



Brussels,  
29 September 2016  
Low Impact Fishers of Europe

### **Crunch Time in Baltic: Opportunities and Threats for Cod and Small Scale Fishers.**

***Just as we should take utmost care for our most vulnerable fish stocks, we are obliged to take the utmost care for the most vulnerable fishers.***

As 2017 Baltic TAC negotiations near conclusion, lobbyists are taking a plethora of public stances. Rather than muddying the waters further, LIFE would like to recall the main elements of its Action Plan for Western cod, elaborated in July.<sup>1</sup>:

1. Strong priority access to national Western cod quotas for small-scale fishers using low impact passive gears, in accordance with Article 17 of Basic CFP Regulation, at least until the current crisis abates and there's enough quota for all segments;
2. Improved spawning protection through total trawling closure in February and March in subdivisions (SDs) 22 and 23;
3. Incentivized cod avoidance measures for larger fleets which can technically move from SDs 22 and 23 to other areas, including ban on "rock hopper" trawls;
4. Regulate recreational fishing in a serious manner, so that the burden of the crisis situation is shared by all concerned segments;
5. Deal with mortality caused by seals in static gear fishing through tailored measures;
6. Intelligently use EMFF, as proposed by DG Mare, to offset effects and provide temporary support, especially on small-scale low impact fleets.

On this basis, we think that a TAC reduction could be somewhat more moderate than ca. 90% as suggested by ICES in July, with more scenarios added early September. Certainly, a 20% cut advocated by some would be too little given the crisis situation we face.

For us, it's not the level of TAC cuts that matters, but how the quota is allocated nationally, and what accompanying measures can be applied to ensure the survival of small scale low impact fleets dependent on Western cod. These have long been at a disadvantage compared

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<sup>1</sup> <http://lifeplatform.eu/lifes-baltic-member-launch-action-plan/>

to larger fleets, and must not bear the brunt of the crisis that is not of their making. This would mean death of fisheries-dependent coastal communities.

We call on decision-makers to apply a special and differentiated treatment in favour of small-scale low impact fleets as regards national quota sharing and EMFF support. This will ensure that small-scale low impact fishers—and communities in which they operate—can survive the crisis, continue their livelihoods and thrive when stocks recover.

We put our hope and trust in decision makers meeting in Council soon to find a wise and responsible balance. It must not be confined to TAC figure only and respond to main elements of our Action Plan. Nowhere more so do small scale fisheries require differentiated treatment.