NSAC Workplan
November 2026 – October 2027

Background

The North Sea Advisory Council (NSAC), established in 2004, will enter its 23rd year of operations in 2026/2027. The NSAC contributes towards an **integrated and sustainable management of North Sea fisheries** by engaging a broad range of stakeholders to develop targeted advice on key issues.

Through the preparation **of policy recommendations** on the management of North Sea fisheries, the NSAC supports the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) objectives and facilitates stakeholder engagement in implementation and assessment of fisheries and marine environmental policies.

The NSAC General Assembly is constituted of **22 member organisations**, with 14 of these organisations represented in the Executive Committee (13 of which are sector organisations and 1 OIG). In 2026, the NSAC will complete its relocation to Belgium, beginning the 2025/26 operational year as a Belgian entity.

Starting in previous operational year and continuing into 2025/26, the NSAC conducted an **independent external performance review (PR)** to assess its effectiveness over the last 5-year period, based on input from its members and stakeholders and analysis of existing documentation. Specific attention will be put on the representativity and internal functioning. The resulting report was shared with the NSAC constituency and published on the website for external stakeholders.

Mission and objectives of the NSAC

The NSAC supports the European Commission and Member States by submitting policy recommendations on matters relevant to the management of North Sea fisheries. Its work is grounded in a **regional perspective**, offering guidance on the management of specific fish stocks, habitats, fishing interests, and environmental concerns related to fisheries in the North Sea.

To advance an integrated and sustainable management of demersal fisheries, the NSAC works closely with a **diverse range of stakeholders** to develop well-informed, tailored advice on relevant subjects. These recommendations are shaped through inclusive dialogue and iterative processes, framed within the broader context of **marine environmental and socio-economic sustainability** in the North Sea.

NSAC is however experiencing a challenging situation as the other-interest-group category seats at the General Assembly and Executive Committee level are not fully occupied. Since 2020, NSAC has experienced withdrawal of other-interest group members, especially from

environmental NGOs. As a result, our objective for 2026 is to consider measures for attracting new members, including small-scale operators and environmental NGOs. We will reach out to potential members and try to expand their presence and active involvement in the NSAC.

All NSAC advice aligns and reinforces the **objectives and principles of the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)**, particularly the commitment to ensure participatory governance and robust stakeholder engagement.

Our specific priorities are outlined in the following sections, structure by topic and working groups.

Landing Obligation

In 2026/27, the NSAC will focus on various management tools available under the regional **Joint Recommendation** mechanism. A key focus will be on **avoidance of choke situations** and enhancing **gear selectivity** to minimize unwanted bycatch of non-target species. To this end, the NSAC will undertake a comprehensive review of policies related to **technical measures, and quota allocation**, but also consider REM and other technological solutions (such as AI)**,** with the aim of assessing their cumulative impact on selectivity and choke mitigation.
Beyond investigating options for improving gear selectivity and **survivability of unwanted catches**, the NSAC will focus on exploring sustainable methods for the **disposal or utilization of surplus** and undersized fish, as well as fisheries side-streams and waste. In this context, valorisation strategies will be explored to promote circularity and support a zero-waste approach to fisheries.

The NSAC will collaborate with scientists, fisheries managers, and other experts to identify and develop best practices for implementing **the landing obligation**. We will also take an active role in the **evaluation of the implementation of the landing obligation (LO)**, assessing its effectiveness in practice and identifying challenges related to its implementation and control. In view of the broader evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy and the emergence of new technologies and concepts (i.e. **Fully Documented Fisheries**), we will reassess the **landing obligation**'s effectiveness and engage with managers to consider possible legislative instruments that more accurately reflect the reality on the ground.

In relation to Discard Plan and in collaboration with North Sea Member States Group (Scheveningen Group), we will continue providing stakeholder input and evidence to Joint Recommendations regarding *de minimis* and *high survivability* exemptions to the LO.

Fisheries technology and innovation

In the NSAC, we maintain an active focus on monitoring **technological developments** in the fisheries sector, with particular attention to improving selectivity, reducing seabed impact, lowering CO2 emissions, enhancing catch efficiency, and strengthening bycatch registration and monitoring. We will continue to hold presentations on innovative projects, such as those

involving **AI, machine learning, image recognition, and other digital tools,** to ensure stakeholders remain informed and engaged in the development and application of these emerging technologies, as well as to increase uptake of these innovations and understand challenges Simplification of existing rules will play an important role in reducing the bureaucratic burden on fishing operators when engaging in innovation.

