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Delegations will find attached document COM(2025) 458 final.

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COM(2025) 458 final

2025/0253 (NLE)

Proposal for a

COUNCIL REGULATION

**fixing the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks
applicable in the Baltic Sea for 2026 and amending Regulation (EU) 2025/202 as regards
certain fishing opportunities in other waters**

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSAL

• Reasons for and objectives of the proposal

In accordance with Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the common fisheries policy (the ‘CFP Basic Regulation’)¹, marine biological resources must be exploited in a way that restores and maintains populations of harvested species above levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield (‘MSY’). An important tool for ensuring this is the annual fixing of fishing opportunities in the form of total allowable catches (‘TACs’) and quotas.

Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea (the ‘MAP’)² further specifies target ranges for fishing mortality. These ranges are used in this proposal to achieve the objectives of the common fisheries policy (‘CFP’) and in particular to restore and maintain MSY.

This proposal aims to fix fishing opportunities for 2026 for the most commercially significant fish stocks in the Baltic Sea. It also aims to regulate marine recreational fisheries to the extent required to conserve the fish stocks covered by this Regulation. To simplify and clarify the annual TAC and quotas decisions, fishing opportunities in the Baltic Sea have been fixed by a separate regulation since 2006.

• Consistency with existing policy provisions in the policy area

The proposal sets TACs and quotas at levels consistent with the objectives of the CFP Basic Regulation and the MAP.

• Consistency with other Union policies

The proposal is consistent with other Union policies, in particular with the policies in the field of the environment.

2. LEGAL BASIS, SUBSIDIARITY AND PROPORTIONALITY

• Legal basis

The legal basis for the proposal is Article 43(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (‘TFEU’).

• Subsidiarity (for non-exclusive competence)

The proposal falls under the Union’s exclusive competence referred to in Article 3(1)(d) TFEU. Therefore, the subsidiarity principle does not apply.

¹ 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/EC (OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/1380/2023-01-01>).

² 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 1098/2007 (OJ L 191, 15.7.2016, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/1139/oj>).

- **Proportionality**

The proposal allocates fishing opportunities to Member States according to the objectives of the CFP Basic Regulation and the MAP. Under Article 16(6) and (7) and Article 17 of the CFP Basic Regulation, Member States are to decide how the fishing opportunities allocated to them are allocated to fishing vessels that fly their flag according to certain criteria set out in those Articles. Member States can therefore exercise the necessary margin of discretion while distributing the allocated TACs, in line with their preferred social/economic model for using the fishing opportunities allocated to them by the proposal.

- **Choice of instrument**

A regulation is considered the most appropriate instrument because it makes it possible to set requirements that apply directly to Member States and relevant businesses. This will help ensure that the requirements are implemented in a timely and harmonised way, thus leading to greater legal certainty.

3. RESULTS OF *EX POST* EVALUATIONS, STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS AND IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

- **Stakeholder consultations**

The Commission consulted stakeholders (particularly through the Baltic Sea Advisory Council) on the basis of its Communication on ‘Sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2026’ (COM(2025) 296 final). The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (‘ICES’) provided the scientific basis for the proposal. The views expressed by the consulted stakeholders on all fish stocks concerned were taken into account as much as possible but without contradicting current policies or causing any deterioration in the state of vulnerable resources.

Scientific advice on catch limitations and on the status of stocks was also discussed with Member States at the BALTFISH regional forum in June 2025.

- **Collection and use of expertise**

The Commission consulted ICES whose scientific advice is based on an advice framework developed by its expert groups and decision-making bodies and issued in line with its framework partnership agreement with the Commission.

The Union seeks scientific advice on the state of important fish stocks from ICES each year. The advice received covers all Baltic stocks and TACs are proposed for the commercially most significant stocks³.

- **Impact assessment**

The proposal is part of a long-term approach in which fishing is adjusted with the objective to contribute to achieving – and then maintaining – sustainable long-term levels. Over time, this approach is expected to result in (i) stable fishing pressure; (ii) higher quotas; and therefore (iii) improved incomes for fishers and their families. Increased landings are expected to benefit (i) the fishing industry; (ii) consumers; (iii) the processing and retail industry; and (iv) the rest of the industry linked to commercial and recreational fishing. In this context, the link between sustainable fisheries and a healthy marine environment in the Baltic Sea needs to be

³ <http://www.ices.dk/advice/Pages/Latest-Advice.aspx>

stressed, in line with the biodiversity strategy and other related initiatives, notably the EU action plan for marine ecosystems and fisheries⁴ and the European Ocean Pact⁵.

This proposal seeks to avoid short-term approaches in favour of long-term sustainability. It therefore takes account of initiatives by stakeholders and advisory councils if they have been positively reviewed by ICES and/or the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF). The Commission proposal (SEC(2011)891) that led to the CFP Basic Regulation was based on an impact assessment that considered that, although achieving the MSY objective was a necessary condition for environmental, economic and social sustainability, those three objectives cannot be achieved in isolation.

Until 2019, decisions on Baltic Sea fishing opportunities succeeded in setting the TACs for all stocks with MSY advice in line with the MSY ranges at the moment of TAC setting, except for western Baltic herring. These decisions also contributed to rebuilding stocks and rebalancing fishing capacity and fishing opportunities. However, in 2019, it became apparent that eastern Baltic cod had been under severe pressure. ICES estimates have since suggested that this stock will most probably remain below the B_{lim} conservation reference point in the years to come. In 2021, it became apparent that the western Baltic cod stock had also been below B_{lim} for many years, and ICES also underlined that several salmon populations were not in a good condition. Until 2020, ICES estimated that the biomass of central Baltic herring was below the MSY $B_{trigger}$ conservation reference point. Since 2023, ICES has estimated that the biomass had actually been fluctuating around B_{lim} since the 1990s. That biomass has increased since 2021 and is estimated to be above B_{lim} but still far below MSY $B_{trigger}$. The biomass of Bothnian herring has been continuously decreasing since its peak in 1994. Following a benchmark in 2024, that biomass is estimated to have been below MSY $B_{trigger}$ since 2019 and has decreased further to one of the lowest levels on record halfway between MSY $B_{trigger}$ and B_{lim} . The biomass of sprat has substantially decreased over the last years to its lowest level since 1990 and has come close to MSY $B_{trigger}$. Further progress is therefore still needed to reach and maintain MSY for all Baltic Sea stocks.

