Norway pout
North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat

**Fishery:** North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat
**Country:** Norway
**Purse seines**

**ASSESSMENT**

**Strengths**
- Scientific advice uses up-to-date age-based methods of assessment.
- The stock, although highly variable due to recruitment variability and a short life span, has been above biomass reference points since 2006.
- Fishing mortality over the past decade has fluctuated at low levels relative to the past 30-year trend.
- Managers’ and fishers’ compliance is evidenced to be strong: catch limits have not been fully used; discards and bycatch of Norway pout are considered negligible; bycatch regulations are in place and contributing to decreases in relative proportion; sorting grids are mandatory in Norway and Faroe Islands.
- Direct impacts on ETP species are expected to be very small. Interaction with the seabed ecosystem does occur in the trawl component of this fishery, but is considered to have mere limited impact than other demersal fisheries in the North Sea.

**Weaknesses**
- The stock is shared between the EU and Norway; and while ICES provides annual review of long-term management strategies at the joint request of the EU and Norway, there is no agreed long-term management plan and no harvest control rule for the stock.
- Combined TACs set by the EU and Norway occasionally exceed the total catches advised by ICES, and in rare cases, by a significant amount (e.g. 2014).
- Environmental parameters’ influence on recruitment and trophic interactions and dependence are not yet well understood.
- There is no comprehensive strategy in place for managing the impacts of this fishery on the overall ecosystem structure and function.
- There is insufficient evidence to determine with certainty that the trawl fishery causes no serious or irreversible harm to sensitive habitats, endangered, threatened, and protected (ETP) species particularly marine mammals and seabirds.
- There is slight misalignment between the area assessed and the area covered by EU TACs (the latter includes Division 2.a, while the former does not).
- Fishing mortality reference points are not defined.

**SCORES**

**Management Quality:**
- Management Strategy: ≥ 6
- Managers Compliance: 9.2
- Fishers Compliance: 10

**Stock Health:**
- Current Health: 10
- Future Health: ≥ 8

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
- Engage with ICES and fishery management authorities in the EU and Norway to develop a long-term management plan and harvest control rule that considers the impacts of this fishery on the overall ecosystem structure and function.
- Work with scientists to conduct research to better understand the influence of natural factors, such as temperature and predation, on recruitment and population size.
- Implement monitoring, analyses, and assessments to determine the direct and indirect impacts of this fishery on sensitive habitats, endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species particularly marine mammals and seabirds.
- Work with scientists and managers to define fishing mortality reference points.