



Council of the
European Union

051462/EU XXVIII.GP
Eingelangt am 17/12/25

Brussels, 17 December 2025
(OR. en, it)

16541/25
PV CONS 66
SOC 834
EMPL 548
SAN 817
CONSOM 286
PARLNAT

DRAFT MINUTES

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
(Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs)

1 and 2 December 2025

MEETING ON MONDAY 1 DECEMBER 2025

1. Adoption of the agenda

The Council adopted the agenda set out in document 15627/25.

2. Approval of "A" items

Non-legislative list

15840/25

The Council adopted all "A" items listed in the document above, including all linguistic COR and REV documents presented for adoption.

Statements to these items are set out in the Annex and the Addendum.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY

Legislative deliberations

(Public deliberation in accordance with Article 16(8) of the Treaty on European Union)

3. Revision of Directive 2004/37/EC on carcinogens, mutagens and reprotoxic substances at work (sixth batch) 15222/25

General approach

The Council reached a general approach on the sixth revision of the above Directive as set out in Annex to the document above.

Belgium presented a statement, as set out in the Annex.

4. Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2021/691 (EGF) as regards support to workers affected by imminent job displacement in enterprises undergoing restructuring 15276/1/25 REV 1 + REV 1 ADD 1 + 15276/25 ADD 1

General approach

The Council reached a general approach on the above Regulation as set out in Annex to document 15276/1/25 REV 1.

Hungary and the Commission presented statements, as set out in the Annex.

Non-legislative activities

5. **Delivering on simplification, implementation and enforcement in the employment and social fields¹**
Exchange of views

 15245/25

The Council held an exchange of views on the above topic, guided by the Presidency note set out in the document above.

Legislative deliberations

(Public deliberation in accordance with Article 16(8) of the Treaty on European Union)

6. **Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment (Article 19)**
Progress report

  14921/25

The Council took note of the progress report on the above Directive as set out in the document above.

Non-legislative activities

7. **Conclusions on the future European Affordable Housing Plan²**
Approval

 15221/25

The Council did not approve the conclusions. Presidency conclusions were issued on the basis of document 15221/25 with the support of 26 delegations.

8. **European Semester 2026: Promoting social inclusion and cohesion through coherent social and housing policies**
Exchange of views

 15226/25

- a) **Autumn Package**
Presentation by the Commission

The Council took note of the presentation of the 2026 European Semester Autumn Package by the Commission.

¹ Attended by the Chairs of the Employment Committee (EMCO) and the Social Protection Committee (SPC) as observers.

² Attended by the Chair of the Social Protection Committee (SPC) as observer.

- b) **Key messages from SPC on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion across EU Member States** 14905/25
Endorsement

The Council endorsed the above key messages, as set out in the document above.

- c) **Key Messages from EMCO and from SPC on the implementation of the Action Plan on labour and skills shortages in the EU** 14896/25
14901/25
Endorsement

The Council endorsed the above key messages, as set out in the documents above.

- d) **Key Messages from EMCO and SPC on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality** 14891/1/25 REV 1
Endorsement

The Council endorsed the above key messages, as set out in the document above.

- e) **EMCO Opinion on improving the scope and relevance of data collection at Union and national level on social dialogue** 14880/25
Endorsement

The Council endorsed the above EMCO opinion as set out in the document above.

Any other business

9. a) **Tripartite Social Summit of October 2025³** [2] 15191/25
Information from the Presidency and the Commission

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency and the Commission.

³ Attended by the Chairs of the Employment Committee (EMCO) and the Social Protection Committee (SPC) as observers.

- b) **Current legislative proposals (Public deliberation in accordance with Article 16(8) of the Treaty on European Union)** 10C

Directive on traineeships
Information from the Presidency

8148/1/24 REV 1

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency.

- c) **Council Recommendation on a reinforced Quality Framework for Traineeships** C12 8155/24
Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency.

- d) **EU Talent Pool** 12 15190/25
Information from the Presidency and the Commission

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency and the Commission.

- e) **Main conclusions from the Porto Social Forum of 18 and 19 September 2025** 12 15189/25
Information from Portugal

The Council took note of the information provided by Portugal.

- f) **Presidency events⁴** 12 15192/25
Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency.