On 28 May 2025 ICES published its scientific advice for the various Baltic stocks for 2026 which, for eastern Baltic cod, was a re-issuance of the advice given for 2025 due to the unchanged (critical) condition of the stock. The advice for eastern Baltic cod (from 2024), western Baltic cod and salmon in the Gulf of Finland is based on the precautionary approach. The biomass of both cod stocks remains below B_{lim} . The other seven stocks have received MSY advice with the following biomass estimates:

- sprat, herring in the Gulf of Riga and plaice are estimated to be above MSY $B_{trigger}$;
- central Baltic herring and Bothnian herring are estimated to be below MSY $B_{trigger}$;
- western Baltic herring is estimated to be below B_{lim} ; and
- the various salmon populations in the main basin are estimated to remain in highly varied conditions (between below R_{lim} and above R_{MSY}).

⁴ Communication from the Commission of 21 February 2023 to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, EU Action Plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries (COM(2023) 102 final).

⁵ Communication from the Commission of 5 June 2025 to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, The European Ocean Pact (COM(2025) 281 final).

It is therefore proposed to maintain the approach taken in 2025 for salmon in the main basin, while decreasing the TAC by -27%. It is also proposed to decrease the fishing opportunities compared to 2025 for Bothnian herring by -62%, for herring in the Gulf of Riga by -17% and for plaice by -3%. It is further proposed to increase the fishing opportunities for salmon in the Gulf of Finland by +1% compared with 2025 and to keep unchanged the fishing opportunities for central Baltic herring, and sprat. The by-catch allocations for eastern and western Baltic cod and for western herring compared to 2025 would decrease by -63%, -84% and -50% respectively.

Therefore, the economic impact of the proposal for 2026 will be that overall the fishing opportunities will decrease for six Member States and be stable for two. All in all, the proposal leads to a level of approximately 295 000 tonnes, representing a 14.3% reduction when compared to the fishing opportunities for 2025.

- **Regulatory fitness and simplification**

The proposal remains flexible in the application of quota-exchange mechanisms already laid down by regulations on fishing opportunities in the Baltic Sea in previous years. There are no new rules or new administrative procedures proposed for Union or national public authorities that could increase administrative burden.

The proposal concerns an annual regulation that applies in 2026. It therefore does not include a revision clause.

4. BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS

The proposal has no implications for the Union budget.

5. OTHER ELEMENTS

- **Implementation plans and monitoring, evaluation, and reporting arrangements**

Monitoring and compliance will be ensured in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009⁶.

- **Detailed explanation of the specific provisions of the proposal**

The proposal fixes fishing opportunities for certain stocks or groups of stocks for fishing in the Baltic Sea for 2026.

To set Union quotas for stocks shared with the Russian Federation, the respective quantities corresponding to the Russian Federation's historic share in these stocks have been deducted from the catches advised by ICES. The fishing opportunities allocated to Member States are set out in the Annex to the proposal.

Regarding eastern Baltic cod, in agreement with the Commission, for 2026, ICES re-issued its advice given for 2025 as the stock remains in the same critical state as in 2025. ICES had downgraded its advice for 2025 to category 3 precautionary advice and was for zero catches

⁶ Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Union control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy, amending Regulations (EC) No 847/96, (EC) No 2371/2002, (EC) No 811/2004, (EC) No 768/2005, (EC) No 2115/2005, (EC) No 2166/2005, (EC) No 388/2006, (EC) No 509/2007, (EC) No 676/2007, (EC) No 1098/2007, (EC) No 1300/2008, (EC) No 1342/2008 and repealing Regulations (EEC) No 2847/93, (EC) No 1627/94 and (EC) No 1966/2006 (OJ L 343, 22.12.2009, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2009/1224/oj>).

for the 6th consecutive year⁷. Given the depleted stock situation, the Council has decided since 2019 to close the targeted fishery and to adopt remedial measures functionally linked to the fishing opportunities (a spawning closure period and a ban of recreational fisheries, which for 2025 was extended to the entire management area). These remedial measures have not yet had the time to improve the stock status, so the proposal seeks to maintain them, in accordance with Article 3(1) of the MAP and Article 16(4) of the CFP Basic Regulation, in conjunction with Article 2(1) and Article 2(5)(c) and (f) of that Regulation. Regarding the TAC level, ICES has so far not been in a position to quantify the level of eastern Baltic cod by-catches in other fisheries, but there are eastern Baltic cod by-catches in all other fisheries⁸. Without a by-catch allocation of eastern Baltic cod, all fisheries in the eastern Baltic cod management area would have to be closed. In order to avoid the potentially severe socio-economic consequences resulting from such a total closure and in the absence of additional information, the Commission proposes, like for 2025, to set the by-catch TAC for eastern Baltic cod at the level of the reported landings in the eastern Baltic cod management area in 2024, which is 159 tonnes. This should ensure that the fishing pressure on this stock will not increase. Moreover, cod is an unavoidable by-catch in demersal flatfish fisheries and more selective fishing gears, which are expected to substantially reduce these by-catches of cod, became mandatory in April 2025 in the main distribution area of eastern Baltic cod.⁹

Regarding western Baltic cod, in 2023, ICES downgraded its assessment to category 3 precautionary advice. In 2025, ICES provided zero catch advice for 2026 and 2027¹⁰. The stock biomass has been below B_{lim} for most of the last 15 years. As a result, since 2021, the Council has decided to close the targeted fishery and to adopt remedial measures functionally linked to the fishing opportunities (a spawning closure period and a ban of recreational fisheries). These remedial measures have not yet resulted in an improved stock status, so the proposal aims to maintain them, in accordance with Article 3(1) of the MAP and Article 16(4) of the CFP Basic Regulation, in conjunction with Article 2(1) and Article 2(5)(c) and (f) of that Regulation. Regarding the TAC level, ICES has so far not been in a position to quantify the level of western Baltic cod by-catches in other fisheries, but there are western Baltic cod by-catches in all other fisheries.¹¹ Without a by-catch allocation of western Baltic cod, all fisheries in the western Baltic cod management area would have to be closed. In order to avoid the potentially severe socio-economic consequences resulting from such a total closure and in the absence of additional information, the Commission proposes, like for 2025, to set the by-catch TAC for western Baltic cod at the level of the reported landings in the western Baltic cod management area in 2024, which is 42 tonnes. This should ensure that the fishing pressure on this stock will not increase. Moreover, cod is an unavoidable by-catch in demersal flatfish fisheries and more selective fishing gears, which are expected to substantially reduce these by-catches of cod, became mandatory in April 2025 in the management area of western Baltic cod.¹²

⁷ <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202563>

⁸ <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.5276>; <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.5649>;
<https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.24799266>

⁹ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2024/3093 of 13 October 2022 amending Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards specific technical measures to reduce by-catches of cod in the Baltic Sea (OJ L 2024/3093, 10.12.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2024/3093/oj).