Our members regularly exchange information on national innovation and technology programs, sharing relevant insights and advancements within their respective networks to support broader dissemination and uptake. To address challenges in uptake, we will continue analysing and monitoring innovation and policy ecosystems in support of implementation of new technology in demersal fisheries.

In parallel, we closely follow scientific research to ensure our recommendations are grounded in **state-of-the-art science and innovation**. This enhances their relevance for decision-makers and increases the likelihood of their implementation by our members. Through this approach, we aim to foster stronger **integration of science, policy, and society**, ensuring that effective solutions reach end-users efficiently and are adopted in a timely manner.

Evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy

The NSAC will continue its efforts to assess the effectiveness of the **Common Fisheries Policy** and explore whether its current concepts and measures remain fit for purpose. Building on the Conference on the Future of the CFP in September 2024, we will keep identifying elements of the Regulation that are outdated, ineffective, or insufficiently implemented. We will also examine **emerging concepts** that have been overlooked / underexplored / under implemented to date, such as Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) or alternative approaches to MSY, as well as the operationalisation of social indicators. These discussions will delve into both the rationale and the practical implementation of the CFP, to better understand its real-world impacts and feasibility.

In this work, we will closely engage with the fishing industry, NGOs, scientific experts, and other relevant stakeholders to help shape a policy framework that is **future-looking and responsive** to the evolving ecological, social and economic landscapes.

Key areas of focus will keep being governance structures (both regional and external), technical measures for conservation and sustainable exploitation of resources, science, human dimension, technological advances, stakeholder engagement, co-management, and the role and effectiveness, as well as the representativeness, of **functioning of Advisory Councils**.

Implementation of the Control Regulation

In relation to the revised EU Fisheries Control Regulation, the NSAC will contribute to ongoing discussions on the upcoming implementing acts and closely monitor the Regulation's effectiveness. Our work will continue to focus on identifying potential gaps and shortcomings

in implementation, as well as simplification, while engaging stakeholders in discussions on the Regulation's consistency with the broader legislative framework.

We aim to enhance collaboration with the Scheveningen Control Expert Group (CEG) to provide practical, on-the-ground perspectives on **control and enforcement issues**. In 2026, we took a decision to include a standing agenda point in the Executive Committee with recurring updates from the CEG presidency. The NSAC will also actively contribute to the organisation of and participate in the workshops held between Advisory Councils and Member States on the implementation of the revised Control Regulation.

We will also maintain our strong collaboration with the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), providing support where necessary and relevant. The past workshop on monitoring, control and compliance with the LO in the North Sea has proven useful in ensuring a common understanding of EFCA's risk-based approach to monitoring and compliance and we hope to continue productive engagement on this aspect in the future.

The NSAC will provide input on provisions within its remit, including tracking of vessels, electronic monitoring systems such as REM and CCTV, margin of tolerance, system of sanctions, data collection and monitoring of fishing capacity. In view of the new Commission's direction on simplification, we will explore possible avenues for reducing red tape (i.e. in technical measures regulation).

In 2027, the NSAC committed to facilitate one workshop between Advisory Councils and the European Commission to discuss development of Delegated and Implementing Acts of the revised Control Regulation.

Scientific advice and stakeholder engagement

The NSAC is committed to maintaining a strong **collaborative relationship** with ICES, engaging not only through annual meeting between ICES and the ACs (MIAC/O), but also by actively taking part in discussions related to fishing opportunities, ecosystem health, fisheries assessments, and cumulative impacts in the North Sea. This includes our role as observers in ICES workshops and working groups of strategic importance. Work will also continue in the recently established Working Group Engage (WGENGAGE) aimed at implementing ICES Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, in which we are participating as experts.

Our ongoing goal is to help bridge the gap between scientific research, stakeholder observations, and policymaking. We work to ensure that **key management issues** are effectively communicated to both scientific bodies and policymakers, while also contributing, where appropriate, to the assumptions that inform fisheries assessment models. By providing feedback to ICES and managers, we aim to support evidence-based decision-making and enhance the relevance and credibility of scientific advice.

We are also committed to promoting meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the scientific and advisory processes. As part of this, the NSAC is committed to contributing to identification of key ecosystem topics/variables and exploring avenues for stakeholder input to ICES advice. We are especially grateful for the Commission's initiative of involving the

Advisory Councils in the critical step of formulation of ICES advice requests, instrumental in introducing ecosystem variables in the framework of ecosystem-based fisheries management. We believe that direct contact with DG MARE Scientific Unit will prove productive in identifying low hanging fruits and aspects to be integrated in ICES advice on its way to a more holistic and adaptive management. Regular updates from MIRIA meeting are a useful approach to enhancing scientific exchange between managers and stakeholders.

