 by its Committee on Fisheries entitled 'Working document on the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 ("Baltic MAP")',
 - having regard to the Framework for a European Management Plan for the Great Cormorant of the Food and Agriculture Organization's European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission of April 2025,
 - having regard to Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Fisheries (A10-0121/2026),
- A. whereas the EU's multiannual plan for Baltic Sea fisheries (Baltic MAP Regulation), in a context of increasing environmental pressures on the Baltic Sea ecosystem, has helped maintain fishing pressure in line with maximum sustainable yield (MSY) levels; whereas, despite significant fishing effort reductions in the past few years, some fish stocks have deteriorated due to a combination of pressures beyond fishing activity, including eutrophication, offshore energy, predator impacts, pollution, habitat degradation and climate-driven ecosystem changes, resulting in significant socio-economic consequences for the fisheries sector;
- B. whereas in 2023, the ecoregions of the Baltic Sea, Celtic Sea and Greater North Sea reduced the average fishing pressure to below MSY levels, with fishing mortality 54 %, 48 % and 23 % below MSY targets respectively, compared to above-target levels in 2003; whereas the EU Baltic Sea fleets spent 267 000 days in 2022, an 8 % decrease compared to 2021 and the lowest level reached since 2013;
- C. whereas Baltic cod stocks remain in an extremely poor condition with no forecasted improvement in the short term, despite targeted fisheries having been closed since 2019; whereas ICES estimates that Baltic cod stocks will continue to develop slowly, showing a downward trend compared to previous years, including for reasons of adverse environmental conditions; whereas cod is still being caught as 'bycatch';
- D. whereas salmon and trout stocks are not covered by the Baltic MAP Regulation; whereas there are important interlinkages between salmon and trout stocks and herring stocks, especially considering

food ecosystems; whereas since 2022 ICES has advised stopping all commercial and recreational salmon catches in the main basin due to the existence of mixed fisheries and the fact that salmon are being caught from multiple river stocks, including threatened stocks;

- E. whereas small-scale coastal fisheries represent 92 % of the vessels operating in the Baltic Sea, landing 7 % of total weight but accounting for 22 % of the landed value, thus providing significant economic and social benefits given the above-average value added of this fleet segment; whereas fisheries rely heavily on the availability of a large fish biomass in line with the CFP and sustainably managed fish stocks, which are critical for the economic viability of the sector;
- F. whereas the Baltic small-scale coastal fishing fleet has access to smaller fishing quotas compared to larger operators, leading to the marginalisation of the small-scale segments and their fishing businesses;
- G. whereas according to Article 17 CFP ‘when allocating fishing opportunities available to them Member States shall use transparent and objective criteria including those of an environmental, social and economic nature’;
- H. whereas the gross added value for small-scale fishers in the Baltic Sea region has declined drastically since the inception of the Baltic MAP Regulation, according to assessments by the Commission’s Scientific Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF), threatening food security and increasing the EU’s dependence on imports; whereas the loss of EU-origin fish supply increases dependence on imports from non-EU countries and weakens market resilience; whereas there has been a continued decline in the number of active fishing vessels in the Baltic Sea;
- I. whereas strengthening Baltic coastal communities and supporting local fisheries, in particular small-scale fisheries, are also essential in reducing this dependence and ensuring the economic and social sustainability of the Baltic coastline;
- J. whereas regular updates on the catches and gross value added of the recreational fisheries sector, including marine recreational fisheries, are forthcoming in the ongoing implementation of the Fisheries Control Regulation¹⁷; whereas recreational fisheries have a considerable social and economic value also beyond monetary terms

¹⁷ Regulation (EU) 2023/2842 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 November 2023 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009, and amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1967/2006 and (EC) No 1005/2008 and Regulations (EU) 2016/1139, (EU) 2017/2403 and (EU) 2019/473 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards fisheries control (OJ L, 2023/2842, 20.12.2023, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/2842/oj>).

and anglers can contribute to restoration efforts and nature protection; whereas recreational fisheries can have a significant impact on fish resources and Member States should, therefore, ensure that they are conducted in a manner that is compatible with the objectives of the CFP; whereas recreational fishers are also legitimate users of marine biological resources;