¹⁰ <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202560>

¹¹ See footnote 8.

¹² See footnote 9.

Regarding plaice, ICES previously provided separate advice for ICES subdivisions 21 to 23 and ICES subdivisions 24 to 32. Since a benchmark in 2025, ICES provides one piece of MSY advice covering ICES subdivisions 21 to 32¹³. According to this advice, the stock's biomass is historically high though the condition of the individual fish has deteriorated over the past five years. Furthermore, the benchmark changed the stock perception, leading ICES to advise a decrease in catches of -35% for 2026 compared to the advice for 2025. The Commission proposes to set the TAC at the F_{MSY} point value in accordance with Article 4(3) of the MAP.

Regarding western Baltic herring, ICES advises for the 8th consecutive year to allow zero catches. Like for 2025, ICES substantially downsized the stock size and estimates that, while it has increased since 2024, it is only 52% of B_{lim} in 2025¹⁴. ICES also continues to estimate that the biomass will remain below B_{lim} at least until 2027, even with no fishing at all. Recruitment has been historically low for about 10 years. As a result, since 2021, the Council has decided to close the targeted fishery except for scientific fisheries and small-scale coastal fisheries, and to set a TAC for unavoidable by-catches to avoid choking other fisheries. These remedial measures have not yet resulted in an improved stock status. The Commission therefore proposes, in accordance with Article 4(6) and Article 5(2) of the MAP, to keep the targeted fishery closed and to discontinue the exemption for small-scale coastal fisheries. Regarding the TAC level, ICES has so far not been in a position to quantify the level of western Baltic herring by-catches in other fisheries, but there are western Baltic herring by-catches in the targeted sprat fisheries¹⁵. In order to avoid the potentially severe socio-economic consequences resulting from the closure of the targeted sprat fisheries in the western Baltic herring management area and in the absence of additional information, the Commission proposes to set the by-catch TAC for western Baltic herring at 394 tonnes.

Regarding Bothnian herring, ICES estimates that the biomass has continued to drop and has reached in 2025 one of the lowest levels on record, halfway between MSY $B_{trigger}$ and B_{lim} ¹⁶. The advice for catches at the F_{MSY} point value is for a -16% decrease compared to the advice for 2025. Furthermore, ICES estimates that, even with no fishing at all, the probability for the stock to recover above MSY $B_{trigger}$ in 2027 is only 30%. ICES also mentions that with a TAC at MSY F_{lower} the probability for the biomass to fall below B_{lim} in 2027 is 9%. The Commission therefore proposes to set the TAC at 25 560 tonnes in accordance with Article 4(6) and Article 5(1) of the MAP, and to establish as a remedial measure a three-month spawning closure based on the similarity of the spawning patterns compared to central Baltic herring for which ICES provided a special advice¹⁷.

Regarding central Baltic herring, ICES undertook a benchmarking study in 2023 and estimates that the biomass has been below B_{lim} for most of the past 30 years, but increasing since 2022 to above B_{lim} since 2024¹⁸. Due to an increased biomass and potentially strong year-classes 2024 and 2025, the advice for catches at the F_{MSY} point value is 26% higher than in 2025. However, ICES states that the recruitment forecast is uncertain and highlights again the issue of misreporting which increases the uncertainty. Furthermore, the 2023 year-class is weak and the stock is vulnerable as it is composed of various genetically distinct subpopulations. Moreover, ICES estimates that, even with no fishing at all, the probability for

¹³ <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202773>

¹⁴ <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202614>

¹⁵ See footnote 8.

¹⁶ <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202623>

¹⁷ <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.28512521>

¹⁸ <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202617>

the stock to recover above $MSY B_{trigger}$ in 2027 is only 52%. ICES also mentions that with a TAC at $MSY F_{lower}$ the probability for the biomass to fall below B_{lim} as referred to in Article 4(6) of the MAP is 6% in 2027. Therefore, in accordance with Article 4(4) and Article 5(1) of the MAP, the Commission proposes to maintain in 2026 the TAC set for 2025 (83 881 tonnes) and to establish as a remedial measure a three-month spawning closure based on the ICES special advice¹⁹.

Regarding herring in the Gulf of Riga, ICES estimates that while the biomass has slightly decreased, it remains above $MSY B_{trigger}$ and at historically high levels²⁰. Therefore, the Commission proposes to set the TAC at the F_{MSY} point value in accordance with Article 4(3) of the MAP.

Regarding sprat, ICES estimates that the biomass of the stock has continued to decrease due to confirmed record low recruitment in 2021-2023. While the biomass remains above $MSY B_{trigger}$, it reached in 2025 its lowest level since 1990²¹. Based on the forecast that the recruitment in 2024 is among the highest on record, the advice for catches at the F_{MSY} point value is 36% higher than in 2025. ICES however stresses that the forecast is based on a single survey and is therefore uncertain and that the probability for the stock to be below the conservation reference points might be underestimated. In addition, ICES highlights the issue of misreporting which increases the uncertainty. The Commission also notes that, in many fisheries, sprat is caught together with herring. The Commission therefore proposes to maintain in 2026 the TAC set for 2025 (139 500 tonnes) and thus set the TAC below $MSY F_{lower}$, in accordance with Article 4(4) of the MAP. The Commission also proposes to maintain the spawning closure established by the Council for 2025.

