

The multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea and ways forward

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The European Parliament adopted by 337 votes to 178, with 44 abstentions, a resolution on the multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea and ways forward.

Urgent actions

Parliament called on the Commission and the Council to ensure the effective use of all existing available legal and management tools, including targeted measures, using a science-based approach as well as effective stakeholder consultation, to prevent any further decline in the Baltic Sea fish stocks. It urged the Commission and Member States to move to a **recovery and rebuilding phase** for fish stocks, taking measures and actions based on the best available scientific advice, as well as remedial measures based on the best available science such as suspending targeted fisheries for some stocks in the Baltic Sea, avoiding measures that could undermine the socio-economic stability of coastal communities.

Members called for the mobilisation of **social and financial support**, particularly for affected communities, as well as local investment, temporary compensation, and transitional aid for fishermen. The Commission was urged to establish a **fund** dedicated to the recovery and transition of fishing in the Baltic Sea to support fleet restructuring.

Parliament called on the Council to adopt **total allowable catches that** fully comply with the precautionary principle. Setting multi-annual quotas based on the best available scientific data could give Baltic Sea marine ecosystems time to recover and provide businesses with the stability they need to plan their investments, maintain employment, upkeep port infrastructure, and support generational renewal in the fishing sector.

Members called for **measures to prevent irreversible ecological damage** to Baltic herring and sprat populations in order to ensure the long-term viability of coastal and small-scale fisheries targeting these species and to preserve marine food webs. They stressed the importance of maintaining **viable small-scale fisheries with limited landing** in the region by allowing them to operate during rebuilding phases.

Parliament stressed the need to prioritise **the socio-economic situation of small-scale coastal fishers** and to further strengthen the implementation of the landing obligation to combat illegal discards in the Baltic Sea. It also highlighted the role of the European Ocean Pact in promoting a comprehensive approach and a regenerative and sustainable blue economy in the Baltic Sea.

Other factors

Parliament asked the Commission to develop a **coordinated and cross-sectoral plan** based on scientific data, which addresses the key stressors affecting the Baltic Sea while ensuring inclusive governance and maritime spatial planning, through dialogue and cooperation with all relevant stakeholders.

Members called for effective **climate change** mitigation and adaptation measures, as well as a significant increase in investment in **modern sewage treatment plants** and pollutant retention and filtration systems, both in the Baltic Sea countries and in all river basins that flow into it.

The resolution stressed the need for the Commission to take urgent and effective measures in response to the pressure exerted by large cormorant populations on fish stocks in the Baltic Sea. The Commission is invited to propose an **EU great cormorant management plan** for Baltic Sea fisheries and aquaculture, based on the best available scientific advice and Member State practices.

Parliament further invited Member States and the Commission to join forces to support the development of scientific research and to exchange best practices on safe and cost-effective methods for detecting and removing **munitions and unexploded ordnance** (UXO) from the seafloor.

The Commission is also invited to study measures to counter the Russian shadow fleet, particularly in the Baltic Sea region.

Legal changes

The Commission is invited to:

- launch an evaluation and possible revision of the regulation establishing a multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea in order to improve its clarity, consistency and practical application, and to assess its performance with regard to environmental and socio-economic aspects;
- assess and, where appropriate, propose to include salmon and trout stocks among the specific stocks covered by the scope of the regulation as regards bycatch;
- strengthen salmon management measures in the Baltic Sea;
- propose rules adapted to the Baltic Sea region regarding measures to be taken automatically when stocks fall below the set thresholds;
- strengthen regional cooperation;
- propose, for the Baltic Sea, a ban on trawling for the production of fishmeal and fish oil during a rebuilding phase, as well as limiting extractive activities in marine protected areas (MPAs).