**NSAC WORK PROGRAMME 2020-2021**

**Priorities**

## Landing Obligation

The NSAC will work on proposing possible choke mitigation tools available within the regional Joint Recommendation mechanism. Avoiding choke situations and improving selectivity in order to reduce unwanted bycatch will be at the core of NSAC endeavours. With a thorough review of inter-related policies on control, monitoring and enforcement, technical measures and quota allocation, the NSAC will work to identify the cumulative impact of these on selectivity and avoidance of choke situations. We will work on the Management of Prohibited Species.

Where improvements regarding gear-selectivity and unwanted catches’ survivability will have been exhausted, the NSAC will work on examining methods for disposal/utilisation of excess and undersized fish**.** Other methods for use and / or disposal will be considered for ports and regions not having an easy access to fishmeal processing.

We will liaise with scientists, fisheries managers and other experts in order to help us identify and develop best practices regarding the implementation of the landing obligation.

## Fully Documented Fisheries & Control Regulation

To ensure compliance with the Landing Obligation, contribute to scientific data collection and improve management decision-making the NSAC will develop a position on Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) and Fully Documented Fisheries. We will investigate possible ways in which Fully Documented Fisheries could be materialized in a considerate manner for the fishers. REM, CCTV cameras and an automatic image recognition will be looked into as possible tools for monitoring discards.

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

## European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) 2021-2027

Under the new EMFF for 2021-2027 period, we will engage in discussions on how to optimize the use of EMFF funds regarding sustainability of fisheries in the North Sea area and achieve environmental, social and employment objectives of the CFP. We will contribute to the overall sustainability of the fishing sector by exploring possible ways in which Member States could use the EMFF financing for collection, management and use of data for fisheries management and scientific analyses with regards to implementation of the CFP.

## ICES Advice

## The NSAC will maintain collaborative relationship with ICES in connection to the advice on fishing opportunities for the North Sea by participating as observers in workshops and advice drafting groups. We will be working towards bridging the gap between science and management by communicating management issues and striving for better understanding of the underlying assumptions. 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 a 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. Together with the Scheveningen Group of North Sea Members States we will monitor the implementation of technical measures in line with CFP objectives. The NSAC will work on advice on the definition of directed fisheries. We will continue contributing to Joint Recommendations and work towards regionalized approach taking into account different fleet specificities.

## Multi-annual Management Plans / Recovery Plans

We will continue our work with regards to recovery of cod stocks, we will contribute to work in order to reduce unwanted catches and discards and to lower fishing pressure.

## 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 and UK stakeholders will help us find adequate solutions for all related parties. Some stocks will need further examination in order to be able to provide advice on their management.

## Brexit and its implications for the NSAC

To keep our UK stakeholders engaged, we will further examine ways in which to best do this while respecting the rules of the Union and the UK, as well as the possible agreement between both parties. We will engage with the Commission and the Member States to discuss the future of the NSAC and produce advice on post Brexit arrangements for membership, structure and funding of the organisation. As information and details become available, we will advise on post-Brexit arrangements with the UK and Norway.

## Environmental Issues

The NSAC will endeavor to engage with the Commission and follow up on the EU Biodiversity Strategy, specifically on its action plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems planned for 2021. We will continue to participate in discussions related to management measures in Natura 2000 and other Marine Protected Areas. Considering the nature of these topics it is challenging to provide consensus advice on these issues, but where possible this will be provided.

We will follow and feed, where appropriate, into the Farm to Fork strategy, setting the vision for sustainable food systems in Europe, including fisheries. We will monitor announced initiatives relevant for North Sea fisheries and engage in their respective consultation processes.

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 the North Sea Member States, their legislative proposals and spatial planning. We will endeavor to increase our engagement with wind park developers in order 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.

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 and partner up with other relevant international organizations and/or projects.

**Other areas 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 2021 presidency (France) with the aim of establishing greater interaction and improved communication channels and to understand their priorities in advance of January 2021. We will also seek feedback from all NSAC advice submitted to the group. We will participate regularly at the Scheveningen Technical and High-Level Group meetings to share the knowledge and experience of the NSAC members on relevant regional topics.

