MEETING DOCUMENT

**Expert Group Swimway (EG-Swimway 22-1)**

10 February 2022

Online meeting

**Agenda Item: 5 Fisheries**

**Subject: Fisheries in Swimway Vision and Action Plan**

**Document No.:** EG-Swimway 22-1/5

**Date:** 04 February 2022

**Submitted by: CWSS**

The Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Expert Group Swimway (EG-Swimway) (see Annex 1) exclude a mandate to tackle implementation of the [Framework Sustainable Fisheries](https://www.waddensea-worldheritage.org/resources/framework-sustainable-fisheries) and other issues related to fisheries.

The Swimway Vision and [Trilateral Wadden Sea Swimay Vision Action Programme](https://www.waddensea-worldheritage.org/sites/default/files/2019_swimway_action_programme.pdf), however, relates to fisheries e.g., as mortality factor of fish in the Wadden Sea. and therefore, EG-Swimway discussed in their EG-Swimway 21-1 meeting on 17 November 2021 to dedicate time for deciding how and what to communicate for the relation of SWIMWAY to fisheries.

This document contains a “description” on the relation of fisheries to EG-Swimway and a proposal on how to proceed.

**Proposal:** EG-Swimway is invited to decide on next steps (e.g., to agree on a document for submission to the WSB and change of ToR).

## Fisheries in SWIMWAY Vision and Action Programme

The overarching goal of the group is to contribute to improving the situation for fish in the Wadden Sea. This goal is to be achieved by fostering trilateral collaboration on the implementation of the trilateral fish targets as laid down in the WSP 2010 and to provide an overarching SWIMWAY approach as an umbrella for initiatives related to achieving the targets according to the Swimway Vision Action Programme and its four pillars: research and monitoring; policy; measures and stakeholder involvement, communication and education.

Both the trilateral fish targets and the SWIMWAY action programme contain multiple aspects, questions and tasks which cannot be sensibly addressed without considering certain aspects of the different forms of fishery occurring in the Wadden Sea and adjacent waters.

## Relevance of fisheries in SWIMWAY Vision and Action Programme

As laid out in the SWIMWAY Vision and Action Programme, predator prey interactions play a vital role.

Each of the four pillars of the SWIMWAY action programme needs to consider fisheries to be successfully addressed.

Pillar 1. **Research and monitoring** has the aim to detect population change and to generate a sound process understanding to identify conservation options. For this task, it is imperative to consider all factors potentially affecting fish life cycles.

Pillar 2. In addition to the **policies** relevant for fish conservation, synergies should be explored with fisheries regulations in order to address the fish targets.

Pillar 3. Trilateral exchange on **measures** for fish conservation should ideally be communicated with the fishing sector. A dialogue that integrates conservation objectives and the needs of the fishermen is a prerequisite for the success of measures.

Pillar 4. The aim of this pillar - **stakeholder involvement, communication and education** – is to gain commitment from all stakeholders, raising awareness, activating practitioners and facilitating knowledge exchange. The SWIMWAY action programme focusses on professionals having direct or indirect impacts on fish through their work, such as researchers, commercial and recreational fishermen, water authorities, relevant governmental agencies and NGO’s.

## Proposal:

While noting that not all relations to fisheries above are the responsibility of EG-Swimway, we propose to include the following concrete aspects of fisheries to the mandate of EG-Swimway:

* (By)catch as source of mortality (predator-prey relationship) e.g. (by)catch of recreational and commercial fisheries or cooling water extraction;
* (By*)*catch as source for record of species occurrence in the Wadden Sea;
* Fisheries induced bottlenecks on the food-web and life cycles of fish;
* Knowledge of fisherfolk on species (e.g., presence of sharks and rays);
* Explore synergies with fisheries regulations in order to address the fish targets.