- K. whereas the most recent EU-wide assessment of the socio-economic value of the marine recreational fisheries (MRF) sector dates back to 2017, and its recommendations have not yet been implemented to fully unlock the potential of this low-impact activity as a recognised component of the EU blue economy strategy; whereas available data indicates that an estimated 8-10 million EU citizens are engaged in the recreational fisheries sector; whereas in the Baltic Sea region, this constitutes a major socio-economic activity, generating an economic contribution of about EUR 1,5 billion and supporting the creation of over 14 000 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs;
- L. whereas the Baltic Sea forms the basis of the livelihood and cultural identity of thousands of families; whereas fishing is part of the centuries-long social, cultural and economic heritage of the region; whereas restrictions on fisheries should be implemented in a way that does not make it impossible to run a local coastal business providing fresh fish to consumers to ensure food security, and avoid the eventual disappearance of fishing-related occupations, and consequently lead to inhabitants leaving coastal areas;
- M. whereas the Baltic Sea is affected by multiple human-induced pressures, including global warming, residual pollution, chemical munitions, eutrophication, changing environmental conditions, and long-term degradation, and is especially vulnerable due to its bathymetrically shallow sea basin with genetically unique species adapted to living in brackish water with naturally low salinity and oxygen levels, and its limited water exchange with the North Sea and strong vertical stratification; whereas these particular conditions require management approaches tailored to regional specificities; whereas fish stocks in the Baltic have continued to decline also due to these pressures, including predator imbalances, that have impacted recruitment, while significant fishing effort reductions have taken place in the past few years; whereas the Commission acknowledges the need to address these additional environmental challenges to support recovery and long-term sustainability;
- N. whereas multiple overlapping pressures including fishing activity, agriculture, forestry run-off, eutrophication, oxygen depletion, chemical pollution and the growing populations of marine predators, together with waste water discharge, pose major pressures on the ecosystem through nutrient and organic enrichment and food-web disruption; whereas this affects fisheries in the whole Baltic Sea ecoregion; whereas progress has been achieved in reducing nutrient

inputs and hazardous substances, yet the combined influence continues to affect fish stocks, the survival of larvae and young fish, and more effort is needed across all contributing sectors in this regard;

- O. whereas offshore wind farms (OWFs) are among the fastest growing industries at sea, with forecasts suggesting that capacity will increase substantially; whereas offshore wind farms provide both benefits, such as shelter for fish species, but also risks to biodiversity depending on the stage of development, location and design;
- P. whereas existing EU legislation initially showed itself to be successful at reducing nitrogen levels in EU waters and contributing to achieving the goals of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), which include minimising human-induced eutrophication, especially and its adverse effects;
- Q. whereas the impacts of seawater warming driven by global climate change and exacerbated by land-based activities are particularly fast-acting in the Baltic Sea, with the Baltic Sea warming at twice the rate of the global ocean average, and are expected to lead to further widespread and mostly unknown consequences, including oxygen depletion and continued disturbance of the future reproductive cycle of fish populations and their distribution;
- R. whereas it is important for the Commission and the Member States to fully implement all relevant EU legislation in the Baltic and improve implementation of the regional sea convention HELCOM's Action Plan in order to tackle the ecosystem failure in the Baltic Sea;
- S. whereas in setting total allowable catches (TACs) for 2026, Member States have balanced environmental sustainability with socio-economic sustainability, preserving a minimum level of activity while continuing to support fish stock recovery; whereas some Baltic fish stocks are deteriorating despite huge reductions in fishing effort; whereas the MSFD requires the Member States to achieve good environmental status through balanced food webs and healthy stocks as well as to tackle contaminants, eutrophication, invasive species, marine litter, pollution from energy generation, including underwater noise, and climate change;
- T. whereas for the Baltic Sea, the Commission, having sought ICES advice, is proposing –and Member States are setting – bycatch quotas, although ICES advises ‘zero catch’;
- U. whereas the existing rules on year-to-year flexibility as enshrined in the CFP affect sustainable quota management; whereas the Council has in some cases decided not to use this option due to critical stock situations; whereas guidance, particularly for cases of stocks in critical condition, is necessary for the Baltic Sea;

- V. whereas misreporting or any case of non-compliance are ongoing issues in Baltic fisheries and should be addressed accordingly through the implementation of the revised Fisheries Control Regulation;
- W. whereas the effective implementation of the landing obligation in the Baltic Sea continues to face practical challenges; whereas Member States must act in accordance with the provisions of the CFP and the Fisheries Control Regulation, including its remote electronic monitoring (REM) provisions;
- X. whereas setting fishing quotas for only one year hinders economic, investment and employment planning in the fisheries sector; whereas a multiannual decision-making framework based on the best available scientific advice would allow for more stable management;
- Y. whereas the Baltic Sea harbour porpoise is facing extinction and only a few hundred of these mammals are left in the Baltic Proper¹⁸; whereas this species is under continued threat from being caught as 'bycatch', from environmental contaminants, prey depletion and disturbance from underwater noise;
- Z. whereas forage fish play a vital role for marine food webs and Baltic Sea ecosystems;
- AA. whereas fisheries for the production of fish meal and fish oil were authorised in the Baltic Sea region in 1995 when exceptions were originally only allowed 'provided that such fishery does not entail risks of irreversible ecological damage' as outlined in the Treaty between the Member States of the European Union and the Kingdom of Norway, the Republic of Austria, the Republic of Finland and the Kingdom of Sweden, concerning the accession of the Kingdom of Norway, the Republic of Austria, the Republic of Finland and the Kingdom of Sweden to the European Union¹⁹;
- AB. whereas many Baltic Sea Member States have introduced individual transferable quota systems (ITQs) as available under the CFP; whereas this has favoured large operators; whereas the impact on stock structure is primarily determined by the gear and fishing techniques used;
- AC. whereas the Baltic MAP Regulation's effectiveness at achieving its overarching ecological and socio-economic goals has been very limited; whereas the failure to restore fish stocks above reference levels, weak integration of ecosystem considerations and insufficient application of a precautionary approach when setting quotas have undermined progress; whereas a lack of holistic policy approaches

¹⁸ <https://helcom.fi/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Red-List-II-species-2025.pdf>.