Regarding salmon river stocks, since at least the 1990s, ICES has stated that the status of those stocks in the Baltic Sea area is heterogeneous, with some salmon river stocks being in a good condition but others not. Since 2022, ICES has also advised that all commercial and recreational salmon catches should stop in the main basin, because they are inherently mixed fisheries catching salmon from all river stocks. At the same time, ICES has considered that continuing the existing targeted fishery in some northern coastal areas during the salmon summer migration would still be possible. Therefore, since 2021, the Council has decided to close the targeted salmon fishery in the main basin and to set a by-catch TAC for unavoidable by-catches, with an exemption for scientific fisheries, while keeping the targeted salmon fishery open during the summer period in the relevant northern coastal areas. Since 2021, the Council has also adopted remedial measures functionally linked to the fishing opportunities (prohibition to use longlines and to fish for sea trout outside coastal areas; daily bag limit of one fin-clipped salmon per angler in most areas). The ICES advice for 2026 follows the same approach as in previous years but advises that the level of recommended maximum catches should be decreased further due to additional uncertainties about the salmon abundance in the most important salmon river²². ICES also mentions the marked decline of one particular river population and therefore recommends to delay the start of the fishing season from May to June in the Åland Sea and around the mouth of that river. ICES also continues to estimate that the post-release mortality of wild salmon in recreational trolling fisheries for adipose fin-clipped (i.e. reared) salmon is 24% (while noting that preliminary results of a new study indicate that the mortality might be considerably lower) resulting in approximately 2 500 dead wild salmon. The Commission therefore proposes, in accordance with Article 16(4) of the

¹⁹ See footnote 17.

²⁰ <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202620>

²¹ <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202893>

²² <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202839>

CFP Basic Regulation, in conjunction with Article 2(1) and Article 2(5)(c) and (f) of that Regulation, to (i) in principle limit the TAC to unavoidable by-catches; (ii) allow a derogation for targeted commercial coastal summer salmon fisheries in ICES subdivisions 29 North to 31 taking into account the recommended later start of the fishing season in ICES subdivision 29 North and around one river mouth in ICES subdivision 31; (iii) set the TAC at the level advised by ICES; (iv) maintain the same remedial measures as for 2025; (v) maintain the limited inter-area flexibility for 2026 to ensure the full use of coastal fishing opportunities in ICES subdivision 32; and (vi) discontinue the possibility of recreational salmon fisheries except in the coastal areas in ICES subdivisions 29 North to 31 during the same periods as commercial fishing.

Regarding salmon in the Gulf of Finland, ICES issued precautionary advice for 2026²³. The Commission therefore proposes a TAC at the precautionary advice level in accordance with Article 16(4) of the CFP Basic Regulation. Based on the past quota consumption, the Commission also proposes to maintain the limited inter-area flexibility between the two salmon TACs for Estonia to avoid the risk of choking its coastal fisheries for other species.

Council Regulation (EC) No 847/96 lays down further conditions for year-to-year management of TACs including, under Articles 3 and 4, flexibility provisions for stocks subject to precautionary and analytical TACs, respectively. Article 2 states that, when fixing the TACs, the Council must decide to which stocks Articles 3 and 4 should not apply, in particular based on the biological status of the stocks. Given the particularly fragile state of the Baltic Sea ecosystem and of several fish stocks, the Commission proposes to exclude year-to-year flexibility pursuant to Articles 3 and 4 of Regulation (EC) No 847/96 for stocks with a biomass below $MSY B_{trigger}$ and for stocks for which ICES recommends either zero catches or suspending the targeted fishery. Article 15(9) of the CFP Basic Regulation also lays down a year-to-year flexibility mechanism for all stocks that are subject to the landing obligation. In order to avoid excessive flexibility that would undermine the principle of rational and responsible exploitation of marine biological resources and make it difficult to achieve the CFP objectives, the Commission also proposes that Articles 3 and 4 of Regulation (EC) No 847/96 only apply if Member States do not use the year-to-year flexibility provided for in Article 15(9) of the CFP Basic Regulation. Furthermore, year-to-year flexibility for quotas under Article 15(9) of the CFP Basic Regulation should also be excluded if this would undermine the achievement of the CFP objectives, in particular for stocks with a biomass below $MSY B_{trigger}$ and for stocks for which only by-catch or scientific fisheries will be permitted.

The Commission also proposes to amend Council Regulation (EU) 2025/202 to set a TAC for Norway pout, for which the fishing year starts on 1 November 2025. The TAC level is marked as 'pm' (*pro memoria*), pending the publication of the ICES advice expected on 10 October 2025 and the outcome of the consultations with the United Kingdom.

²³ <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202842>

Proposal for a

COUNCIL REGULATION

fixing the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks applicable in the Baltic Sea for 2026 and amending Regulation (EU) 2025/202 as regards certain fishing opportunities in other waters

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and in particular Article 43(3) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

Whereas:

- (1) The Council is to adopt measures on the fixing and allocation of fishing opportunities, including certain conditions functionally linked to these fishing opportunities. Under Article 16(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council¹, fishing opportunities are to be fixed in accordance with the objectives of the common fisheries policy (CFP) as set out in Article 2(2) of that Regulation. Under Article 16(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, fishing opportunities are to be allocated between Member States in such a way as to ensure the relative stability of fishing activities of each Member State for each stock or fishery.
- (2) The total allowable catches (TACs) should therefore be established, in accordance with Article 3 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, on the basis of the available scientific advice, taking into account biological and socio-economic aspects while also ensuring fair treatment between fishing sectors, and in the light of opinions expressed during consultation of stakeholders.
- (3) Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council² establishes a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and for the fisheries exploiting those stocks. In accordance with Article 3(1) of that Regulation, that plan aims to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the CFP listed in Article 2 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013. The plan also aims to ensure that the exploitation of marine biological resources restores and maintains populations of harvested species above levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield (MSY). The plan also aims to contribute to ensure that fishing and aquaculture activities are environmentally sustainable in the long term and are

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

² 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 1098/2007 (OJ L 191, 15.7.2016, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/1139/oj>).

managed in a way that is consistent with the objectives of achieving economic, social, and employment benefits, and contributing to the availability of food supplies. These objectives, as further specified in Article 2(5), points (c) and (f), of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, include providing conditions for a viable and competitive fishing, capture and processing industry and land-based fishing related activities. Furthermore, they aim to ensure a fair standard of living for those dependent on fishing activities, particularly considering coastal fisheries and socio-economic aspects.

