



Losing more than fish: EU recreational fishers rise as wild salmon vanishes

On 04 November, the European Parliament Recreational Fisheries and Aquatic Environment Forum hosted a high-level movie screening & policy debate dedicated to Emilie Björkman's docufilm "***A Baltic salmon requiem – FREE FALLING***" ([link](#)).

The event focused on the urgent need to safeguard the Baltic Sea's ecosystem, particularly its wild salmon populations. It highlighted how communities whose livelihoods depend on healthy aquatic environments, angling tourism, and the related socio-economic benefits of this activity are being affected.

Recreational fisheries are a major stakeholder in the Baltic Sea region, generating an annual economic revenue of **1.917 million EUR** and support approximately **15,656 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs**, all with sustainable activities in the region's marine & fresh waters¹.

The event was organised following the recent publication of the draft EU Parliament's [Own-Initiative Report \(INI\) "The multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea and ways forward"](#) – amid a growing recognition at the EU level of the worrying state of Europe's seas, rivers and fish stocks.

MEP Ms Heléne Fritzon (S&D, Sweden) opened the event underlining that "*(The) documentary tells a story both beautiful and troubling. It reminds us that even after years of recovery, the wild Baltic salmon faces a new crisis (and that) what happens in our rivers and seas reflects much larger changes in our environment and climate.*"

MEP Mr Niclas Herbst (EPP, Germany), co-chairing the event stated that "*Today's film reminds us that behind every policy proposal, there is people – families, anglers, and communities who care deeply about the waters they know best...let's focus on what unites us – a determination to see the Baltic salmon swim freely once again, healthy and in good numbers. Let's make this event not a requiem, but a wake-up call*".

Four Members of the European Parliament from across the political spectrum² participated in the event, expressing strong support to protect the Baltic Sea's wild salmon populations, and revert the deteriorating state of the Baltic Sea. The screening was followed by a **policy debate**, chaired by MEP Niclas Herbst (EPP, Germany) featuring:

- **Ms Francesca Arena – Deputy Head of Cabinet of European Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans** Mr Costas Kadis
- **MEP Michal Wiezik (Renew Europe, Slovakia)**
- **MEP Emma Wiesner (Renew Europe, Sweden)**
- **Emilie Björkman, movie director**

¹ [Research for PECH Committee - Marine recreational and semi-subsistence fishing - its value and its impact on fish stocks | Think Tank | European Parliament](#)

² MEP Niclas Herbst (EPP, Germany), MEP Heléne Fritzon (S&D, Sweden), MEP Emma Wiesner (Renew Europe, Sweden) and MEP Michal Wiezik (Renew Europe, Slovakia)

- **Thomas Johansson** - Baltic Salmon Fund - Secretary General; and
- **Kaare M. Ebert** – European Anglers Alliance (EAA) representative

During the discussion, Ms Arena emphasized that Commissioner Kadis recognises the ongoing ecological crisis in the Baltic Sea, which threatens the socio-economic livelihoods of many remote communities – including those who rely on wild salmon in freshwaters. For this reason, Commissioner Kadis supports a rebuilding trajectory for the Baltic Sea, as reflected in the Commission’s Fisheries Total Allowable Catches (TAC) proposal for 2026 and the request for scientific advice on how to implement and achieve this trajectory.” To conclude the roundtable discussion, **Kaare M. Ebert** (European Anglers Alliance) said “*A part of people’s local cultural identity is restored again when salmon are back in a river valley... river fishing (for salmon) just in the Torne River (Sweden) creates 11 million EUR per year, The Mörrum River (Sweden) 4,5 million € per year³, and a single salmon caught by recreational fishers at sea in Finland is worth 1.150 €⁴... But to create these social and economic values, we need salmon in rivers, we need proper fisheries management.*”

Through this event, the European Parliament Recreational Fisheries and Aquatic Environment Forum calls for recreational fisheries to be recognised as a key partner in shaping a sustainable EU fisheries policy in the Baltic — uniting economic vitality, social value, and environmental responsibility. Building on these insights, the RecFishing Forum will work to amend the Fisheries Committee’s INI report to reflect these priorities.

Pictures



Photo credits: Aliénor – 2025

From left to right: Kaare M. Ebert, Francesca Arena, Emilie Björkman, Thomas Johansson

³ [The hidden value of recreational fishing - Uppsala University](#)

⁴ [Valuing recreational salmon fishing at a remote site in Finland: A travel cost analysis | Request PDF](#)



Photo credits: Aliénor – 2025

From left to right: MEP Michal Wiezik, MEP Niclas Herbst, MEP Emma Wiesner, MEP Heléne Fritzon



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Note to the editor:

About the event:

You can read more about the event on [this page](#). The agenda of the event can be downloaded [here](#).

About the Forum:

The Forum on Recreational Fisheries and Aquatic Environment (RecFishing Forum) was created in 2014. **By providing a cross-party discussion platform**, the Forum has been an essential tool for the **Members of the European Parliament to establish a direct connection with the recreational fishing community, its network of scientists, in-house experts and other sector representatives** to gather knowledge, information and data on the topics that were discussed in the European Parliament.

The RecFishing Forum Secretariat is provided by [EAA](#) and [EFTTA](#)
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 [@RecFishingEP](#)

More information about the Forum [here](#).

About EAA and EFTTA:

The **Secretariat of the Forum is provided by two associations working together**: the [European Anglers Alliance](#) (EAA) and the [European Fishing Tackle Trade Association](#) (EFTTA). The EAA and the EFTTA work at the EU level and beyond to improve the aquatic environment, to achieve sustainable management of the fish stocks and to protect and promote recreational angling (rod and line fishing) in Europe. They also advocate for recreational fisheries to be managed in a fair and equitable way with respect to the other fisheries sectors.

The **European Anglers Alliance (EAA)** is a pan-European organisation for recreational angling, which defends European recreational anglers' interests at the European level and beyond. EAA was launched in Brussels in 1994. There are about 3 million affiliated members to EAA's 11 member organisations and affiliates from 15 European countries.

The **European Fishing Tackle Trade Association** was established in London in 1981 with a clear purpose: to support the European sportfishing tackle sector – the manufacturers and wholesalers, the importers and exporters. Every year, EFTTA organises EFTTEX, the leading European Fishing Tackle Trade Exhibition.