¹⁹ OJ C 241, 29.8.1994, p. 9.

has further complicated the work to avoid further degradation and support a more resilient Baltic Sea; whereas the added value in terms of regional cooperation has been low, few joint recommendations by Member States have been initiated and regionalisation provisions of the EU fisheries rules are not being used in order to adapt management measures to the specificities of the Baltic Sea; whereas engagement and cooperation with all relevant stakeholders has been insufficient;

- AD. whereas certain single species assessments and scientific advice have, in the context of the specific and dynamically changing environmental conditions in the Baltic Sea, resulted in the structural overestimation of stock reproductive capacity and total stock size, heavily affecting the resource and the management and operational capacity of the Baltic fishing sector, showing the need for more sea-basin-specific approaches;
- AE. whereas the Commission's requests for advice on the Baltic Sea from ICES have so far not asked for environmental factors to be considered, including oxygen deficits or food availability, which may affect the state of stocks, nor have they sufficiently included the need to highlight risk considerations; whereas requests should be continuously improved, including better communication of data uncertainty by ICES, in order to better reflect the quality of the assessments;
- AF. whereas the genetic structure of populations and sub-populations of commercially exploited stocks is not fully known and should be further investigated by ICES, such as through data calls to Baltic Sea Member States, to improve the knowledge base on the relevant population structures in the region;
- AG. whereas in September 2025, ICES, together with the Commission's Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, stated that for the Baltic Sea the 'traditional uniform management of single species is no longer sufficient to address the complexities observed';
- AH. whereas HELCOM is developing environmental risk maps covering areas particularly vulnerable to eutrophication, anoxia and toxic bottom sediments, which provide information for where to prioritise establishing protected areas and possible fishing closure periods;
- AI. whereas scientific advice for the Baltic Sea should be improved to avoid overestimation of stock size and productivity, undue catch limits and business uncertainty;
- AJ. whereas in accordance with Article 43(3) TFEU, decisions on the setting of total allowable catches (TACs) and other fishing opportunities are the exclusive competence of the Council and, therefore, of the Member States; whereas these decisions must take full account of the latest scientific data and the diversity of

environmental conditions in the Baltic Sea region;

- AK. whereas some non-EU countries including Canada, New Zealand and Australia apply different science-based management systems with varying degrees of precaution compared to the EU;
- AL. whereas effectively managed and well-connected marine protected areas (MPAs) are valuable tools in climate mitigation as well as for broader goals such as biodiversity, resilience and ecosystem health; whereas the restoration of vegetated coastal ecosystems such as tidal marshes and seagrass meadows (coastal blue carbon ecosystems) can contribute to climate change mitigation through increased carbon sequestration;
- AM. whereas the implementation of Article 5 of the Baltic MAP regarding TAC decisions, technical rules and remedial measures has not been sufficient; whereas where actions have been taken 'to ensure rapid return of the stock concerned to levels above those capable of producing MSY' they have not reached their aim;
- AN. whereas while the Baltic MAP Regulation is intended to be a flexible framework to be adjusted under a regionalised approach, such changes have had limited success, to some extent also as a result of the limited implementation of the relevant legislation;
- AO. whereas several EU regulations referred to in the Baltic MAP Regulation stipulate how to avoid risk, and assess healthy stocks and ecosystem components;
- AP. whereas winter fishing of pelagic species in the Baltic Sea during their period of intensive growth and accumulation of energy reserves prior to spawning weakens the reproductive capacity of stocks, as females deprived of adequate nutrition produce fewer and less well-developed eggs, which limits reproductive success and hinders population recovery;
- AQ. whereas in 2023 Parliament's own initiative report called for a pragmatic and balanced approach to MPAs, recognising their diversity in terms of size, species and conservation objectives, underlined the need to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach and emphasised that such policies must carefully consider the socio-economic impact on coastal communities, be grounded in the best available scientific evidence on a case-by-case basis, and ensure the active involvement of fishers in the design and management of MPAs;
- AR. whereas the EU decision-making system on TACs currently distinguishes between management of target species and the protection needs of other species while aiming to apply a precautionary approach, in order to reach and maintain healthy ecosystem status;