- (4) On 28 May 2025, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) published its annual stock advice for Baltic stocks for 2026, though for eastern Baltic cod, ICES re-issued its advice given for 2025. According to ICES, most of the fisheries in the Baltic Sea have at least some degree of mixing between stocks. That mixing concerns both stocks managed by a TAC and stocks not managed by a TAC. The most important degree of mixing occurs among pelagic species and demersal species respectively.
- (5) For 2026, ICES advises zero catches of western Baltic herring, eastern and western Baltic cod, and salmon in ICES subdivisions 22 to 31. Therefore, if the TACs for those stocks were established at the levels advised by ICES, the obligation to land all catches, including by-catches from those stocks in mixed fisheries, would lead to the phenomenon of choke species. Cod is by-caught in all fisheries, western herring is by-caught in the targeted sprat fisheries, and salmon can be by-caught in many fisheries. A choke situation would particularly affect vessels fishing for flatfish and pelagic species, potentially forcing them to cease fishing operations in 2026 and leading to a premature closure of those fisheries. Based on the data from the European Market Observatory for Fisheries and Aquaculture Products, the first-sale value of the plaice, sprat and relevant herring fisheries that are allowed to be caught within the limits of the TACs and expected to be caught in the relevant respective area is estimated at EUR 25 300 000, EUR 55 700 000 and EUR 43 400 000, respectively. Many fisheries, in particular small-scale coastal fisheries for species not managed by a TAC, would also need to cease fishing operations in 2026. In order to strike a balance between maintaining fisheries, in view of the potentially severe socio-economic implications of failing to do so and of the need to achieve a good biological status for those stocks, and taking account of the difficulty of fishing all stocks in a mixed fishery at MSY, it is appropriate to maintain the TACs exclusively for unavoidable by-catches for western Baltic herring, eastern Baltic cod, western Baltic cod, and main basin salmon.
- (6) As regards the eastern Baltic cod stock, ICES has advised zero catches for that stock since 2019. As the stock remains in the same critical state, for 2026 ICES re-issued its advice given for 2025 in which ICES was confident about the stock's biomass trends and that the biomass was well below the conservation reference point (B_{lim}), below which there may be reduced reproductive capacity. In accordance with Article 3(1) of Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 and Article 16(4) of the CFP Basic Regulation, it is therefore appropriate to suspend the targeted fishery and adopt functionally linked remedial measures. In accordance with Article 2(1) and Article 2(5), points (c) and (f) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, the fishing opportunities for unavoidable by-catches should also be set at a low level in order to avoid the potentially severe socio-economic implications that would result from setting the fishing opportunities at zero.
- (7) As regards the western Baltic cod stock, after advising a low level of catches for several years, ICES advises zero catches for 2026 because the stock's biomass is estimated to be below B_{lim} in 2025 and not to recover above B_{lim} in 2027. In accordance with Article 3(1) of Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 and Article 16(4) of the

CFP Basic Regulation, it is therefore appropriate to suspend the targeted fishery and adopt functionally linked remedial measures. In accordance with Article 2(1) and Article 2(5), points (c) and (f) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, the fishing opportunities for unavoidable by-catches should also be set at a low level to avoid the socio-economic consequences that would result from setting the fishing opportunities at zero.

- (8) As regards salmon in ICES subdivisions 22 to 31, ICES has maintained its zero-catch advice, while considering for 2026 the possibility of continued targeted commercial and recreational coastal summer fisheries in the area north of latitude 59° 30' N (ICES subdivisions 29 North to 31). ICES also reduced its catch advice further compared to 2025 because of additional uncertainties about the salmon abundance in the most important salmon river. Moreover, ICES mentions that starting fishing only in June in ICES subdivision 29 North and outside the river mouth of river Råneälven would contribute to the further protection of this particularly fragile wild salmon population as well as of other early migrating wild salmon populations. In addition, there is post-release mortality of wild salmon in recreational fisheries for adipose fin-clipped salmon. In accordance with Article 16(4) of the CFP Basic Regulation, it is therefore appropriate to set the level of fishing opportunities and the fishing area and period in line with the ICES advice, and to adopt functionally linked remedial measures (prohibition to use longlines and to fish for sea trout outside coastal areas; allow recreational fisheries only when and where targeted commercial fisheries are allowed).
- (9) In order to ensure the full use of coastal fishing opportunities for salmon in ICES subdivision 32, it is appropriate to allow limited inter-area flexibility for salmon between ICES subdivisions 22 to 31 and ICES subdivision 32.
- (10) In order to reduce the risk of salmon being misreported as sea trout in the salmon fisheries, it is appropriate to prohibit fishing for sea trout beyond four nautical miles measured from the baselines and to limit by-catches of sea trout to 3% of the combined catch of sea trout and salmon.
- (11) Measures on recreational fisheries of cod and salmon and measures for the conservation of sea trout and salmon stocks should be without prejudice to more stringent national measures under Articles 19 and 20 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013.
- (12) As regards herring in the Gulf of Bothnia, ICES estimates that the biomass has continued to decrease and is now halfway between B_{lim} and the conservation reference point ($MSY B_{trigger}$), below which appropriate remedial measures are to be taken to ensure the rapid return of the stock at levels above those capable of producing MSY . ICES also mentions uncertainties in the estimation of the young age groups and of weight-at-age. Moreover, ICES continues to note that the proportion of older individuals in the population is unlikely to increase if the fishing opportunities were set at the F_{MSY} point value. Furthermore, ICES notes that the stock is likely vulnerable to loss of genetic diversity. None of the catch scenarios within the F_{MSY} ranges ensures that the probability of the stock biomass falling below B_{lim} in 2027 is less than 5%. Furthermore, even with no fishing at all the stock is projected to recover above $MSY B_{trigger}$ in 2027 with a probability of only 30%. In accordance with Article 4(6) and Article 5(1) of Regulation (EU) 2016/1139, it is therefore appropriate to set the fishing opportunities accordingly set the fishing opportunities accordingly and to establish a three-month spawning closure period as a functionally linked remedial measure.