- g) **Work programme of the incoming Presidency**
Information from Cyprus

⁴ Attended by the Chairs of the Employment Committee (EMCO) and the Social Protection Committee (SPC) as observers.

MEETING ON TUESDAY 2 DECEMBER 2025

HEALTH

Legislative deliberations

(Public deliberation in accordance with Article 16(8) of the Treaty on European Union)

10. Critical Medicines Act
General approach



15503/25

+ ADD 1 REV 1

The Council reached a general approach on the Critical Medicines Act as set out in the Annex to document 15503/25.

Bulgaria and Italy presented statements, as set out in the Annex to these minutes.

Any other business

11. a) Current legislative proposals (Public deliberation in accordance with Article 16(8) of the Treaty on European Union)



Pharmaceutical package

i) Directive on the Union code relating to medicinal product for human use

8759/23 + ADD 1

ii) Regulation laying down Union procedures for the authorisation and supervision of medicinal products for human use and establishing rules governing the European Medicines Agency

8758/23 + ADD 1

Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency.


b) 2025 Annual progress report on Simplification, Implementation and Enforcement (health)




14737/25

Information from the Commission


The Council took note of the information provided by the Commission.

- c) **WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC): Eleventh Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 11) (Geneva, 17-22 November 2025)**  15279/25
Information from the Presidency and the Commission


The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency and the Commission.

- d) **Union prevention, preparedness and response plan for health crises**  15316/25
Information from the Commission


The Council took note of the information provided by the Commission.

- e) **EU Cardiovascular Health Plan**  15365/1/25 REV 1
Information from Czechia, supported by Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain

The Council took note of the information provided by Czechia, supported by Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.

- f) **Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive – Cost Study**  15367/1/25 REV 1
Information from Czechia, supported by Austria, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden

The Council took note of the information provided by Czechia, supported by Austria, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden, orally supported by Finland.

- g) **EU strategy on climate and health**  15753/1/25 REV 1
Information from the Netherlands, supported by Austria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia and Spain

The Council took note of the information provided by the Netherlands, supported by Austria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia and Spain, orally supported by Portugal.

h) European Health Union as a core pillar in enhancing competitiveness and security of the Union



15868/1/25 REV 1

Information from Slovenia and Spain, supported by Austria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal and Slovakia

The Council took note of the information provided by Slovenia and Spain, supported by Austria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal and Slovakia.

i) Presidency conferences



15124/25

Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency.

j) Negotiations for an international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response

14653/25

Information from the Presidency and the Commission

k) Work programme of the incoming Presidency

Information from Cyprus



First reading



Special legislative procedure



Item based on a Commission proposal



Public debate proposed by the Presidency (Article 8(2) of the Council's Rules of Procedure)

Statements to the legislative "B" items set out in doc. 15627/25Ad "B" item 3:

Revision of Directive 2004/37/EC on carcinogens, mutagens and reprotoxic substances at work (sixth batch)

General approach

STATEMENT BY BELGIUM

“Belgium attaches importance to a high standard of protection for the health and safety in the workplace. The sixth revision of the Directive 2004/37 will contribute to enhancing the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to additional carcinogenic substances across the European Union.

The setting of occupational exposure limit values is the **result of a process based on scientific and socio-economical opinions** that remain essential for the credibility of the EU framework for worker protection.

However, Belgium considers it also crucial **to ensure coherence across EU policies**. In this context, competitiveness has been identified as a major guiding principle of EU action, notably in recent European Council conclusions and in the broader context of the industrial and green transition.

In this respect, Belgium stresses the importance of addressing files examined under the EPSCO remit **in consistency with other strategic EU initiatives**, such as the **Critical Raw Materials Act**, the **Open Strategic Autonomy** approach, and the efforts to strengthen Europe’s strategic autonomy in critical value chains.

Security of supply is therefore also a key challenge, particularly concerning critical raw materials, such as cobalt. In this context, Belgium stresses the existence of **specific national industrial interests** in the cobalt value chain, which plays an essential role in Europe’s green-tech ecosystem.

In this file, the impact assessment itself acknowledges that an OEL value of 20 µg Co/m³ cobalt is already very strict. Any tightened level will require long transition periods due to the **high level of investment and potentially innovation needed**.