- AS. whereas a functional ecosystem as defined in the MSFD requires that all elements of the marine food webs, to the extent that they are known, occur at normal abundance and diversity and levels capable of ensuring the long-term abundance of the species and the retention of their full reproductive capacity, as outlined in Annex I to the MSFD;
- AT. whereas ecosystem-based management is defined by the UNEP as 'the management of human activities and their impacts on ecosystems and natural resources based on consideration of the whole ecosystem;
- AU. whereas preparatory discussions about TAC decisions are held in the Baltic Sea Fisheries Forum (BALTFISH); whereas regionalisation allows for flexible management of EU sea basins; whereas BALTFISH is able to put forward 'joint recommendations' regarding specific measures that should be streamlined;
- AV. whereas the long-term sustainability of the Baltic fisheries sector depends on the integration of environmental, economic and social objectives, ensuring that management measures safeguard employment, regional cohesion and food supply in coastal areas; whereas regional and local knowledge, including that of fishers and coastal communities, represents an essential component of effective management;
- AW. whereas various policy and scientific reports highlight the need for an improved and more coherent approach to decision-making and application of a fully holistic approach; whereas achieving such an approach has been the aim of the ministerial declaration²⁰ from the 'Our Baltic' conferences; whereas concrete results from these conferences and the declaration have been limited, especially in terms of progress on the implementation of environmental legislation;
- AX. whereas the European Ocean Pact, announcing a forthcoming legislative proposal for an Ocean Act, has the ambition to provide a holistic framework to clarify the interlinkages and priorities of existing ocean policies;
- AY. whereas the Commission and the Member States have not taken sufficient action to protect and restore the ecosystems of the Baltic Sea against additional threats such as pollution, eutrophication and climate change; whereas such pressures are transboundary and cumulative in nature and therefore require coordinated action at international and EU level; whereas transitioning to low-impact and

²⁰ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/486161f4-241f-4388-b10e-22f4711acd16_en?filename=ministerial_declaration_our_baltic_conference.pdf.

low-carbon economic activities can contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation;

- AZ. whereas natural predation forms part of the Baltic ecosystem; whereas there is a growing population of certain protected species in the Baltic Sea such as grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) and great cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*); whereas significant impact by seals and cormorants on juvenile cod survival, particularly for Western Baltic Cod, may occur as well as on aquaculture and fishing gear; whereas scientific evidence shows that they have mostly a localised species- and stock-specific impact on fish populations; whereas all factors affecting fish populations have to be considered in order to rebuild Baltic Sea fish stocks; whereas an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management should also integrate environmental factors; whereas addressing these interactions requires targeted and effective management measures based on the best available science and dialogue with all stakeholders; whereas on the adoption of a European cormorant management plan aimed at mitigating the growing impact of cormorants on fish stocks, fisheries and aquaculture, Parliament outlined a series of potential measures to address the ongoing challenges posed by cormorant populations;
- BA. whereas the Commission is assessing the European Union's seal regime; whereas during a public consultation by the Commission there was a strong opinion against the placing on the market of seal products and concerns about seal hunting²¹;
- BB. whereas, since the end of the Second World War, tens of thousands of tonnes of conventional and chemical weapons containing dangerous substances, including chemical warfare agents such as sulfur mustard (mustard gas), tear gas and paralytic-convulsive agents, are gradually releasing hazardous chemicals into the marine environment as a result of progressive corrosion, leading to its contamination, damage to ecosystems and loss of biodiversity, as well as posing a threat to human health and to economic activities dependent on the sea, including fisheries, transport, raw material extraction and the development of marine energy;
- BC. whereas any leakage from chemical storage facilities could lead to the rapid contamination of a large part of the Baltic Sea, which would exceed the capabilities of individual countries and require a coordinated response from the EU;
- BD. whereas the remediation of the Baltic Sea seabed, including the removal of chemical weapons, toxic cargoes and radioactive substances, requires a long-term and financially secure plan

²¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14031-Trade-in-seal-products-fitness-check-of-EU-rules/public-consultation_en.

developed at EU level;

- BE. whereas the sustainable management of Baltic Sea fish stocks is complicated also by data gaps arising from non-reporting of data by Russia, which increases scientific uncertainty and undermines effective regional fisheries management;
- BF. whereas Russia unilaterally decides on quotas, disregarding scientific advice and consistently setting quotas exceeding MSY, potentially risking the recovery of Baltic Sea fish stocks;
- BG. whereas the activity of Russia's so-called shadow fleet has increased since Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine; whereas this fleet operates obsolete vessels that fail to meet safety standards and are used to transport crude oil and petroleum products across the Baltic Sea, with minimal regard for safety, environmental and regulatory standards, poses a serious risk to the marine environment and regional fisheries due to the ageing and poorly maintained condition of its vessels, and also raises concerns with regards to fisheries in the context of the necessary recovery of the Baltic Sea fish stocks and the overall security of the Baltic Sea, with the potential for catastrophic consequences in the event of an oil spill that could affect all countries in the region;