Consequently, we invite an open discussion about how to “*consider fisheries in the view of predator-prey relationships and species occurrence and abundance”* in the work of EG Swimway and we propose to change the ToR of EG-Swimway as follows:

***Extract of Terms of Reference EG-Swimway***

***“Background***

*At the Ministerial Council Meetings in 2014 and 2018, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands stated and decided to work on the further implementation of the five Trilateral Fish Targets as laid down in the Wadden Sea Plan 2010. To that effect, the trilateral Swimway Vision 2018-2024 was approved by the ministers at the 13th Governmental Conference on the protection of the Wadden Sea on 18 May 2018 in Leeuwarden, NL, and the Trilateral Wadden Sea Swimway Vision Action Programme as adopted by the Wadden Sea Board (WSB) at WSB28. EG Swimway reports to the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS) and to the Task Groups Management (TG-M) and Monitoring and Assessment (TG-MA) if appropriate. The group may consider fisheries in the view of predator-prey relationships and as afor species occurrence and abundance."*

Annex 1 Terms of Reference EG-Swimway

2021 – 2024

**Background**

At the Ministerial Council Meetings in 2014 and 2018, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands stated and decided to work on the further implementation of the five Trilateral Fish Targets as laid down in the Wadden Sea Plan 2010. To that effect, the trilateral Swimway Vision 2018-2024 was approved by the ministers at the 13th Governmental Conference on the protection of the Wadden Sea on 18 May 2018 in Leeuwarden, NL, and the Trilateral Wadden Sea Swimway Vision Action Programme as adopted by the Wadden Sea Board (WSB) at WSB28. EG Swimway reports to the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS) and to the Task Groups Management (TG-M) and Monitoring and Assessment (TG-MA) if appropriate. The implementation of the Framework Sustainable Fisheries and other issues related to fisheries are excluded from the scope of work for this Expert Group.

In fulfilling its mandate, this group will duly take into account and seek to promote the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

**Objective**

The overarching goal of the group is to contribute to improving the situation for fish in the Wadden Sea. This goal is to be achieved by fostering trilateral collaboration on the implementation of the trilateral fish targets as laid down in the WSP 2010 and to provide an overarching SWIMWAY approach as umbrella for initiatives related to achieving the targets according to the Swimway Vision Action Programme and its four pillars: research and monitoring; policy; measures and stakeholder involvement, communication and education.

**Tasks**

(1) Develop, initiate, /support, document existing projects and evaluate activities targeted at improving the situation for fish in the Wadden Sea. Activities concern research, monitoring, conservation and restoration measures, capacity building, development of best practices, education and advice;

(2) Exchange on national monitoring programmes and development of a possible future (harmonized) trilateral fish monitoring programme as part of the Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Programme (TMAP), including the promotion of complementary research programmes;

(3) Overseeing progress towards reaching the trilateral fish targets under the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (TWSC), in particular by liaising with and/or participating in relevant actions to improve the conservation status of Wadden Sea fish, such as national and international research projects and action plans;

(4) Conduct regular assessments based on the monitoring programme and relevant, scientific programmes in order to provide advice to management relevant for fish life cycles in the Wadden Sea. Contribution to and update of the thematic report on fish of the Quality Status Report (QSR);

(5) Define a concept for a forum to stimulate and support exchange of information on Wadden Sea fish, and for coordination with other, EU – wide or global SWIMWAY and related activities;

(6) Promote communication of its work and actions to other national, trilateral and international groups as part of the communication work of the TWSC via CWSS, including organization of Swimway conferences.

(7) Coordination and implementation of the Swimway Vision and Action Programme; including elaborating recommendations of the Swimway policy review.

(8) Acquisition of collaborative projects with relevance to the SWIMWAY vision and action programme, such as joint research projects, including an early exchange of information;

**Deliverables**

(1) Regular documentation of how the group work has contributed to the improvement of the situation for fish in the Wadden Sea;

(2) Recommendation for operational fish monitoring programme(s) under TMAP;

(3) Regular trilateral progress reports on the status of Wadden Sea fish, including QSR thematic reports on fish, based on recent monitoring and under consideration of additional data, provide advice for measures to management;

(4) The group to function as platform for communication and for exchange of information with other SWIMWAY initiatives and entities to consider the wider geographical context of migrating fish; Collaboration and exchange, e.g. via Swimway conferences, support of the development of information material;

(5) Activity plan for implementation of SWIMWAY Vision and Action Programme with clearly defined products and results and division of tasks, with continuous updates.