## Working closely with scientists

We will stay engaged with the members of ICES and will aim at organising some of the NSAC meetings in Denmark, which will give ICES members an 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 data collection. In January 2021, the NSAC is taking over the co-organisation and chairing of the annual ICES MIAC meeting, further strengthening our ties with ICES.

## 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.

## Developing closer links with the European Parliament

NSAC will continue to provide members of the PECH Committee with copies of all NSAC approved advice. We will develop closer links with advisors and rapporteurs of relevant legislative files encouraging participation at relevant NSAC meetings. PECH Committee members will be continuously informed about NSAC activities and meetings via permanent contact established with the PECH Committee Secretariat. As resolved at the MAC/AAC Workshop on the role of Advisory Councils under the Common Fisheries Policy in November 2019, communications from advisory councils will be shared with the PECH Committee Secretariat, who shall further inform its MEPs about AC activities. MEPs were also encouraged to actively follow a chosen advisory council. In our case, MEP Mr Peter van Dalen agreed to be our designated MEP and will therefore be invited to follow closely our activities. Further means will be sought to improve our communication and contact with the Members of the Parliament.

## Relationships with Norway, UK and other third countries

The NSAC will continue to liaise with representatives of the fishing industry of third countries. For example, Norwegian stakeholders will continue to be invited to the Demersal Working Group and the Skagerrak & Kattegat Working Group meetings, in order to exchange relevant information and ideas with the NSAC members. They will be invited to participate in other meetings should there be a need for their expert opinion or experience. The same approach will be followed with the UK representatives, who will be invited and encouraged to take part, as much as possible, in the work of the NSAC.

## Links to the European Commission

While grateful for its current support and engagement, we would welcome further and stronger collaboration with colleagues at DG MARE to be able to proactively contribute to the development of fisheries policy, instead of feeding into consultations alone. The NSAC would like to invite the new Director-General to engage with us 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 in the NSAC work.

**Provisional planning**

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| Title of the meeting | Date | Place | Issues to be discussed |
| **Demersal Working Group** | November 2020 | online | TAC and quotas 2021 NS Cod Landing Obligation Technical Measures Regulation ICES Advice |
| **Executive Committee** | January 2021 | tbc | Advice for Approval Updates from WGs and forward plan Budget monitoring Emerging and strategic issues  Brexit and implications for the NSAC |
| **Ecosystem Working Group** | January 2021 | tbc | Wind farm developments Management measures for MPAs Biodiversity Strategy, Ecosystem-based fisheries management Marine Litter |
| **MIAC (ICES)** | January 2021 | online | tbc |
| **Demersal Working Group** | February 2021 | tbc | Implementation the Landing Obligation ICES stock assessments |
| **Skagerrak and Kattegat Working Group** | February 2021 | tbc | Control regulation Technical measures Fully Documented Fisheries |
| **Demersal Working Group** | April 2021 | tbc | Implementation of the Landing Obligation TAC setting |
| **Ecosystem Working Group** | April 2021 | tbc | Wind farm developments Management measures for MPAs Ecosystem-based fisheries management Marine Litter |
| **Chairs Planning Meeting** | May 2021 | tbc | Forward planning for 2020-21 Legal structure post Brexit |
| **Skagerrak and Kattegat Working Group** | May 2021 | tbc | tbc |
| **Executive Committee** | June 2021 | tbc | Updates from Working Groups Advice for Approval Budget monitoring Presentation and approval of 2021-22 Work Programme and Budget |
| **Demersal Working Group** | July 2021 | tbc | Presentation of ICES advice |
| **Executive Committee** | September 2021 | tbc | Approval of Advice Approval of contracted services Budget monitoring |
| **General Assembly** | September 2021 | tbc | Annual Review Presentation of work plan and budget 2021-2022 Approval of 2019-20 accounts |
| **Ecosystem Working Group** | October 2021 | tbc | Wind farm developments Management measures for MPAs Ecosystem-based fisheries management Marine Litter |
| **Skagerrak and Kattegat Working Group** | October 2021 | tbc | tbc |