Urgent actions

1. Calls on the Commission and the Council to ensure the effective use of all existing available legal and management tools, including targeted measures, using a science-based approach as well as effective stakeholder consultation, to prevent any further decline in the Baltic Sea fish stocks;
2. Calls on the Commission together with the Member States to assess how the distribution of quotas among fleet segments in the Baltic Sea has evolved and to determine whether a causal link between the pressure on the resources and the national distribution policy of fishing opportunities exists;
3. Urges the Commission and the Member States when implementing the Baltic MAP Regulation to move to a recovery and rebuilding phase for fish stocks, taking measures and actions based on the best available scientific advice, as well as taking other potential interlinked actions related to other EU or national legislation to address all stressors on fish stocks; calls on the Commission and the Member States, when implementing the above-mentioned recovery and rebuilding phase, to consider remedial measures based on the best available science such as suspending targeted fisheries for some stocks in the Baltic Sea as provided for in the MAP, avoiding measures that could undermine the socio-economic stability of coastal communities so as to ensure that fishing activities for human consumption remain sustainable;

4. Calls for the mobilisation of social and financial support, including support for affected communities, local investment, temporary compensation and bridging aid for fishers in line with EU rules to prevent undue hardship and preserve cultural heritage; notes that while temporary measures address immediate ecological concerns, permanent cessation tools are designed to adjust fishing capacity with fishing opportunities in the long-term; calls therefore for a clear separation between temporary and permanent cessation in support schemes; acknowledges that small and medium-scale Baltic fishing enterprises have received no adequate economic compensation for the losses incurred since the closure of targeted cod fisheries in 2019; calls on the Commission to establish a dedicated Baltic fisheries recovery and transition fund to support fleet restructuring, technology modernisation, compensation for losses caused by species-specific fishing prohibitions, and the preservation of coastal fishing communities and their cultural heritage;
5. Stresses that any measures concerning stock recovery must take into account the unique and basin-specific hydrological and chemical conditions of the Baltic Sea, as a semi-enclosed brackish sea characterised by limited water exchange, anoxic zones and persistent sediment contamination that are specific to this basin and not comparable to those of other EU sea basins;
6. Calls on the Council to adopt TACs that are fully aligned with the precautionary approach, taking into account the vulnerability of the Baltic Sea ecosystem, socio-economic factors, and the slow recovery rates of stocks as well as the scientific uncertainty of advice; calls on the Commission to carefully consider socio-economic aspects when evaluating the current MAP; underlines the need for a balanced approach between environmental and socio-economic factors, as set out in Article 2 of the CFP Regulation;
7. Stresses that setting multiannual quotas based on the best-available science could give marine ecosystems in the Baltic Sea time to recover and provide businesses with the stability they need to plan investments, maintain employment and maintain port infrastructure, and support generational renewal in the fisheries sector; underlines that prolonged regulatory instability leads to disinvestment, loss of production capacity and the disappearance of family fishing enterprises, constituting an irreversible socio-economic loss for Baltic coastal communities; stresses that the development of such management measures should include effective, timely and systematic stakeholder consultation;
8. Calls on the Member States and the Commission, taking into account the shortcomings of the Baltic MAP Regulation in terms of reaching its ecological and socio-economic objectives, to consider launching measures in accordance with Articles 12 and 13 of the CFP whenever best available scientific advice indicates the need for such measures,

and to prepare action by analysing the costs and benefits of closing relevant fisheries, including for recreational fisheries, noting lost revenues, livelihoods, food security and the future cost of inaction;

9. Calls for the prevention of irreversible ecological damage to herring and sprat populations in the Baltic Sea in order to secure the long-term viability of coastal and small-scale fisheries targeting those species and safeguarding marine food webs; believes that, based on scientific advice, recovery pauses for the respective stocks must be urgently considered, until scientific evidence demonstrates a clear and sustained recovery of the stocks;
10. Highlights in this regard that to be as effective as possible, remedial measures require appropriate stakeholder involvement and must be based on the best available science in order to achieve their objectives; highlights furthermore the option of creating science-based fish-stock-recovery areas and temporary fishing closures in the Baltic Sea, focusing on winter and pre-spawning aggregation areas with a view to maintaining stable recruitment and a healthy age structure, as well as passive and active restoration measures including in spawning and nursery areas, aligned with provisions in relevant EU environmental legislation; highlights the importance of accompanying such measures with appropriate and timely compensation in line with relevant EU provisions;
11. Recalls the EU's commitments and targets in terms of area coverage and effectiveness of MPAs; encourages the proper implementation of effective management measures in current MPAs in the Baltic Sea, as well as the designation of additional MPAs in line with EU commitments; highlights that this designation should be based on scientific assessments showing critical habitats or spawning grounds; points out the need for effective management measures combined with pilot projects for selective and low-impact fishing gear inspired by successful initiatives in the North Sea and the Skagerrak;
12. Highlights the importance of maintaining viable small-scale fisheries with limited landings in the region, allowing them to operate during rebuilding phases; recalls relevant provisions of the revised Fisheries Control Regulation and their full and effective implementation; stresses that these fisheries are crucial for livelihoods, resilience of traditional supply chains and preserving jobs in coastal fishing communities and that they have particular social and cultural value; points out that strengthening these fisheries can garner greater added value for local economies; highlights the importance of the 3 pillars of sustainable development in line with Article 2 of the CFP;
13. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to give priority to improving the socio-economic situation of small-scale coastal fishers; highlights the importance of fishing opportunities and fishing zones