**Composition/Membership**

Chairperson plus

1-2 members per region (DK, HH, LS, NL, SH), preferably with scientific expertise in Wadden Sea fish and from monitoring and administrative/ management level, plus 1 -2 representatives of NGOs with Wadden Sea fish expertise.

Participation by additional experts to EG-Swimway meetings and activities is welcome upon invitation on specific tasks/topics.

**Time schedule**

Permanent group.

According to the decision by the Ministerial Conference, the implementation of the Swimway Vision/Action Programme is foreseen to be accomplished within the German Presidency plus two years i.e. in the period 2021 – 2024.

Annex 2 Fisheries in the SWIMWAY Vision and Action Programme.

*Open research questions are specified in subsequent sections, relating to the Trilateral Fish Targets and the adjusted targets as formulated in the QSR 2017, and focussing in particular on species-habitat relationships, predator-prey relationships, fisheries, connectivity and ecophysiology along the SWIMWAY of focal species. Within each of these subjects, climate change is potentially important and will be referred to under each research topic.*

*Natural mortality through predation and human-induced mortality through a.o. fisheries are simultaneously affecting Wadden Sea fish communities. For an effective management towards viable populations, it is necessary to evaluate natural disturbances and sources of mortality against the effects of fisheries or other human activities.*

*The ecological mechanisms underlying the trade-off between rich food supply and threat through predators and diseases, is largely unknown. In addition to natural mortality, removal of fish by fisheries (including by-catch) is important. At the same time, the relationship between surplus and loss may determine the nursery value of the Wadden Sea and may be a bottleneck along the SWIMWAY of fish.*

*At the European level, there are a number of directives and regulations relevant to the Trilateral Fish Targets. These include o.a. Habitats Directive, the Water Framework Directive, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Common Fisheries Policy, Ballast Water Convention, the Marine Spatial Planning directive and the Alien Species Regulation. Each of the Wadden Sea countries has legislation which can be relevant for the targets. Policies dealing with fisheries in the trilateral Wadden Sea will also be relevant1.[1:* *A.o. Tønder Declaration on sustainable fisheries (paragraphs 36-40), CWSS report 2013 sustainable fisheries, TGMM working paper on fisheries from the TG-M 13 meeting in August 2015.]*

*Bottlenecks could be either physical obstacles, such as weirs and dams, or sources of mortality, such as catch and bycatch of recreational and commercial fisheries or cooling water extraction but also habitat degradation by dredging or sand nourishment. This could be in the Wadden Sea or surrounding waters, or even further away in the freshwater or marine environment.*

*The effects of plastics and activities, such as fisheries and dredging, on habitat and food web have not been well-studied in the Wadden Sea to date. Coherent management measures have not been developed*

*Denmark: Citizen Science. Use of citizen science in fisheries, with focus on recreational fisheries, the Key fishermen’s project.*

*Netherlands: Collaborative project: From previous work with commercial shrimp fishermen it appears that the coastal area and tidal inlets of the Wadden Sea could be pupping areas for the tope shark (Galeorhinus galeus). This species carries out migrations of hundreds of km – spending at least part of its life cycle off the coast of Scotland. In order to identify the role that the Dutch coastal waters play in the life cycle of the tope shark, a collaborative project was set up with the shrimp fishermen, NGOs and the VHL University of Applied Sciences to tag and release the individuals the fishermen catch. This will likely be continued in 2022.*

*The SWIMWAY action programme focusses on professionals having direct or indirect impacts on fish through their work, such as researchers, commercial and recreational fishermen, water authorities, relevant governmental agencies and NGO’s. T*