Belgium considers it essential that **transitional periods are realistic and feasible**, ensuring that companies, particularly those operating in strategic sectors, have adequate time to adapt, make investments, and are able to comply in an achievable manner considering the current geostrategic environment.

Belgium calls **the co-legislators and the Commission to ensure industrial competitiveness** to be adequately reconciled with the legitimate objective of worker protection in the context of the forthcoming interinstitutional trilogues. Furthermore, **strengthening socio-economic analysis** for any future legislation would be essential to ensure a balanced approach between social ambition and industrial adaptability.”

Ad "B" item 4:

Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2021/691 (EGF) as regards support to workers affected by imminent job displacement in enterprises undergoing restructuring
General approach

STATEMENT BY HUNGARY

“Hungary recognises and promotes equality between men and women in accordance with the Fundamental Law of Hungary and the primary law, principles and values of the European Union, as well as commitments and principles stemming from international law. Equality between women and men is enshrined in the Treaties of the European Union as a fundamental value. In line with these and its national legislation, Hungary interprets the term ‘gender’ as reference to ‘sex’ in the *Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2021/691 (EGF) as regards support to workers affected by imminent job displacement in enterprises undergoing restructuring.*”

STATEMENT BY THE COMMISSION

“The Commission underlines that the proposal 7721/25 for a Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2021/691 as regards support to workers affected by imminent job displacement in enterprises undergoing restructuring (‘Amendment to the EGF Regulation’) does not set any new sectorspecific rules as regards control, audit and recovery obligations of Member States according to the rules set out in the Financial Regulation (EU, Euratom 2024/2509).”

STATEMENT BY BULGARIA

“Bulgaria considers the availability of affordable safe, effective and quality *medicines* as one of the key priorities of national health policy. This is the case also for treatments that are assessed as *critical* at European or at national level.

In that regard the ambition of European Critical Medicines Act to support the manufacturing of critical medicines in Europe is generally to be welcomed. However, **this ambition, claimed to be a common European goal, is not backed by a common European fund.**

We remain of the opinion that **the proposed legal basis – Article 114 TFEU is inappropriate and insufficient** in the light of the stated objectives of the proposal, namely, to strengthen the availability of critical medicinal products, and the availability and accessibility of “medicinal products of common interest” within the Union.

First, the measures proposed do not have the "establishment and functioning of the internal market" as their genuine object but appear to be aimed at safeguarding availability and accessibility of medicines, as part of health policies. Secondly, some of the envisaged measures are likely to result in limiting Member States' discretion on spending national healthcare budgets as settled in 168 (7) TFEU, thereby effectively circumventing the explicit prohibition of harmonisation set out in Article 168 (5) TFEU. Third, the general requirement set out in Article 114 TFEU to ensure high level of protection of health *inter alia*, does not constitute an objective in itself, but rather serves as a safeguard to prevent harmful impact on health, safety, environment etc.

The public procurement of medicines with public budgets constitutes an integral component of national health policies and should continue to be governed accordingly, in line with national priorities and resources available. The „critical“ status of certain medicinal products does not alter their inherent nature as medicines and treatments. Therefore, this characteristic alone cannot justify a replication of the legal framework applicable to various categories of critical products.

Overall, the choice of Art. 114 as a legal basis appears as an attempt to subordinate health policies to the logic of the internal market. This will predictably have negative consequences for the healthcare in Europe. **In the absence of an impact assessment, it remains unclear which “distortions” of the internal market are targeted by the proposed measures. At the same time, the actual impact of some of the measures will be “distortion” of national solutions at the core of health policies, as well as distortion of competition.**

Despite the good intentions, some measures, such as voluntary collaborative or joint procurements (Chapter IV, Section II) are not only incompatible with a harmonisation legal basis but will have a potentially disruptive effect on national health policies and healthcare budgets by resulting in single price for countries with different GDP, and limiting availability, accessibility and affordability in non-participating countries.

In our view therefore the current choice of legal basis does neither adequately respect the division of competences between the Union and the Member States, nor the conferral of powers principle. *The management of health services and medical care and the allocation of the resources assigned to them* includes the public procurement of medicines (critical or not) with public budgets. An erosion of national competences in the field of health remains undesirable, given that Member States’ policies, priorities and budgets differ and must be adapted to the specific needs at national level – those closest to citizens and patients.