- (13) As regards western Baltic herring, ICES advises zero catches for that stock for the 8th consecutive year. As was the case in 2024, ICES revised the estimates of the biomass downward for previous years and estimates the biomass to be only 52% of B_{lim} in 2025, even if it has continuously increased since 2021. Furthermore, recruitment remains at historically low levels and the biomass is not expected to recover above B_{lim} in 2027. In accordance with Article 4(6) and Article 5(2) of Regulation (EU) 2016/1139, it is therefore appropriate to suspend the targeted fisheries and to discontinue the exception for small-scale fishers. In accordance with Article 2(1) and Article 5(5), points (c) and (f) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, the fishing opportunities for unavoidable by-catches should also be set at a low level in order to avoid the socio-economic consequences that would result from setting the fishing opportunities at zero.
- (14) As regards central Baltic herring, ICES estimates that the stock has been below B_{lim} most of the last 30 years. ICES estimates that, due to increased weight-at-age and stronger recruitment in 2022, the stock has been above B_{lim} since 2024 but is still far below $MSY B_{trigger}$. ICES estimates that recruitment in 2024 and 2025 could be strong but underlines that these estimates are uncertain. The recruitment in 2023 is below average. Moreover, ICES recalls that continued species misreporting is increasing the uncertainty of the advice. None of the catch scenarios within the F_{MSY} ranges ensures that the probability of the stock biomass falling below B_{lim} in 2027 is less than 5%. Furthermore, the probability that the stock will remain below $MSY B_{trigger}$ in 2027 is still 52% even with no fishing at all and that despite the estimated positive forecast. In accordance with Article 4(4) and Article 5(1) of Regulation (EU) 2016/1139, it is therefore appropriate to set the fishing opportunities accordingly and to establish a three-month spawning closure period as a functionally linked remedial measure.
- (15) As regards herring in the Gulf of Riga and plaice, ICES estimates that the biomass is above $MSY B_{trigger}$ and the fishing pressure below F_{MSY} . In accordance with Article 4(3) of Regulation (EU) 2016/1139, it is therefore appropriate to set the fishing opportunities accordingly.
- (16) As regards sprat, ICES estimates that, while the biomass is still above $MSY B_{trigger}$, the biomass has continued to decrease due to confirmed historically low recruitment from 2021 to 2023. The biomass is estimated to be in 2025 at its lowest level since 1990 and close to $MSY B_{trigger}$. ICES estimates that recruitment in 2024 could be exceptionally high, but underlines that the estimate is uncertain and that the probability for the biomass to be below the conservation reference points might be underestimated. Furthermore, ICES recalls that continued species misreporting is increasing the uncertainty of the advice. In accordance with Article 4(4) of Regulation (EU) 2016/1139, it is therefore appropriate to set the fishing opportunities accordingly. In accordance with Article 16(4) of Regulation (EU) 1380/2013, the Commission also proposes to maintain the existing three-month spawning closure period.
- (17) The use of the fishing opportunities set out in this Regulation will be monitored and controlled in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009³, in particular

³ Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Union control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy, amending Regulations (EC) No 847/96, (EC) No 2371/2002, (EC) No 811/2004, (EC) No 768/2005, (EC) No 2115/2005, (EC) No 2166/2005, (EC) No 388/2006, (EC) No 509/2007, (EC) No 676/2007, (EC) No 1098/2007, (EC) No 1300/2008, (EC) No 1342/2008 and repealing Regulations (EEC) No 2847/93, (EC) No 1627/94 and (EC) No 1966/2006 (OJ L 343, 22.12.2009, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2009/1224/oj>).

Articles 33 and 34 of that Regulation, concerning the recording of catches and fishing effort, and the notification of data on the exhaustion of fishing opportunities to the Commission. It is therefore necessary to specify the codes used by Member States when sending data to the Commission data on landings of stocks covered by this Regulation.

- (18) Articles 3 and 4 of Council Regulation (EC) No 847/96⁴ provide for year-to-year flexibility for quotas for stocks subject to both precautionary and analytical TACs. Under Article 2 of that Regulation, when fixing the TACs, the Council is to decide the stocks to which Articles 3 and 4 are not to apply, in particular on the basis of their biological status as this mechanism leads to quota levels being available in a given year which exceed the quotas initially set for that year. Until now, these Articles were not applied to stocks with a biomass below B_{lim} . Given the fragile state of the Baltic Sea ecosystem and its fish stocks, it is appropriate to also not apply these Articles to stocks with a biomass between B_{lim} and $MSY B_{trigger}$. Moreover, Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 provides for further year-to-year flexibility for all stocks that are subject to the landing obligation. In order to avoid excessive flexibility that would undermine the achievement of the objectives of the CFP, year-to-year flexibility for quotas pursuant to Articles 3 and 4 of Regulation (EC) No 847/96 and Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 should not apply cumulatively. Year-to-year flexibility under Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 should, where relevant, be excluded on the basis of the biological status of stocks.
- (19) The biomass of the eastern Baltic cod, western Baltic cod and western Baltic herring stocks is below B_{lim} . For all these stocks only by-catch and scientific fisheries are permitted in 2026. The biomass of Bothnian herring and central Baltic herring is well below $MSY B_{trigger}$. Therefore, and given the relatively low resilience of the Baltic Sea ecosystem, the Member States that have a quota share of the relevant TACs have undertaken not to apply the year-to-year flexibility provided for in Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 to those stocks in 2026 so that catches in 2026 do not exceed the relevant TACs. Furthermore, south of latitude 59° 30' N, the biomass of almost all salmon river stocks is below the limit reference point for smolt production (R_{lim}) and only by-catch and scientific fisheries are permitted in 2026. The relevant Member States have therefore made a similar commitment regarding year-to-year flexibility in relation to main-basin salmon catches in 2026.
- (20) *[placeholder for Norway pout: The Union and the United Kingdom held bilateral consultations on [XX] October 2025 on the TAC for Norway pout in ICES division 3a (Skagerrak-Kattegat), United Kingdom and Union waters of ICES subarea 4 and United Kingdom waters of ICES division 2a (North Sea) for the period from 1 November 2025 until 31 October 2026. Those consultations were held pursuant to Article 498(2) of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part (TCA)⁵. The Union participated in those consultations on the basis of specifications to the Union position endorsed by the Council on [XX] October 2025, pursuant to Article 2 of Council*

⁴ Council Regulation (EC) No 847/96 of 6 May 1996 introducing additional conditions for year-to-year management of TACs and quotas (OJ L 115, 9.5.1996, p. 3, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/1996/847/oj>).

⁵ OJ L 149, 30.4.2021, p. 10, ELI: [http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2021/689\(1\)/oj](http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2021/689(1)/oj).

Decision (EU) 2021/1875⁶. The Union and the United Kingdom agreed on a TAC based on the ICES advice for Norway pout in in ICES subarea 4 and division 3a for that period published on [XX] October 2025. The outcome of the consultation was documented in the Written Record, which was signed by the Heads of Delegation of the Union and the United Kingdom on [XX] October 2025. The TAC for the period from 1 November 2025 to 31 October 2026 should therefore be fixed at the level set out in that Written Record.]