The NSAC is committed to promoting science-industry partnerships for data collection and monitoring. Enhancing the current collaboration with national institutes for integration of fisheries-dependent data in stock assessments and ecosystem overviews will ensure more accurate estimations of the state of the stocks and ecosystems, while also ensuring stakeholder commitment. In more general terms, the NSAC is interested in exploring a more streamlined but highly-regulated sharing of data across-borders based on mutual agreements.

Technical Measures for Conservation of Fisheries Resources

The NSAC remains committed to the conservation of fishery resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through the application of technical measures. Collaborating with the Scheveningen Group of the North Sea Member States, we will monitor the implementation of these measures to ensure alignment with the objectives of the CFP.

Our efforts will include input to upcoming Implementing Acts following the implementation of the **Technical Measures Regulation**. Additionally, we will contribute actively to the development of Joint Recommendations of the Scheveningen Group, promoting a **regionalized approach** that accounts for the unique characteristics and operational realities of different fleet segments operating in the North Sea.

Subject to approved funding of the project, the NSAC aims to provide a forum to discuss the management of non-quota species, such as cephalopods. These emerging fisheries of species, such as squid, cuttlefish and octopus, currently have no management plans in place. To change this, we plan to explore possible co-management modalities and management measures through a series of workshops, organised together with scientists and the UK partners.

Multi-annual Management Plans and TAC-setting

The NSAC will contribute to the evaluation of the **multiannual management plan for the demersal fisheries in the North Sea** while continuing its efforts to support the recovery of cod and other stocks requiring **long-term management measures**. In this work, we aim to strike a balance between ecological sustainability, economic viability, and social objectives. Our approach will be adaptive, pragmatic and effective, ensuring that management measures remain responsive to changing conditions and grounded in the input of relevant stakeholders.

Shared stocks are at greater risk of overfishing. To address this, we will strengthen our efforts in sustainably managing these stocks and ecosystems with third countries, working on potential long-term management strategies.

We remain committed to the ongoing review of the implementation of the EU North Sea **Multiannual Plan, with particular attention to the of TAC setting arrangements**. Our collaboration with stakeholders from Norway and the UK will be essential in identifying fair and balanced solutions that reflect the needs of all parties involved. In parallel, selected fish stocks will require in-depth assessment to enable the development of comprehensive and effective advice on their management.

Brexit

The NSAC is committed to identifying appropriate and constructive ways to involve former UK members in its work, while respecting the regulatory frameworks of both the EU and the UK, as well as the provisions outlined in the **Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA)**. Collaborating with the Commission and Member States, we will actively take part in discussions and provide advice on post-Brexit fisheries arrangements in the North Sea, with a particular focus on the management of **shared quotas**.

We will also continue working closely with other affected ACs and relevant DG MARE Units through the **Inter-AC Brexit Forum**, an informal platform for addressing technical measures and other issues arising from the TCA and related Specialised Committee on Fisheries (SCF) and Working Groups. The forum provides stakeholders with an opportunity to share concerns, promote a level playing field, and contribute to the shaping the SCF's agenda.

We would like to congratulate and thank the Commission for their efforts in securing a long-term fishing access arrangement until 2038. At the same time, we find it of significant importance to monitor and address any unilateral measures that could disproportionately affect EU fleets, such as the recent sandeel case, or the announced closure to bottom-trawling of a number of MPAs in the UK waters. We will continue consulting with DG MARE and the UK counterparts to explore how best to design and implement proposed conservation measures, including identification and monitoring of their conservation objectives, to ensure a **level playing field** across jurisdictions.

Food sovereignty and competitiveness

The NSAC plays a vital role in shaping sustainable fisheries by promoting food sovereignty and the potential of blue foods. In its next work plan, NSAC aims to feed into the 2040 Vision for Fisheries, contributing to a competitive, climate-resilient, and socially inclusive sector. Through inclusive dialogue and stakeholder input, it supports the Competitiveness Compass and advocates policies that enhance regional food systems while safeguarding marine biodiversity and fishing communities.

Environmental sustainability

The NSAC will continue to actively engage with policymakers to support the implementation of the **EU Biodiversity Strategy** and its associated **Action Plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems**, supporting all its pillars, such as reducing fishing's environmental impact, improving selectivity, protecting sensitive species, and strengthening the knowledge base for sustainable fisheries management. Our work will also focus on energy transition of the fisheries sector, including efforts to enhance energy efficiency. The EU Ocean Pact and the ongoing developments in the evaluation of the CFP, Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and Marine Spatial Planning Directive (MSPD), will be assessed from an **environmental sustainability** perspective, taking into account socio-economic implications.