We remain convinced that by the end of the ordinary legislative procedure there is still time to choose a proper legal basis. Other legislative acts dealing with complex situations of interaction between internal market and health policies – mostly national competence, can serve as inspiration, such as the EU HTA Regulation ((EU) 2021/2282), which does have **a dual legal basis – Article 168 and Article 114 TFEU.**

Finally, we note that the implementability of Art. 18 (2) and Art. 19 highly depends on guidelines, that should be developed on time and in respect of Member States' competences in the area of healthcare.

We remain committed to constructively contribute to the upcoming trilogues, with the aim to achieve a reasonable, clear and legally robust regulatory framework.”

STATEMENT BY ITALY

“L’Italia sostiene la lotta alle carenze ed il rafforzamento delle produzioni locali di farmaci critici, fondamentali per garantire un accesso tempestivo e uniforme ai farmaci critici in tutta l’UE.

Le misure previste dalla proposta di Regolamento sui medicinali critici agevolano una maggiore resilienza del sistema farmaceutico europeo, rispondendo alle priorità individuate anche dall’Italia a livello nazionale.

Tuttavia, si desidera sottolineare taluni aspetti che preoccupano l’Italia.

Appalti collaborativi

L’Italia ritiene che gli appalti collaborativi, dove la Commissione agisce in nome e per conto, debbano essere riservati esclusivamente ai medicinali critici carenti (con vulnerabilità accertata nella catena di approvvigionamento) oppure a categorie ben circoscritte di medicinali, in casi eccezionali, qualora la presenza di una popolazione di pazienti ristretta (c.d. malattie ultra-rare) non ne garantisca l’acquisto a livello nazionale. Infatti, per l’Italia l’utilizzo di appalti collaborativi come procedura standard di acquisto di un’ampia categoria di medicinali potrebbe avere ripercussioni negative sulla concorrenza e sulle procedure negoziali degli Stati membri (SM) non partecipanti, potendo determinare una sorta di prezzo di riferimento europeo, più alto rispetto a quello negoziabile dagli SM non partecipanti. Dal punto di vista dell’attuazione, la gestione di appalti collaborativi potrebbe rivelarsi complessa nella pratica, per quanto riguarda l’esecuzione del contratto e le potenziali controversie. Inoltre, si ravvisa una potenziale implicita deroga alle previsioni dei Trattati unionali, che attribuiscono le competenze in materia di prezzi e rimborso agli SM.

Informativa sugli obblighi di contingency stocks

L’Italia non sostiene che le informazioni relative ai requisiti nazionali in materia di scorte di emergenza non vengano fornite all’EMA/MSSG. La gestione di tali informazioni dovrebbe rientrare principalmente nelle competenze dell’EMA/MSSG, in quanto enti responsabili della tutela della salute pubblica. Questi ultimi dovrebbero a loro volta informare il Gruppo di Coordinamento sui medicinali critici (CMCG), poiché tali informazioni potrebbero essere rilevanti anche dal punto di vista industriale.

L'imposizione da parte degli SM di obblighi di contingency stock, senza coordinamento con gli altri SM - anche se può ridurre le carenze e dare alle autorità nazionali il tempo di agire in tale SM - può avere effetti di ricaduta e creare o aggravare le carenze in altri SM. Per tali ragioni, un'informativa tempestiva sugli obblighi di contingency stock ha importanti rilievi in materia di salute pubblica, potendo consentire agli altri SM di prevedere e reagire tempestivamente a fenomeni di carenza, eventualmente causati dall'imposizione di contingency stock. Pertanto, la gestione di tale informativa dovrebbe ricadere tra i poteri dell'EMA/MSSG, quali istituzioni preposte alla tutela della salute pubblica. Dovrebbero essere poi tali istituzioni (EMA/MSSG) ad informare a loro volta il CMCG, potendo avere tale informazione rilevanza anche per l'industria. Inoltre, l'assegnazione di competenze di salute pubblica al CMCG rende ancora più difficile distinguere gli ambiti di azione di quest'ultimo dalle autorità preposte alla tutela della salute, come l'EMA e l'MSSG, determinando il rischio concreto di generare possibili disallineamenti nella gestione delle singole casistiche.”

