

Brussels, 20 June 2022

EAA position on recreational fishing for Western Baltic cod in 2023

Common position statement by the European Anglers Alliance (EAA) for Western Baltic cod in 2023. The EAA is a pan-European organisation for recreational angling, defending the interests of approximately 10 million anglers that go fishing every year.



**DEUTSCHER
ANGELFISCHER-
VERBAND e.V.**



SportFiskarna

The position statement was written by four EAA members that have a particular interest regarding fishing opportunities for Cod in the Western Baltic Sea: Deutscher Angelfischerverband e.V. (Germany), Sportfiskarna (Sweden) and Sportfiskerforbund (Denmark).

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) published its catch recommendations for western Baltic cod (*Gadus morhua*) on May 31, for the year 2023. Current scientific information shows that the western Baltic cod stock suffers from both environmental factors affecting reproductive success, a previous history of overfishing and that selective commercial fishing gears that could reduce bycatch of small cod have not yet been utilised.

For cod in the western Baltic Sea, ICES has recommended within the framework of the EU management plan a total catch of 943 t. This is an increase of 35 % compared to the 2022 ICES (total catch corresponding to the MAP F_{MSY} = 698 t) which was the basis for the Agriculture and Fisheries Council's decision for the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 489 t in subdivisions 22-24 (Western Baltic).

Recreational fishing vs commercial fishing – a totally different approach

While commercial fishers want to get their permitted catch, the so-called quota, as quickly as possible with as little effort as possible, recreational fishers prefer a different approach. Profit is not a motive for recreational anglers as the sale of recreationally caught fish is forbidden. With a daily harvest limit the angler is given a daily maximum catch and whether they reach this or not, is not the primary reason to fish from the coast or to venture out onto the Baltic Sea. Just the experience of fishing together with the chance of catching a fish is what drives most anglers. The ability to perhaps take home a fish and not just the size of the daily harvest limit is often seen as a goal and not, as in commercial fishing, as the sole motivator for going fish (Gundelund et al., 2022¹).

¹ Gundelund, C, Arlinghaus R, Birdsong, M, Flávio H, & Skov C (2022). Investigating angler satisfaction: The relevance of catch, motives and contextual conditions. *Fisheries Research*, 250, 106294.

Recognize the added value of recreational anglers

Total economic impact of marine recreational fishing amounts to 10.5 billion euro, supporting almost 100 000 jobs in Europe (Hyder et al, 2017²). The largest share of this expenditure is on boats, fishing tackle, travel, and overnight stays. Anglers are therefore an important source of income for tourism in coastal regions, especially in the off season.

Anglers live for the enjoyment of fishing and the chance of catching a fish, not for the amount caught

The so-called bag limit (daily harvest limit) has been in effect for recreational cod fishing in the western Baltic Sea and Öresund region since 2016. This means that the daily catch allowed for all recreational fishers is limited to a certain number of fish. In 2022 the daily harvest was limited to 1 fish per angler and fishing day.

The European Anglers Alliance has recognized that, as protectors and users of the stock, anglers have made their contribution to the recovery of the stock and will continue to do so in the future.

These are the demands of the European Anglers Alliance for 2023:

- **Recreational fishing opportunities for cod must be preserved.**
- **Consider alternative management measures which further lower the recreational catch: e.g., increased minimum landing size; introduce a maximum landing size - to protect the biggest cod, the 'super spawners; targeted management of recreational fishing; intensification of the dialogue between the interest groups, science, and politics.**
- **No dedicated fishing activities on spawning cod.**
- **Improvement and obligatory use of selective gear to reduce bycatch of cod in commercial fisheries, is urgently needed.**
- **Investigate and consider the impact of cormorant predation on cod stocks^{3,4,5}.**

² Hyder K, Radford Z, Prellezo R, Weltersbach MS, Lewin WC, Zarauz L, Ferter K, Ruiz J, Townhill B, Mugerza E, Strehlow HV (2017). Research for PECH Committee - Marine recreational and semi-subsistence fishing - its value and its impact on fish stocks. IP/B/PECH/IC/2016-131. European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies: Brussels. ISBN 978-92-846-1604-6. 136 pp.

³ Jepsen N (2022) Cormorants and fish population – Documentations of effects. Public hearing on Cormorant problematic affecting EU fisheries and aquaculture, 11 May 2022. Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/248202/01%20Niels%20Jepsen.pdf>

⁴ Pietrock, M, Sternberg N (2021). Analyse von Speiballen zur Ermittlung der Nahrungszusammensetzung von Kormoranen in den Gebieten Plöner Seen, Untertrave und Schlei. Bericht im Auftrag des Ministeriums für Energiewende, Landwirtschaft, Umwelt, Natur und Digitalisierung des Landes Schleswig-Holstein. Institut für Binnenfischerei e. V. Potsdam-Sacrow, 90 pp.

⁵ EIFAAC (2022) Impact of cormorant predation on fish and fisheries in Europe. EIFAAC Advisory note: 1/2022