We will remain involved in discussions surrounding management measures for **Natura 2000 sites** and other **Marine Protected Areas as stemming from the Habitats and Birds Directives**, including **Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs)**. Given the complexity and sensitivity of these topics, consensus-based advice may not always be achievable, but we will strive to provide balanced recommendations.

The NSAC will closely follow key initiatives affecting North Sea fisheries and engage in relevant consultation processes, such as under the **MSFD review**. This includes participation in the Marine Strategy Coordination Group and Technical Group Seabed. We will organize dedicated meetings and, budget permitting, wider events involving external stakeholders and academia to explore ecosystem considerations in relation to North Sea fisheries, including for example climate change and seabed disturbance, with the aim to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, identify strengths and gaps, and analyse the relevant legal framework. Advice addressing these, as well as considerations of coherence and regulatory alignment, will be submitted to the Commission and Member States.

Following the adoption of the **Nature Restoration Law and EU Ocean Pact**, we will closely monitor its implementation in Member States and assess their coherence with existing environmental and fisheries legislation. We will advocate for stronger integration and coordination between environmental and fisheries departments at both EU and national levels, ensuring that pillars of sustainability are appropriately balanced through inclusive stakeholder engagement.

The NSAC will pay particular attention to the development of **offshore wind parks** and their cumulative impacts on fisheries and the marine environment. We will collaborate with North Sea Member States on their **marine spatial planning (MSP)** legislative proposals and enhance our engagement with wind park developers to ensure fisheries interests are duly considered. In this context, we will monitor the progress of the **Greater North Sea Basin Initiative** and work with relevant representatives to ensure fisheries are meaningfully consulted in the allocation of marine space, and all competing activities are regarded in an equal way. A regular contact with GNSBI will be maintained, and we will actively contribute to their Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and its implementation. **Mapping of important fishing grounds** will remain a key priority, and we will stay informed of relevant scientific and technical developments in this area. Other potential environmental pressures, such as sand and gravel extraction and CO2 storage will also be evaluated.

We will continue our efforts to address the reduction and disposal of **marine litter**, including abandoned, lost, and discarded fishing gear, and considerations on reduction of underwater noise and pollution. Where common objectives are identified, we will prepare topical advice. Our contributions will be enriched by attending external events, and partnering with international organizations and research initiatives, including national institutes, OSPAR, and ICES.

Social sustainability

The Common Fisheries Policy (Regulation 1380/2013) sets out that fishing activities must contribute to long-term environmental, economic, and social sustainability of the sector. It also emphasises the importance of enhancing **productivity, ensuring a fair standard of living** for those working in fisheries, including small-scale operators, maintaining stable markets, and securing an affordable and reliable food supply for consumers.

Recognizing the increasing emphasis placed by the Commission on the social dimension of the CFP, an area that has historically received limited attention, the NSAC welcomes the ongoing work of the of the STECF Expert Working Group on the Social dimension of fisheries, which we aim to regularly observe and report from. We are also extremely grateful to the STECF EWG chairs for participating in our focus group meetings, enhancing knowledge exchange and refining the social report, but also helping direct our own work to be more focused and useful to STECF. In many fishing communities and regions of the EU, the **social relevance** of the fisheries sector often outweighs its direct economic value, requiring systematic attention and appropriate socio-economic impact assessment of proposed measures.

To address such concerns, the NSAC, in partnership with the NWWAC, will continue its work through the **joint Focus Group on Social Aspects**. This group seeks to identify and analyse key social issues and advance the social sustainability of the sector. It will highlight gaps and limitations in existing fisheries legislation related to the social and economic considerations, propose areas for further exploration, and deliver concrete recommendations aimed at enhancing the well-being of those involved in **commercial, small-scale and recreational fisheries**.

Our work will also examine strategies to promote **generational renewal** and support new entrants in response to the growing challenge of an aging workforce. We will explore aspects such as **vessel safety, certifications and training standards**, and measures to improve general **working conditions** for fishers. Furthermore, we will advocate for the integration of comprehensive socio-economic impact assessments in the development of fisheries management measures. Emphasis will also be put on the **viability of coastal communities** and the need to **reduce conflicts** between stakeholders.

Gender equality within North Sea fisheries will be a continued area of focus. In collaboration with organizations that champion this cause within the sector, we will assess our internal practices and discourse, while also working to elevate the role of women in fisheries in order to improve their visibility, opportunity, and economic and working conditions. Efforts will be made to ensure gender balance in our discussions, meetings and organizational structure. To this end, we continue to encourage appointment of women to available chair positions.