Ad "A" item 2:

Council Regulation fixing for 2026 the fishing opportunities applicable in the Baltic Sea

Adoption

JOINT STATEMENT BY DENMARK, ESTONIA, FINLAND, GERMANY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, POLAND AND SWEDEN on the application of Article 15(9) of the Basic Regulation as regards eastern Baltic cod and western Baltic cod in 2026

“Given that the biomass of the stocks of eastern Baltic cod and western Baltic cod are below B_{lim} , and in order to ensure the recovery of the stock in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/1139, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden undertake not to make use of inter-annual flexibility under Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 with regard to these stocks in 2026. This undertaking is a response to the current exceptional circumstances for the eastern Baltic cod and western Baltic cod stocks.”

JOINT STATEMENT BY DENMARK, FINLAND, GERMANY, POLAND AND SWEDEN on the application of Article 15(9) in the Basic Regulation as regards western Baltic herring in 2026

“Given that the biomass of the stock of western Baltic herring is below B_{lim} , and in order to ensure the recovery of the stock in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/1139, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Poland and Sweden undertake not to make use of inter-annual flexibility under Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 with regard to this stock in 2026. This undertaking is a response to the current exceptional circumstances for the western Baltic herring stock.”

JOINT STATEMENT BY DENMARK, FINLAND, GERMANY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, POLAND, SWEDEN AND ESTONIA on the application of Article 15(9) in the Basic Regulation as regards main basin salmon in 2026

“Given that in ICES subdivisions 22-29S almost all wild salmon river stocks are well below R_{lim} , and in order to ensure the recovery of the stocks, Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Estonia undertake not to make use of inter-annual flexibility under Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 with regard to these stocks in 2026. This commitment is a response to the current exceptional circumstances for the wild salmon river stocks south to latitude 59°30’N.

Given the limited salmon migration in the major salmon rivers in the Gulf of Bothnia both in 2023 and 2024, and in order to ensure and promote a faster recovery of the salmon stocks, Finland undertakes not to make use of inter-annual flexibility under Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 with regard to the Main Basin salmon quota in 2026. Sweden undertakes to limit the use of inter-annual flexibility under Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 for bycatch and unavoidable catches purposes only. These commitments are a response to the worrying development of the wild salmon river stocks in ICES subdivisions 30-31.”

JOINT STATEMENT BY DENMARK, ESTONIA, FINLAND, GERMANY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, POLAND AND SWEDEN on exchanges of eastern and western Baltic cod quotas

“In a spirit of solidarity, a Member State not needing its entire by-catch quota for eastern or western Baltic cod will seek to agree on quota exchanges with a Member State that can demonstrate it will be confronted with a choke effect due to its limited eastern or western Baltic cod quota.”

JOINT STATEMENT BY DENMARK, ESTONIA, GERMANY, LITHUANIA AND POLAND on transfers of Main Basin salmon quotas

“In a spirit of solidarity and recognising the conservation efforts made by Finland and Sweden, which have led to healthy stocks in their waters, a Member State which cannot use its entire quota for Main Basin salmon will consider a voluntary transfer of the unused or unusable part of that quota to Finland and/or Sweden.”

JOINT STATEMENT BY DENMARK, GERMANY AND THE NETHERLANDS on the application of Article 15(9) of the Basic Regulation as regards Norway pout in the North Sea in the 2026 fishing season

“Given that ICES forecasts that the biomass of Norway pout in the North Sea (NOP/2A3A4.) is below Blim and given that ICES advises zero catches for the 2026 fishing season (1 November 2025 to 31 October 2026), and in order to ensure the recovery of the stock, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands undertake not to make use of inter-annual flexibility under Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 with regard to that stock in the 2026 fishing season. This undertaking is a response to the current exceptional circumstances of that stock.”

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE COMMISSION AND GERMANY on the option of support for the temporary cessation of fishing activities by the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)

“According to Article 5(3), point (a) of 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, remedial measures for the purpose of Article 5 of that Regulation may include Member State emergency measures pursuant to Article 13 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, provided that certain conditions are met.