in coastal areas for small operators; highlights that Member States can achieve these improvements through their national quota allocations in line with Article 17 CFP, as well as through investments in selective and low-impact gear; calls, furthermore, on the Commission and the Member States to assess and, where appropriate, implement differentiated access rules for Baltic Sea fisheries based on vessel length and gear type, specifically with a view to limiting the competitive pressure exerted by large-scale industrial vessels on small and medium-scale family enterprises and coastal communities;

14. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to further strengthen the implementation of the landing obligation to tackle illegal discarding in the Baltic Sea, recognising the need for workable measures, to support selectivity and reduce unwanted catches, and to implement the relevant provisions on this matter in line with the CFP and the Fisheries Control Regulation;
15. Highlights the role of the European Ocean Pact in fostering a holistic approach and a regenerative and sustainable blue economy in the Baltic Sea, with targeted actions to restore fish stocks and reduce environmental pressures; notes that the implementation of the objectives of the Ocean Pact and the Competitiveness Compass requires adequate financial support for the development of a resilient maritime economy that is viable over the long term, as well as to foster innovation, modernisation, decarbonisation and digitalisation;
16. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to reduce the administrative burden and ensure better coordination across policies to strengthen the resilience, competitiveness and long-term sustainability of the Baltic Sea region in the face of ecological and market challenges;
17. Calls on the Commission as the guardian of the Treaties, to act in accordance with the Treaties in cases where the Council and the Member States are in breach of EU rules such as the rules of the Baltic MAP;
18. Calls on the Member States to ensure the full and effective implementation of the EU fisheries control regulation, including provisions addressing misreporting of catches and strengthening the accuracy and reliability of catch reporting in the region;

Improving the scientific advice

19. Underlines the importance of basing fisheries management on the best available scientific advice and the pivotal role of ICES in ensuring scientific coherence, as well as the importance of fishers' knowledge; highlights the importance of the independence of ICES; calls on the Member States and the Commission to ensure that

updated and necessary scientific fishing data are available for ICES in order to continue improving its advice and ensure the timely availability of high-quality scientific assessments; calls on the Commission to make all its requests for scientific advice from ICES publicly available to also allow for an open dialogue;

20. Urges the Commission to immediately request that ICES, in its deliberations on the memorandum of understanding, further develop ecosystem-based, multi-species advice as well as advice on stock recovery, recognising environmental variability and food web interactions, to explore the use of ecosystem-based reference points and ecosystem-adjusted fishing mortality data tailored for the Baltic and specific species interactions, and to also include complementary indicators based on other relevant EU rules such as the MSFD, for example to include large fish indicators as well as age and size distribution indicators; highlights that any such advice should remain transparent and predictable for the sector and avoid overestimation subsequently leading to undue catch limits and business uncertainty;
21. Calls on the Commission, in the case of the Baltic Sea, to request from ICES advice for precautionary buffers related to the uncertainty of the scientific advice, as well as the uncertainty of recruitment and biomass trajectory, as well as advice on the effects of not using ranges above MSY and all relevant consequences, avoiding rigid or automatic reductions that disregard socio-economic realities; stresses that MSY remains an important tool for adaptive and responsible management; calls furthermore on the Commission to request from STECF relevant socio-economic analyses for the Baltic Sea;
22. Calls on the Commission to base all stock assessments used for implementing EU law on B_{MSY} biomass reference points, as reflected in the objectives of Article 3(1) of the Baltic MAP Regulation and Article 2(2) of the CFP;
23. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that the management of Baltic Sea fish stocks includes targets for the restoration of natural size and age distributions within populations in line with Article 2(5)(j) of the CFP that refers to Article 1(1) of the MSFD, recognising that healthy population structures contribute to reproductive capacity, stock resilience and ecosystem stability; encourages the development of monitoring indicators and more selective fishing practices developed in cooperation with the sector that can reduce the systematic removal of larger and older fish and better protect the recruitment potential of the stock;
24. Calls on the Commission, for the purpose of implementing EU law including the Baltic MAP Regulation, to request scientific advice from ICES that considers relevant environmental and ecosystem stressors in the Baltic Sea; considers that this advice should clearly

highlight and reflect, among other factors, risks related to the current state of the environment, land-sea interaction, the increased uncertainty due to climate change and the impact of species interactions including relevant predator populations; emphasises that any advice should also clearly communicate the respective level of uncertainty;