Ecosystem-based Fisheries Management (EBFM)

We strongly advocate the operationalization of **Ecosystem-based Fisheries Management (EBFM)**. In view of this, we will work on exploring ways to advance EBFM by prioritizing ecosystem considerations and identifying acceptable trade-offs, thereby contributing to the strengthening of all three pillars of sustainability and ensuring a more holistic approach to fisheries management. Some of our priorities relayed to DG MARE Scientific Unit in our first dialogue on scientific advice in 2024 include the incorporation of climate considerations, foodweb interactions, sources of natural mortality other than fisheries, and social aspects.

We welcome ICES FEISA framework operationalizing EBFM combining indicators with a risk-based approach to advance knowledge and data development, to support ecosystem-informed scientific advice. We also support ICES efforts in identifying avenues for stakeholder engagement in Management Strategy Evaluations (MSEs) such as the one on herring, and believe this should be replicated in MSEs for other stocks. We see MSEs as a tool for operationalization of EBFM, where all pillars of sustainability are considered and trade-offs recognized.

In terms of socio-economic models and projects advancing these, the NSAC systematically contributes to developing these in a way that reflects stakeholder views, concerns and priorities. Some of the projects we contributed to involve SEAwise, SURIMI, GNSBI, and Ecoscope. We strive to become a go-to platform to obtain stakeholder input for the North Sea region.

Other areas of interest

Continue to develop closer links with the Scheveningen Group

The NSAC will maintain its close cooperation with the Scheveningen Group of the North Sea Member States. We will continue our engagement with the 2027 French Presidency in both the **Technical and High-Level Group meetings.** Our aim is to strengthen dialogue and enhance stakeholder input into the development of proposed technical measures. To this end, we will solicit contributions from our members input on any draft Joint Recommendations under consideration by the Group, ensuring that our advice reflects a broad range of perspectives. In parallel, we will seek continuous engagement with the **Scheveningen Control Expert Group** to address issues related to fisheries control and enforcement in the region. We will also seek updates from the FISH-ENV Member State group dealing with the Nature Restoration Law.

Working closely with other Advisory Councils

The NSAC will continue to collaborate closely with other ACs on a range of horizontal and regional issues, including elements of the revised Control Regulation and selected technical measures, as well as to ensure level playing field between fleets, also from third countries.

Where mutual benefit and shared interests are identified, inter-AC cooperation has proven highly valuable and will remain a key part of our strategy. Some recent examples of such collaboration include the NSAC/BSAC workshop on the seals and cormorants interactions with fisheries in the North and Baltic sea basins, joint-AC workshop on Control, ongoing NWWAC/NSAC Focus Group on Skates and Rays management, NSAC/NWWAC FG on Social Aspects, the Inter-AC Brexit Forum, MIAC meetings, and the joint AC workshop at the EMD 2026.

The AC Secretariats maintain regular dialogue throughout the year to explore potential synergies across sea basins and on cross-cutting policy themes. This collaborative approach enhances the effectiveness and coherence of AC advice and contributes to a more integrated and responsive advisory system. Lastly, NSAC will work with ACs to develop a Memorandum of Understanding on good management practices with view to improve internal management and functioning of ACs.

Developing closer links with the European Parliament Fisheries Committee

The NSAC will continue to share all adopted advice with the PECH Committee for information. We aim to strengthen our links with advisors and rapporteurs working on relevant legislative files, by encouraging their participation in NSAC meetings and activities. Regular communication with the PECH Committee Secretariat will ensure that MEPs remain informed of NSAC developments. To further enhance engagement, we will explore additional outreach means, including inviting MEPs to subscribe to our newsletter and proposing bilateral meetings, where appropriate, to inform the members about NSAC positions and priorities.

Relationships with Norway, UK and other third countries

The NSAC will maintain regular dialogue with representatives of the Norwegian and UK fishing industries. We will continue to invite them to relevant Working and Focus Group meetings to facilitate the exchange of relevant information and perceptions on proposed measures and developments regarding the **North Sea shared stocks and access to waters**. Where their expertise is particularly relevant, they will be invited to participate in other NSAC meetings to contribute to discussions. To strengthen our cooperation on important shared stocks, we will *consider establishing a* North Sea Stakeholder Forum dedicated to discussions on management and science of these stocks. The aim is to feed technical considerations as identified by stakeholders as well as relevant MARE units dealing with EU-UK-NO files.

Developing closer links with other (environmental) actors such as OSPAR

Since being granted **observership status** in 2021, the NSAC has participated in several OSPAR meetings, particularly those addressing the environmental impacts of human activities. Regular updates from these meetings are shared with the NSAC membership, and participation in OSPAR developments is encouraged when relevant and feasible.

