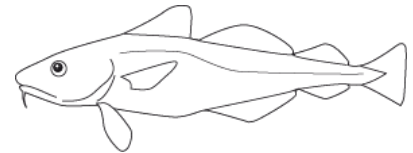


## Explanations on the ICES Advice for 2024

### Western Baltic cod



This small but formerly very productive cod stock has been overfished since the early 2000s, i.e. fishing pressure has not been adjusted to the reduced production of offspring. Despite several warnings, politicians failed to adjust the management plan in force between 2007 and 2016 - mainly because the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers disagreed on who was in charge for this adjustment.

In 2015, however, the stock produced only 10% of the average amount of recruits: it collapsed. At this point, policymakers took the right measures, reduced the commercial catch drastically and involved recreational fisheries, which account for a significant share of the total harvest, in the recovery of the stock.

The following yearclass of 2016 appeared to be stronger, but did not contribute to the stock recovery as much as expected. Since 2023, the stock assessment is indicative of trends only and results are presented in relative terms. Due to a lack of reliable data, fishing mortality cannot be calculated. The relative harvest rate presented instead indicates that fishing pressure is now very low and has almost no influence on stock development anymore. Spawning biomass shows a slight increase in 2023, but remains far below the limit value. The reason for continued poor recruitment since 2017 has not yet been conclusively explained, but as with eastern cod, the influence of environmental conditions is apparently now much more important than that of fishing.

Since 2022, the directed fishery is closed, and a small bycatch quota (489 tons) has been set to keep the remaining fisheries open in the western Baltic Sea. The daily catch limit for the recreational fishery has been reduced to one cod. For 2024, ICES follows the standard approach for data-limited stocks and recommends a catch of only 24 tons (including angler's catches).

The fishery reports that cod can no longer be caught in this area; therefore, the larger trawlers in Schleswig-Holstein, which largely targeted cod, have therefore been scrapped.

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