25. Calls on the Commission to consult with ICES within the framework of the existing memorandum of understanding to encourage the regular update of their technical guidelines for harvest control rules and the further refinement of stock assessment methods based on independent scientific criteria; notes that it is important that ICES – when delivering advice to the Commission or the Member States – use the most up-to-date approaches for the Baltic Sea, and that they remain scientifically sound and consistent with the EU fisheries legal framework; acknowledges that this is an internal ICES process;
26. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to initiate a comprehensive genetic population mapping in the Baltic Sea of certain commercially exploited species, including herring and sprat, as well as other commercially exploited species, based on the best available scientific knowledge, and to supplement evidence-based advice for better informed decisions on fishing opportunities and on technical measures; stresses that such genetic data must be fully validated by ICES and integrated into long-term stock assessment models before being used for management purposes;
27. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to enhance the availability and quality of data regarding age and size criteria for the stocks concerned in preparation of fisheries management decisions for the region; highlights that improved data collection on these parameters should support the integration of MSFD Descriptor 3 Criterion 3 (D3C3) as required by Article 3(3) of the Baltic MAP;
28. Calls on the Commission to request that ICES produce a detailed scientific analysis of the current EU approach to utilising scientific advice for the Baltic Sea; calls furthermore on the Commission to ensure that requested advice on catch levels fully reflects all relevant legal requirements and policy objectives including the objectives of the CFP as set out in Article 2; points out the importance for the Commission of addressing possible shortcomings and outlining concrete actions on how the currently available advice on fishing opportunities can be used in a sufficiently precautionary way to meet all relevant legal requirements and objectives;
29. Encourages the Commission and the Council to ensure that TAC-setting is transparent and grounded in the best available scientific advice and knowledge according to the objectives of the Baltic MAP Regulation and the CFP, and according to ecosystem-based multi-species advice, and takes into account interactions between fisheries

and the long-term socio-economic stability of coastal communities;

30. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take into consideration relevant international work and definitions, including that of UNEP, when further developing the understanding of ecosystem-based management within the existing EU legal framework such as on functioning ecosystems as noted in Article 5(5)(a) MSFD;

Other factors impacting Baltic Sea fisheries

31. Requests that the Commission develop a science-based, coordinated and cross-sectoral plan that addresses key stressors affecting the Baltic Sea while ensuring inclusive governance and maritime spatial planning, engaging and cooperating with all relevant stakeholders;
32. Calls on the Commission to utilise the opportunity to support improved policy coordination and coherent implementation of marine and water-related policies through the upcoming legislative proposal for an Ocean Act;
33. Calls for effective climate change mitigation and adaptation measures to address climate-related risks in a timely manner and avoid the escalating risks and costs of delayed action in the region;
34. Calls for the continued and effective implementation of EU environmental legislation while recognising the need for balanced and workable solutions for all affected sectors to address environmental pressures in the Baltic Sea and other EU waters, including nutrient pollution from multiple sources;
35. Calls for a significant increase in investment in modern sewage treatment plants and pollution retention and filtration systems, both in the Baltic Sea countries and in all river basins discharging water into the Baltic Sea; stresses that without the comprehensive modernisation of water and sewage infrastructure, all efforts to improve the quality of the Baltic Sea's waters will remain merely declarative and ineffective;
36. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to base any approach to natural predation on science and stakeholder consultations, including preventive, locally anchored and targeted management measures for great cormorants and grey seals, ensuring that any measures adopted are effective, fulfil all legal obligations, and include adequate monitoring, dedicated and adequate funding and strengthened stakeholder cooperation, to ensure the effectiveness of the implemented measures, including mitigation practices such as deterrents or physical exclusion;
37. Stresses the need for the Commission to take urgent and effective action in response to the pressures exerted by great cormorant

populations on Baltic Sea fish stocks, ensuring that measures are proportionate, regionally adapted and implemented through effective, targeted and locally tailored management interventions based on the best available scientific data, while enabling Member States to apply practical and situation-specific mitigation measures where necessary in order to address local impacts effectively, thereby supporting the long-term sustainability of fisheries in affected coastal areas;

38. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to closely monitor whether measures for the recovery of the critically endangered Baltic harbour porpoise are being effectively implemented and where necessary to take additional measures to avert the main threats to their survival;
39. Recalls that Baltic seal populations were brought to the brink of extinction in the 1970s;
40. Reiterates its call on the Commission to propose an EU great cormorant management plan for Baltic Sea fisheries and aquaculture, based on the best available scientific advice and Member State practices, taking into consideration the plan recently proposed by the Food and Agriculture Organization's European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC²² as well as previous EU-funded research projects such as 'INTERCAFE'²³; stresses the need for preventive measures, compensation for losses, and funding from EU and national sources;
41. Reiterates the grave environmental and safety risks posed by unexploded ordnance (UXO) dumped in the Baltic Sea; recalls its resolution of 27 April 2021 on chemical residues in the Baltic Sea and the successful CHEMSEA, DAIMON and DAIMON 3 projects; urges the Commission and the Member States to take further coordinated and practical measures to systematically locate, assess and monitor these hazardous materials to prioritise areas for remediation;
42. Calls for joint efforts by Member States and the Commission to support the development of scientific research and exchange best practices on safe and cost-effective ways to identify and remove munitions and unexploded ordnance (UXO) from the seafloor with a view to enabling coordinated large-scale remediation actions;
43. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to launch a

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<https://www.fao.org/fishery/services/storage/fs/fishery/documents/EIFAAC/cormorantsplan/EuropeanManagementPlanforCormorants-April2025.pdf>.