Relationships with Stakeholders

The NSAC is committed to strengthening stakeholder engagement both within and beyond its membership. We aim to **broaden stakeholder representation and engagement** to improve the collaborative management of marine resources. This also includes opportunities to engage other marine space users, such as offshore wind and energy operators, to support more integrated and inclusive management approaches.

To improve the functioning of the Advisory Councils, we will work closely with all relevant actors to foster trust and build cooperative capacity within the NSAC. In the context of the CFP evaluation, we will keep working on implementing strategies to improve the functioning and representativeness of ACs. Starting in 2025, an **independent external performance review** is being carried out and will be completed in 2026, offering valuable insights into the strengths and areas for improvement in NSAC stakeholder relations.

The NSAC will work on an action plan of measures to improve its representativeness and internal functioning. These measures involve fully implementing our Code of Conduct, improving our Rules of Procedure and processes to address any shortcomings in terms of representation and handling of consultation procedures. Additionally, we will reach out to other-interest group entities, including environmental NGOs, and try to expand their presence and active involvement in the NSAC. Acknowledging the challenges with achieving the 60%:40% objective fully in a narrow timeframe, the NSAC would like to attract at least 1 other-interest group member by September 2026. Together with experts conducting our performance review, we will discuss possible pathways in the form of an Action Plan to achieving organisational transformation.

Links to the European Commission

The NSAC welcomes the strengthening of its collaboration with DG MARE, particularly through **improved Inter-AC meetings** involving the AC Secretariats and DG MARE services, as well as through the Commission's active participation in NSAC meetings. DG MARE's demonstrated commitment to considering NSAC's proposals significantly reinforces our members' motivation to contribute constructively to the development of fisheries policy.

The NSAC remains open to bilateral dialogue with the Directorate to strategically shape future collaboration and agenda-setting. We strongly encourage the Commission to attend NSAC meetings whenever possible, as direct engagement is essential for fostering **effective stakeholder participation** and maintaining a productive and transparent dialogue.

NSAC work priorities

General

1. *Work towards integrated and sustainable management of North Sea fisheries.*
2. *Provision of advice on the sustainable management of North Sea fisheries.*
3. *Promotion of objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy.*

4. *Development of innovative approaches to fisheries management on all levels.*
5. *Promotion of stakeholder engagement and co-management in regional context.*
6. *Increased involvement of other-interest group entities as full members of the NSAC, especially at the Executive Committee level.*
7. *Contribution to research projects on sustainable environmental, social and economic management of the North Sea.*

Work priorities identified for each Working Group and Focus Group (where available)

The NSAC Executive Committee is responsible for overseeing the performance of Working Groups and addressing overarching topics that span across regions and ecosystems of the North Sea, the Skagerrak and the Kattegat. Below we list topics within each of the functional working groups. The NSAC conducts its work through three permanent Working Groups, namely the Demersal Working Group, Skagerrak and Kattegat Working Group and the Ecosystem Working Group, as well as through various permanent and *ad hoc* focus groups.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee meets three times per year. Meetings cover updates from Working Group, legislative and procedural developments from the Commission and Scheveningen Group on cross-cutting topics not limited to specific geographic areas. The Executive Committee sets annual work priorities, financial planning and objectives. Horizontal focus groups intended to facilitate discussion and the drafting of advice can be launched by the Executive Committee. Advice developed in these groups follows a one-stage ExCom approval. Consultation procedure in this group takes 10 working days unless otherwise agreed by the ExCom Chair and Vice-chairs.

Meetings: 3 per year

Meeting agendas may include:

- Updates on legislative files from Scheveningen Group/DG MARE/Working Groups
- Updates on outreach to OIGs and status of potential new membership
- The Common Fisheries Policy
- The EU Ocean Pact
- Technical Measures (general aspects)
- Energy transition
- Control and enforcement
- EMFAF
- 3rd country relations / Brexit and governance of shared stocks
- Stakeholder engagement
- Greater North Sea Basin Initiative & Marine Spatial Planning
- Food security & sovereignty
- Other horizontal issues, as identified

Demersal WG

The Demersal Working Group meets three times per year and covers ICES area IV. Topics include fishing opportunities, such as annual TAC and quota negotiations, ICES Advice, and the potential mitigation of choke situations, as well as bi-lateral and tri-lateral negotiations between the EU, UK and Norway. The Landing Obligation is discussed in terms of the annual discard plan, implementation, and issues related to control and enforcement. Improving selectivity in order to reduce unwanted bycatch is explored. Further attention is given to technical measures and their harmonisation across fleets where applicable. Management of stocks, in particular multi-annual management plans and recovery strategies for species in decline, such as cod, is discussed, as is general fisheries science on stock surveys and scientific basis for technical measures. The designation and management of specific MPAs for the North Sea basin is also addressed. Focus groups intended for discussion and advice drafting can be established by the Working Group. Advice produced through such a focus group require two-step approval (first by Demersal WG and then by the ExCom). The standard consultation procedure is 10 working days, unless otherwise agreed by the Chairs and Vice-chairs.