- (21) [placeholder for other possible modifications to Council Regulation (EU) 2025/202].
- (22) Regulation (EU) 2025/202⁷ should therefore be amended accordingly.
- (23) To avoid the interruption of fishing activities and safeguard the livelihood of fishers, the provisions of this Regulation relating to the Baltic Sea should apply from 1 January 2026. However, the provisions relating to Norway pout in the Skagerrak-Kattegat and in the North Sea should apply retroactively from 1 November 2025 until 31 October 2026 because that is the fishing season for Norway pout. For reasons of urgency, this Regulation should enter into force immediately after publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*,

HAS ADOPTED THIS REGULATION:

CHAPTER I

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1

Subject matter

This Regulation fixes the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks in the Baltic Sea for 2026 and amends certain fishing opportunities in other waters fixed by Regulation (EU) 2025/202.

Article 2

Scope

1. This Regulation applies to Union fishing vessels operating in the Baltic Sea. It also applies to recreational fisheries where they are expressly referred to in the relevant provisions.

Article 3

Definitions

For the purposes of this Regulation, the definitions laid down in Article 4 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 apply.

⁶ Council Decision (EU) 2021/1875 of 22 October 2021 concerning the position to be adopted on behalf of the Union in the annual consultations with the United Kingdom to agree on total allowable catches (OJ L 378, 26.10.2021, p. 6, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2021/1875/oj>).

⁷ Council Regulation (EU) 2025/202 of 30 January 2025 fixing for 2025 and 2026 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks, applicable in Union waters and, for Union fishing vessels, in certain non-Union waters, and amending Regulation (EU) 2024/257 as regards fishing opportunities for 2025 (OJ L 2025/202, 31.1.2025, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2025/202/oj>).

In addition, the following definitions apply:

- (1) 'subdivision' means an International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) subdivision of the Baltic Sea as defined in Annex III to Regulation (EC) No 218/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council⁸;
- (2) 'total allowable catch (TAC)' means:
 - (a) in fisheries subject to the exemption from the landing obligation referred to in Article 15(4) to (7) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, the quantity of fish that may be landed from each stock each year;
 - (b) in all other fisheries, the quantity of fish that may be caught from each stock each year;
- (3) 'quota' means a proportion of the TAC allocated to the Union, a Member State or a third country;
- (4) 'recreational fisheries' means non-commercial fishing activities exploiting marine biological resources for recreation, tourism or sport;
- (5) 'analytical assessment' means a quantitative evaluation of trends in a given stock, based on data about the stock's biology and exploitation, including based on proxies, which scientific review has indicated to be of sufficient quality to provide scientific advice;
- (6) 'analytical TAC' means a TAC for which an analytical assessment is available;
- (7) 'precautionary TAC' means a TAC for which an analytical assessment is not available and for which either an assessment based on the precautionary approach is available or no assessment is available.

CHAPTER II

FISHING OPPORTUNITIES

Article 4

TACs and allocations

The TACs, quotas and, where appropriate, measures functionally linked thereto, are set out in the Annex.

Article 5

Special provisions on allocation of fishing opportunities

1. The allocation of fishing opportunities among Member States set out in this Regulation shall be without prejudice to:
 - (a) exchanges made pursuant to Article 16(8) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013;
 - (b) deductions and reallocations made pursuant to Article 37 of Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009;

⁸ Regulation (EC) No 218/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2009 on the submission of nominal catch statistics by Member States fishing in the north-east Atlantic (OJ L 87, 31.3.2009, p. 70, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2009/218/oj>).

- (c) additional landings allowed under Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 847/96 and under Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013;
 - (d) quantities withheld in compliance with Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 847/96 and transferred under Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013;
 - (e) deductions made pursuant to Articles 105, 106 and 107 of Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009.
2. Stocks subject to precautionary or analytical TACs for the purposes of the year-to-year management of TACs and quotas provided for in Regulation (EC) No 847/96 are identified in the Annex to this Regulation.
 3. Except where otherwise specified in the Annex to this Regulation, Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 847/96 shall apply to stocks subject to a precautionary TAC, and Article 3(2) and (3) and Article 4 of that Regulation shall apply to stocks subject to an analytical TAC.
 4. Articles 3 and 4 of Regulation (EC) No 847/96 shall not apply where a Member State uses the year-to-year flexibility provided for in Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013.

Article 6

Conditions for landing of catches and by-catches

The stocks of non-target species within safe biological limits referred to in Article 15(8) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 to which the derogation from the obligation to count catches against the relevant quotas applies are identified in the relevant TAC tables in the Annex to this Regulation.

Article 7

Closures to protect cod spawning

1. It shall be prohibited to fish with any type of fishing gear in subdivisions 25 and 26 from 1 May to 31 August.
2. The prohibition laid down in paragraph 1 shall not apply in the following cases:
 - (a) fishing operations conducted for the exclusive purpose of scientific investigations, provided that those investigations are carried out in compliance with the conditions set out in Article 25 of Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council⁹;
 - (b) Union fishing vessels of less than 12 metres in length overall that fish with gillnets, entangling nets or trammel nets, with bottom set lines, longlines, drifting lines, handlines and jigging equipment or similar passive gear, in areas

⁹ Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1224/2009 and Regulations (EU) No 1380/2013, (EU) 2016/1139, (EU) 2018/973, (EU) 2019/472 and (EU) 2019/1022 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 894/97, (EC) No 850/98, (EC) No 2549/2000, (EC) No 254/2002, (EC) No 812/2004 and (EC) No 2187/2005 (OJ L 198, 25.7.2019, p. 105, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2019/1241/oj>).

where the water depth is less than 20 metres according to the coordinates on the official sea chart issued by the competent national authorities;

- (c) without prejudice to the closure periods set out in Article 8(1)(a) and Article 9(1), Union fishing vessels that fish in subdivision 25 for pelagic stocks for direct human consumption, using gears with a mesh size of 45 mm or less, in areas where the water depth is less than 50 metres according to the coordinates on the official sea chart issued by the competent national authorities, and whose landings are sorted.
- 3. It shall be prohibited to fish with any type of fishing gear in subdivisions 22 and 23 from 15 January to 31 March and in subdivision 24 from 15 May to 15 August.
 - 4. The prohibition laid down in paragraph 3 shall not apply in the following cases:
 - (a) fishing operations conducted for the exclusive purpose of scientific investigations, provided that those investigations are carried out in compliance with the conditions set out in Article 25 of Regulation (EU) 2019/1241;
 - (b) Union fishing vessels of less than 12 metres in length overall that fish with gillnets, entangling nets or trammel nets, with bottom set lines, longlines, drifting lines, handlines and jigging equipment or similar passive gear, in areas where the water depth is less than 20 metres according to the coordinates on the official sea chart issued by the competent national authorities;
 - (c) Union fishing vessels that fish in subdivision 24 for pelagic stocks for direct human consumption, using gears with a mesh size of 45 mm or less, in areas where the water depth is less than 40 metres according to the coordinates on the official sea chart issued by the competent national authorities, and whose landings are sorted;
 - (d) Union fishing vessels that fish with dredges for bivalve molluscs in subdivision 22, in areas where the water depth is less than 20 metres according to the coordinates on the official sea chart issued by the competent national authorities.
 - 5. Masters of Union fishing vessels referred to in paragraph 2, points (b) or (c), and paragraph 4, points (b), (c) or (d), shall ensure that their fishing activities can be monitored at any time by the control authorities of the competent Member State.