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<https://www.ceh.ac.uk/our-science/projects/intercafe>.

coordinated, long-term, adequately funded EU programme aimed at identifying, neutralising and removing Baltic Sea UXO;

44. Condemns Russia's irresponsible, unsustainable and unscientific exploitation of Baltic Sea fish stocks;
45. Calls on the Council and the Commission to consider the unilateral actions of Russia when setting quotas for the Baltic Sea; further calls on the Commission to consider actions aimed at pressuring Russia to bring quotas in line with scientific advice;
46. Strongly condemns the growing presence of Russia's shadow fleet in the Baltic Sea, with operations that bypass key regulatory standards, increasing the risk of oil spills and other environmental hazards; stresses the potential harm to marine ecosystems, local fisheries and human health; further notes concerns that Russian fishery products continue to reach the EU market through existing trade channels, highlighting the need to ensure the effective closure of any loopholes that may undermine the objectives of EU restrictive measures; calls on the Commission to explore further measures to combat Russia's shadow fleet, especially in the Baltic Sea region; calls for enhanced regional cooperation and stricter enforcement to mitigate these risks and protect the Baltic's marine resources; highlights the importance of ensuring the full enforcement of sanctions against Russia;

Legal changes

47. Highlights the urgent need to do more in terms of holistic policy coordination as well as continued and accelerated progress in implementation of legislation of other policy areas in order to avoid relying solely on fisheries measures and preventing further socio-economic decline of coastal communities; notes the efforts that have been made within the context of the 'Our Baltic' conferences; encourages further progress towards concrete results;
48. Urges the Commission to initiate an evaluation and possible revision of the Baltic MAP Regulation with a view to improving its clarity, coherence and practical application, assessing its performance with regard to environmental and socio-economic aspects; stresses further the importance of ensuring that any possible future adjustment of the framework remains simple, science-based and workable for the sector;
49. Calls on the Commission, within a possible revision of the Baltic MAP Regulation, to assess and, where needed, propose the inclusion of salmon and trout stocks as specific stocks to be covered by the scope of the regulation as regards bycatch;
50. Expresses concerns that the added value in terms of regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea has been low, considering that the MAP has mostly consolidated pre-existing or already initiated avenues for

cooperation; notes that due to slow processes and increased bureaucracy accompanying such initiatives, relatively few joint recommendations by Member States have been initiated, leading to a worrying signal that regionalisation provisions of the EU fisheries rules are not being used to adapt management measures to the specificities of the Baltic Sea; highlights the need for regional cooperation between the Baltic countries, including all stakeholders;

51. Stresses that effective Baltic Sea management must be built on trust, dialogue and regional cooperation between Member States, all stakeholders, regional bodies such as HELCOM, and coastal communities to promote practical solutions and knowledge exchange;
52. Calls for a new, regionally adapted approach to the management of risk;
53. Calls for the rules in the MAP to be clarified to make year-to-year flexibility prohibited for stocks below the current Btrigger conservation reference point of the Baltic Sea MAP as currently agreed by the Council;
54. Calls on the Commission to strengthen science-based and proportionate management measures for salmon in the Baltic Sea, ensuring that the ecosystem impacts of herring, sprat and cod fisheries on salmon are properly understood and addressed; urges enhanced monitoring and research to support sustainable salmon management;
55. Emphasises that fisheries management in the EU should be based on European experience, science and regional realities; calls on the Commission to propose regionally adapted rules for the Baltic Sea for actions to be taken automatically when stocks fall below trigger values set in accordance with the precautionary approach, and reiterates that MSY management should be complemented where applicable by measures to differentiate catches according to size and age in the first place; considers that inspiration could be drawn from management practices in other regions such as those of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States, while ensuring consistency with the EU legal framework;
56. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen regional cooperation in line with Article 18 of the CFP;
57. Calls for concrete and effective measures ensuring that fish caught in the Baltic Sea are increasingly directed towards direct human consumption, to promote and incentivise local food supply chains;
58. Notes that some Member States in the Baltic Sea region such as Germany and Sweden have introduced national measures to restrict or prohibit bottom trawling in certain marine areas;

59. Calls on the Commission and the Member States for the Baltic Sea to propose halting trawling for fish meal and fish oil during a rebuilding phase, and limiting extractive activities in MPAs; recognises that approaches differ across the Union in the light of specific ecological, legal and socio-economic contexts; encourages the Member States to continue developing proportionate, science-based solutions in cooperation with stakeholders, in particular the fishing sector and coastal communities, to improve marine protection while ensuring the viability of the EU fisheries sector through a just transition;

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60. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.