Given the assessment of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) on cod and herring in subdivisions 22-24 Germany therefore deems it necessary to adopt emergency measures pursuant to Article 13(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013. The emergency measures in subdivisions 22-24 for German fishing vessels consist in introducing a closure of 30 days for the protection of cod in addition to the cod spawning closure established by Article 7(3) of the Regulation fixing for 2026 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks applicable in the Baltic Sea during which the exemption contained in Article 7 (4)(b) shall not apply, and limiting by additional 30 days the herring fishery during which the exemption for certain small-scale coastal fisheries from the prohibition to target western herring is interrupted and fisheries with by-catches of herring.

The Commission and Germany agree that this emergency measure is eligible for funding from Regulation (EU) 2021/1139 of the European Parliament and the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and amending Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 provided that it is in accordance with the conditions set out in Article 21(2)(c) of that Regulation.”

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE COMMISSION, AND DENMARK, GERMANY, ESTONIA, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, POLAND, FINLAND AND SWEDEN on the urgent need for rebuilding fisheries in the Baltic Sea

“Conscious of the importance to urgently start the rebuilding trajectory for the fisheries in the Baltic Sea, the Commission, and Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Finland and Sweden agree on the need to request the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) to provide in its annual stock-specific catch advice scenarios to rebuild the fish stocks concerned to the required biomass levels within different timeframes. Such advice should take into account the biological characteristics of the stocks and show different catch levels for the respective rebuilding phase.”

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE COMMISSION AND FINLAND on Bothnian herring

“Finland highlights its concerns about the state of Bothnian herring. Finland renews its commitment to continue further improving the data collection for Bothnian herring with a view to making the most recent data available to ICES. In parallel the Commission will request ICES to update its advice for 2026 for that stock based on the most recent data submitted by Finland. Once ICES replies to that request, the Commission will consider submitting – as soon as possible – a proposal for amending the TAC set for 2026 in line with the updated ICES advice.”

JOINT STATEMENT BY FINLAND, ESTONIA, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, POLAND AND SWEDEN on cormorants and seals

“We urge the Commission, without delay, to find solutions for better management of great cormorants and seals, in order to take into account their impact on fish stocks and ensuring the balance of the ecosystem.”

STATEMENT BY THE COMMISSION on the political agreement reached by the Council

“The Commission takes note of the political agreement reached by the Council on the fishing opportunities for 2026 in the Baltic Sea. The Commission is concerned that the following elements of that agreement are less likely to contribute to the rebuilding of the fisheries that rely on the recovery of certain stocks for their economic activities than the Commission proposal: (1) the total allowable catches (TACs) for Bothnian herring, central Baltic herring and western Baltic herring should have been set at a level which ensures that the probability for the stocks to respectively fall or remain below B_{lim} in 2027 is less than 5%; and (2) there should be no targeted fisheries, commercial or recreational, of western Baltic herring and main basin salmon (except when and where targeted commercial fisheries are allowed) for which the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea advises to stop all fishing.”

STATEMENT BY SWEDEN on ICES advice and ecosystem-based fisheries management

“Sweden reaffirms its commitment to a science-based fisheries policy. Sweden urges the Commission to ensure a holistic approach in their requests to ICES, thus that the scientific advice provided by ICES on fishing opportunities also reflects size and population structures and that the advice from ICES in addition to having fisheries parameters also includes the complex realities of marine ecosystems, including the effects of human activities, natural mortality from predators, and broader ecosystem dynamics.”

STATEMENT BY ESTONIA on the fixing for 2026 of fishing opportunities applicable in the Baltic Sea

“We are deeply concerned about the process regarding setting Baltic Sea TACs and quotas at the AGRIFISH Council meeting in October 2025. The TACs and quotas setting did not follow the ranges of the best available scientific advice. It is of utmost importance that the TACs would be set according to ranges set in MAP (Baltic Sea Multiannual Plan) when stocks are above B_{lim} . In addition, the dispute over article 4(6) remains unresolved and needs to be urgently addressed. The idea of the MAPs was to reduce the subjectiveness in debates over the fishing opportunities in the Council. Unfortunately, the Baltic Sea MAP is not serving its purpose. Arbitrary derogations from F ranges will create a dangerous precedent for the future discussions on the EU managed quotas.”