Article 8

Closures to protect herring spawning in subdivisions 25, 26, 27, 28.2, 29, 30, 31 and 32

- 1. It shall be prohibited to fish for pelagic species using pelagic trawl in coastal areas up to four nautical miles measured from the baselines and where the water depth is less than 20 metres according to the coordinates on the official sea chart issued by the competent national authority during the following periods and areas:
 - (a) from 16 March to 15 June in subdivisions 25 and 26;
 - (b) from 1 April to 30 June in subdivisions 27 and 28.2;
 - (c) from 1 May to 31 July in subdivisions 29 to 32.
- 2. The prohibition laid down in paragraph 1 shall not apply for fishing operations conducted for the exclusive purpose of scientific investigations, provided that those investigations are carried out in compliance with the conditions set out in Article 25

of Regulation (EU) 2019/1241. The usage of this derogation shall be limited to each Member State's initial quota allocation.

Article 9

Closures to protect sprat spawning in subdivisions 25, 26, 27, 28.2, 29 and 32

1. It shall be prohibited from 1 May to 31 July for Union fishing vessels to fish for pelagic stocks with active gear in areas beyond 12 nautical miles measured from the baselines in subdivisions 25, 26, 27, 28.2, 29 and west of 24° 00' E in subdivision 32.
2. The prohibition laid down in paragraph 1 shall not apply in the following cases:
 - (a) fishing operations conducted for the exclusive purpose of scientific investigations, provided that those investigations are carried out in compliance with the conditions set out in Article 25 of Regulation (EU) 2019/1241; the usage of this derogation shall be limited to each Member State's initial quota allocation;
 - (b) Union fishing vessels of less than 12 metres in length overall that fish with gillnets, entangling nets or trammel nets, with bottom set lines, longlines, drifting lines, handlines and jigging equipment or similar passive gear.

Article 10

Measures on recreational fisheries of cod in subdivisions 22 to 32

1. Recreational fisheries of cod shall be prohibited in subdivisions 22 to 32. Any specimen of cod caught accidentally shall be immediately released back into the sea.
2. Notwithstanding paragraph 1, incidental by-catches of cod in recreational fisheries for other species in subdivisions 27 to 32 may be retained.

Article 11

Measures on recreational fisheries of salmon in subdivisions 22 to 31

1. Recreational fisheries of salmon shall be prohibited in subdivisions 22 to 31. Any specimen of salmon caught accidentally shall be immediately released back into the sea.
2. By way of derogation from paragraph 1, recreational fisheries of salmon shall be allowed in areas within four nautical miles measured from the baselines during the following periods and areas:
 - (a) from 1 June to 31 August in ICES subdivision 29 north of latitude 59° 30' N;
 - (b) from 1 May to 31 August in ICES subdivisions 30 and 31, except for May in the area within four nautical miles measured from the mouth of river Råneälven.
3. This Article is without prejudice to more stringent national measures under Articles 19 and 20 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013.

Article 12

Measures for the conservation of the sea trout and salmon stocks in subdivisions 22 to 32

1. Union fishing vessels shall not fish for sea trout beyond four nautical miles measured from the baselines in subdivisions 22 to 32. When fishing for salmon beyond four

nautical miles measured from the baselines in subdivision 32, by-catches of sea trout shall not exceed 3% of the total catch of salmon and sea trout on board at any moment or landed after each fishing trip.

2. Fishing with longlines for sea trout or salmon beyond four nautical miles measured from the baselines in subdivisions 22 to 31 shall be prohibited.
3. This Article is without prejudice to more stringent national measures under Articles 19 and 20 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013.

Article 13

Data transmission

When Member States send data on quantities of stocks caught or landed to the Commission pursuant to Articles 33 and 34 of Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009, they shall use the stock codes set out in the Annex to this Regulation.

CHAPTER III
FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 14

Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2025/202

Regulation (EU) 2025/202 is amended as follows:

- (1) In Annex IA, Part B, Table 122 is replaced by the following:

“

Table 122

Species:	Norway pout and associated by-catches				Zone:	3a; United Kingdom and Union waters of 4; United Kingdom waters of 2a (NOP/2A3A4.)
	<i>Trisopterus esmarkii</i>					
Year	2025		2026		Analytical TAC Article 3(2) and (3) of Regulation (EC) No 847/96 does not apply Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 847/96 does not apply	
Denmark	299,722	(1)(2)	<i>pro memoria (pm)</i>	(4)		
Germany	0,057	(1)(2)(3)	pm	(4)		
Netherlands	0,221	(1)(2)(3)	pm	(4)		
Union	300	(1)(2)(3)	pm	(4)		
United Kingdom	100	(1)	pm	(4)		
TAC	400	(1)	pm	(4)		
(1)	May only be fished from 1 November 2024 to 31 October 2025.					
(2)	Exclusively for by-catches. No direct fisheries for Norway pout are permitted under this quota.					
(3)	By-catch quota may be fished in United Kingdom and Union waters of ICES zones 2a, 3a and 4 only.					
(4)	May only be fished from 1 November 2025 to 31 October 2026.					

“

- (2) [placeholder for other modifications to Council Regulation (EU) 2025/202].

Article 15

Entry into force and application

This Regulation shall enter into force on the day following that of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

It shall apply from 1 January to 31 December 2026.

By way of derogation from the second subparagraph:

- (a) Article 14, point (1), shall apply from 1 November 2025 until 31 October 2026;
- (b) [placeholder for other modifications to Council Regulation (EU) 2025/202].

This Regulation shall be binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States.

Done at Brussels,

For the Council
The President