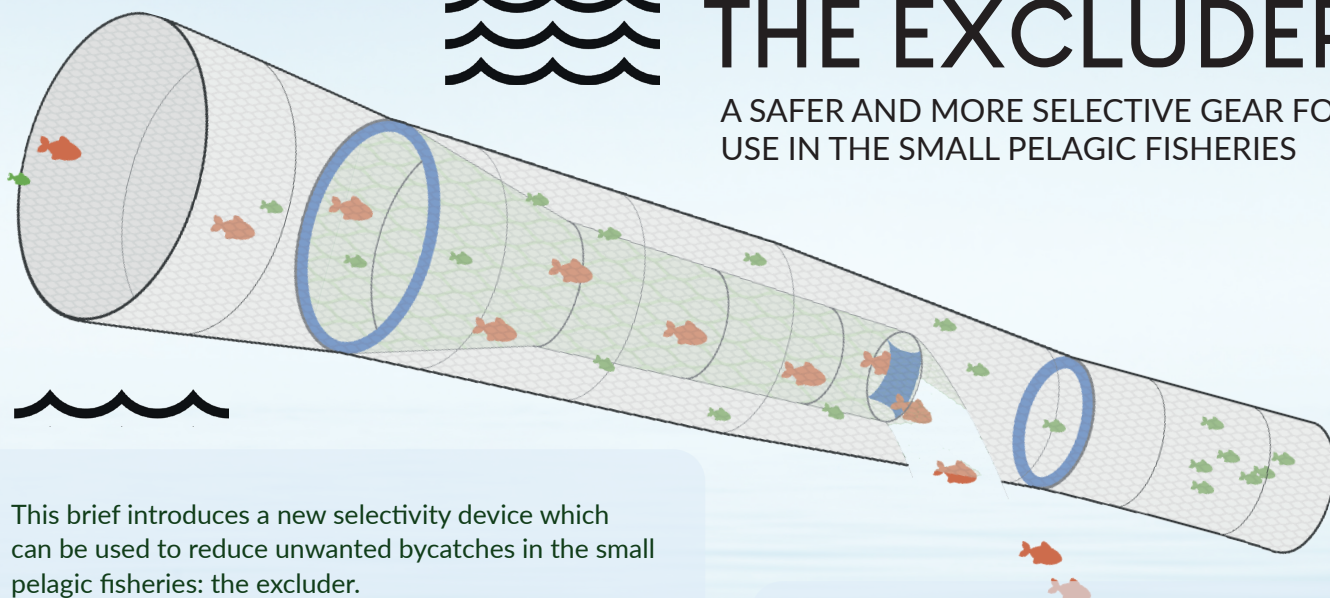




# THE EXCLUDER

A SAFER AND MORE SELECTIVE GEAR FOR  
USE IN THE SMALL PELAGIC FISHERIES



This brief introduces a new selectivity device which can be used to reduce unwanted bycatches in the small pelagic fisheries: the excluder.

For the Norway pout fishery, the excluder was developed to provide a more species-selective, and safer alternative to the heavy, rigid sorting grid. The excluder has been adopted into EU legislation but is not allowed in the UK EEZ where most of the fishery traditionally takes place. Therefore, there is an urgent need to change the current arrangements between the EU and the UK, allow the use of the excluder in UKs EEZ and thereby introduce a safer and much more selective Norway pout fishery.

## There are evident benefits of the excluder:

- The effects of minimizing unwanted bycatches are well documented.
- It significantly improves crew safety because it is made of lighter, flexible material and therefore easy to handle.
- Experience gained so far indicates great potential in minimizing the risk of unwanted bycatches of marine mammals, elasmobranchs and other protected species.
- Effectively reduces fishing effort, impact on marine environment and CO2 emissions

In 2020<sup>1</sup>, the excluder was evaluated by the Commission's Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) as an alternative to the sorting grid. Based on the conclusions from the STECF the Commission in 2021 adopted a Commission Delegated Regulation allowing the use of the excluder in the Norway pout fishery, and as an exemption from the sorting grid.<sup>2</sup>

## Design

The Excluder consists of an outer-net and an inner-net selection tube. The inner tube has an outlet in a bottom panel, enabling escape of unwanted bycatches. To reach the codend, organisms must pass through the meshes of the inner selection tube. This design ensures maximum selectivity in the fishery and is much easier to handle on deck, compared to the heavy, rigid sorting grid.

The excluder is currently being used on a voluntary basis in the sandeel, herring and sprat fisheries in the North Sea, Skagerrak, as well as the Baltic Sea. Several scientific projects have been started to further develop the excluder and to tailor it to the specific challenges faced in those fisheries. These include minimising the risk of accidental bycatches of marine mammals.

Reduction of bycatch when using the excluder compared to sorting grid in the Norway pout fishery<sup>3</sup> (Eigaard et. al. 2021)



<sup>3</sup> Eigaard OR, Herrmann B, Feekings JP, Krag LA, Sparrevohn CR (2021) A netting-based alternative to rigid sorting grids in the small meshed Norway pout (*Trisopterus esmarkii*) trawl fishery. PLoS ONE 16(1): e0246076. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0246076>

<sup>1</sup> Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – 65th Plenary Report (PLEN-20-03), Ulrich, C. and Doerner, H. editor(s), EUR 28359 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020, ISBN 978-92-76-27162-8 (online), doi:10.2760/148684 (online), JRC122989.

<sup>2</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/btx/pdf/?uri=celex:32022R0199>



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