Meetings: 3 per year

Geographical area: North Sea (ICES area 4)

Meeting agendas may include:

- **Fishing opportunities**
  - TAC and quotas
  - ICES Advice
  - Choke risks and mitigation
  - EU-NO-UK negotiations

- **Landing Obligation**
  - Discard Plan
  - LO Implementation
  - Control & enforcement
- **Technical Measures regulation and implementation**

- **Legislative and technical updates**
  - Commission / DG MARE
  - Scheveningen Group / Member States
  - Third countries (UK, Norway)

- **Management of Stocks**
  - Multi-annual management plans

- **Regional MPAs**
  - Designation and management of region-specific MPAs

- **Science in fisheries**
- Stock survey updates
- Scientific underpinning of technical measures
- Novel bycatch reduction studies
- Other/general
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- **Socio-economic issues**

- **Ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management**

Ecosystem WG

The Ecosystem Working Group meets three times per year and discusses overarching environmental issues, such as Marine Protected Areas, Marine Spatial Planning, prohibited species, participatory approach to the management, socio-economic aspects of environmental policies, marine litter, and impacts of human activities (such as wind farms, marine noise, sand extraction). The group operates within the regulatory framework of the Common Fisheries Policy, while also addressing broader EU environmental legislation, including the EU Biodiversity Strategy, Natura 2000, Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Birds and Habitats Directives, and the new Nature Restoration Law. It covers topics related to the state of the ecosystem and scientific research, such as vulnerable benthic communities, data collection efforts etc. The working group serves as a platform for legislative and policy updates from DG MARE and, where relevant, DG ENVI. Focus groups intended for discussion and advice drafting may be launched by the Working Group. Advice produced in such a focus group require a two-step approval (first by EWG and then by ExCom). Consultation procedure takes 10 working days, unless otherwise specified by the Chairs and Vice-chairs.

Meetings: 3 per year

Geographical area: Greater North Sea region (ICES areas 3 and 4)

Meeting agendas may include:

- **Regulatory Framework**
- Legislative updates (DG MARE, DG ENVI, OSPAR)
- EU Biodiversity Strategy
- Natura 2000
- Birds and Habitats Directives
- Nature Restoration Law
- Marine Strategy Framework Directive
- Marine Spatial Planning

- **General on MPAs**
- Natura 2000
- MSFD
- Participatory approach/stakeholder engagement/co-existence
- MPA management

- **Prohibited Species**
  - Prohibited Species List

- **Marine pollution**
  - Marine plastics
  - Circular design of fishing gear

- **Human interferences in marine environment**
  - Climate change
  - Offshore renewables
  - Marine noise
  - Sand extraction
  - Other

- **Science in ecosystems**
  - Vulnerable benthic communities
  - Data collection framework directive
  - Scientific underpinning of conservation measures

- **Decarbonization and energy transition of the fleet**

Skagerrak and Kattegat WG

Meetings: 3 per year

Geographical area: Skagerrak & Kattegat (ICES area 3)

Meeting agendas may include:

- **Fishing opportunities**
  - TAC and quotas
  - ICES Advice
  - Choke risks and mitigation
  - EU-NO-UK negotiations

- **Landing Obligation**
  - Discard Plan
  - LO Implementation

- **Technical Measures**
  - TM Regulation
  - Specific technical measures implementation
  - Harmonisation of TM across geographical area

- **Legislative & technical updates**
  - Commission / DG MARE

- Scheveningen Group / Member States
- Third countries (UK, Norway)

- **Management of Stocks**
- Multi-annual management plans
- Cod management/recovery plan

- **Regional MPAs**
- Designation and management of region-specific MPAs

- **Science in fisheries**
- Stock survey updates
- Scientific underpinning of technical measures
- Other/general

Existing and planned focus groups in 2026-27:

- Skates and Rays management FG (NWWAC, NSAC)
- Social Aspects FG (NWWAC, NSAC)
- Inter-AC Brexit Forum (NSAC, MAC, PELAC, NWWAC, LDAC)
- Brown Crab FG (NWWAC, NSAC)
- Landing Obligation FG
- Climate Change FG (NSAC)
- MSFD FG (NSAC)
- Simplification FG (NSAC)
- Co-management of cephalopods FG
- Small-scale fisheries FG
- Various Advice Drafting Groups (ADGs), as needed

Other issues of interest if any:

Workshops, webinars and seminars

Besides standing working and focus groups, the NSAC organizes external events, such as workshops, symposia, webinars, and conferences. This allows us to engage with broader audience and address complex topics more holistically. External events have proven to a be a valuable tool for several reasons: they bring together a wide range of stakeholders, including those outside the NSAC; they condense discussions that would typically span multiple meetings into a single focused event; and they raise the visibility of the NSAC's work among stakeholders who may not be regularly involved. Additionally, these events allow to maximise cost-efficiency as the combine multiple services under a single fixed cost. Outputs from these events typically include comprehensive reports, many of which are converted into formal advice papers to the EU Commission and Member States.

In 2026/27, the NSAC may continue hosting such events, based on the needs of its membership and taking into consideration its budget.

Planned recommendations for year 2026-27:

No	Issue/subject	Link with the CFP	WG/FG at the origin of the recommendation	Planned date of adoption (if available)
1	Advice on CFP	Article 2(5a)	Executive Committee	Q4 2026
2	Advice on technical measures	Article 2(5a)	Demersal WG / Skagerrak & Kattegat	Q4 2026
3	Advice on Nature Restoration Law and MSFD	Article 22	Ecosystem WG	Q4 2026
4	Advice on fisheries science	Article 2(3)	Demersal WG	Q1 2027
5	Advice on the NS Discard plan 2028	Article 2(5a)	Demersal WG	Q1 2027
6	Advice on shared stocks	Articles 2(5d) and 3	Inter-AC Brexit Forum / Demersal WG	Q3 2027
7	Advice on NS fishing opportunities	Article 2(5a)	Demersal WG / Skagerrak & Kattegat	Q4 2027
8	Advice on skates and rays management	Article 2(5a)	Skates and rays FG	2027
9	Advice on social aspects of fisheries	Article 2(5f and 5i)	Social Aspects FG	2027
10	Advice on MSP/Ocean Act	Article 2(3)	Ecosystem WG	Q4 2026
11	Advice on implementation of control regulation	Article 2(5a)	Landing Obligation FG	2027
12	Advice on bottom-trawling in the North Sea	Article 3	Ecosystem WG	Q4 2026
13	Advice on simplification of rules	Commission's initiative	Executive Committee	Q4 2026
14	Advice on EBFM/MSEs	Article 2(3)	Demersal WG	Q42026
15	Advice on co-management of cephalopods	Article 2(5a)	Demersal WG	Q4 2027

Planned participation to Commission public consultations*

Topic/subject	Link with the CFP	Deadline for the EU Survey (if available)	Planned date for adoption (if available)
MSFD Review			
CFP Review			
MSPD review			

*The NSAC will respond to any relevant public consultations in the form of advice papers.

NSAC planning of meetings (from November 2026 to October 2027)

No	Date (for the first 6 months, please provide precise dates)	Topics /subjects of meeting	Type of meeting (physical/planned/hybrid)	European Commission participation requested (yes/no)	If Commission participation requested, specific issues to be dealt with	Priority for a Commission participation (from 1 to 4) (1= highest priority)
1	27 February 2027	Ecosystem Working Group	In person/hybrid for speakers	Yes	NRL/MSFD	1
2	27 January 2027	Executive Committee	In person/hybrid for speakers	Yes	CFP review, Vision 2040	1
3	10 February 2027	Demersal Working Group	In person/hybrid for speakers	Yes	EU/UK/NO negotiations	2
4	24 February 2027	Skagerrak & Kattegat Working Group	online	Potentially	Technical measures	3
5	7 April 2027	General Assembly	In person/hybrid for speakers	Yes	Vision 2040	1
6	9 June 2027	Executive Committee	In person/hybrid for speakers	Yes	TBD	1
7	9 June 2027	Ecosystem Working Group	In person/hybrid for speakers	Yes	TBD	1
8	8 July 2027	Joint Demersal and Skagerrak & Kattegat WGs	In person/hybrid for speakers	No	/	
9	15 September 2027	Executive Committee	In person/hybrid for speakers	Yes	TBD	1
10	15 September 2027	Ecosystem Working Group	In person/hybrid for speakers	Yes	TBD	2
12	13 October 2027	Demersal Working Group	In person/hybrid for speakers	Potentially	EU-UK-NO	2
13	20 October 2027	Skagerrak & Kattegat WG	online	No		