

The Data Collection Framework

Report of the 16th Liaison Meeting

**Meeting between the Chairs of RCGs, PGECON and key end users
(ICES, STECF, ICCAT), JRC and the Commission**

FINAL REPORT

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

According to Article 8 of the Regulation (EC) No 2017/1004¹ (Data Collection Framework, DCF), Member States shall cooperate and coordinate their actions to further improve the quality, timeliness and coverage of data enabling the reliability of data collection methods to be further improved, with a view to improving their data collection activities. Further according to article 9 (1) of the same regulation, Member States shall coordinate their data collection activities with other Member States in the same marine region and shall make every effort to coordinate their actions with third countries having sovereignty or jurisdiction over waters in the same marine region.

In order to facilitate regional coordination, Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs) shall be established by the relevant Member States for each marine region (Article 9(2) of the Regulation (EC) No 2017/1004). An RCG consists of experts appointed by Member States, including national correspondents, end users and the Commission and a meeting is held annually. In 2018 (LM report 2018), a decision was taken to test a merging of RCG North Sea and Eastern Arctic (RCG NS&EA) with RCG North Atlantic (RCG NA). As a result, five Regional Coordination Groups (RCG) were established in 2019, operating in the data collection framework. These are:

- RCG Baltic (Baltic),
 - Meeting held in Lyngby, Denmark, 10-14 June 2019.
 - Chairs: Maria Hansson, Sweden and Ari Leskelä, Finland.
- RCG North Atlantic, North Sea & Eastern Arctic (NANS&EA),
 - Meeting held in Ghent, Belgium, 3-6 June 2019.
 - Chairs: Els Torreele, Belgium and Leonie O'Dowd, Ireland.
- RCG Mediterranean and Black Sea (Med&BS),
 - Meeting on EU-MAP revision held in Madrid, Spain, 11-12 June 2019
 - RCG meeting planned in Malta, 23-26 September 2019.
 - Chairs: Apostolos Karagiannakos, Greece and Simona Nicheva, Bulgaria
- RCG Long Distance Fisheries (LDF)
 - Meeting held in Tenerife, Spain, 2-4 July 2019
 - Chair: Sieto Verver, Netherland
- RCG Large Pelagics Fish (LPF)
 - Meeting held in Madrid, Spain, 13-14 May 2019
 - Chairs: Pedro Lino, Portugal and Jon Ruiz Gondra, Spain

¹ Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 of the Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 on the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the common fisheries policy and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 199/2008 (recast)

Most fishing fleets subject to DCF activities are covered by these RCGs. In addition to these RCGs, a pan-regional planning group deals with collection of economic data:

- Planning Group on Economic Issues (PGECON)
 - Meeting held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, 6-10 May 2019
 - Chairs : Arina Motova, UK and Emmet Jackson, Ireland

According to article 9(6) of the Regulation (EC) 2017/1004, RCGs shall coordinate with each other and with the Commission, where issues affect several marine regions. In order to create a forum where issues that affect several marine regions can be assessed and discussed, a Liaison meeting is organised every year after the RCG meetings have taken place.

Formally, the Liaison Meeting is an expert group to assist the Commission on data collection issues. Its participants are the chairs of STECF EWGs on data collection, the chairs (incoming and outgoing) of all RCGs and of PGECON, representatives of core DCF data end-users (e.g. ICES, ICCAT and GFCM), the chairs of Regional Databases steering groups and the Commission.

The 16th Liaison Meeting (LM) was held at the Borschette Centre (European Commission), Brussels, from 3 to 4 September 2019. Mr Joost Paardekooper, DG MARE Head of Unit C3, opened the meeting by welcoming participants and underlined the importance of this meeting, which has expanded in duration and participation in the course of recent years. He noted that COM's role is to facilitate and promote the process of regional cooperation and that LM participants should be in the driving seat. He further addressed the status of the EU-MAP and the roadmap for its ongoing revision from the Commission's point of view.

1.1 Terms of Reference

The terms of references for the meeting were the following:

TOR 1. Discussion with end users

- A. Setting the scene (end user role and future legislative developments)
- B. End user needs: presentations from end users on data needs and data quality, ongoing developments and main changes in data calls anticipated next year
- C. Presentation on feedback from end users on EU MAP revision

TOR 2. Data handling

- A. RCG data calls – overview of how MS responded
- B. End user data calls and RFMO reporting obligations – overview of how MS responded
- C. Progress achieved in the Regional Databases for RCGs in 2019 and problems identified
- D. Future developments for Regional Databases

TOR 3. Discussion on possible follow-up to the main outputs/recommendations

- A. The 2019 RCGs - specific recommendations addressed to the Liaison Meeting and proposal for future intersessional work
- B. The 2019 PGECON – outcomes and recommendations from their 2019 meeting(s) and proposal for future intersessional work
- C. STECF EWG meetings on DCF and STECF Plenary - outcomes and recommendations from their 2019 meetings and preparation for EU MAP revision
- D. Future steps in RCG, PGECON work (i.e. regional work plans) and follow up of outcomes of regional grants MARE/2016/22

TOR 4. Governance

- A. Follow-up of RCG RoP adoption in each of the RCGs, PGECON
- B. Structure of RCGs and PGECON (tentative changes in structure i.e. PGECON and in RCG number)
- C. Cooperation between RCGs and PGECON

TOR 5 Preparation for RCG Decision Meeting

- A. Agree on a list of recommendations:
 - to be included in the submission of National Work Plans 2020-2021
 - related to the revision of the EU MAP
 - on functioning and future work of RCGs and PGECON
 - coming from the regional grants MARE/2016/22
- B. Review and prioritization of DCF-related study proposals from RCGs, PGECON, EGs etc.
- C. Announcement of new chairs (where relevant), next meeting(s) and venues

1.2 Participants

The 16th Liaison Meeting met with the following participants:

Name	Role	E-mail
Joël Vigneau	Chair of LM	jvigneau@ifremer.fr
Christoph Stransky	Chair of STECF EWGs (on DCF issues)	christoph.stransky@thuenen.de
Willy Van Hee	STECF	wvanhee@telenet.be
Sieto Verver	Chair of RCG on Long Distance Fisheries (RCG LDF)	sieto.verver@wur.nl
Ireneus Wojcik	Incoming chair of RCG on Long Distance Fisheries (RCG LDF)	iwojcik@mir.gdynia.pl
Maria Hansson	Co-Chair of RCG Baltic	maria.hansson@slu.se
Tapani Pakarinen	Co-Chair of RCG Baltic	tapani.pakarinen@luke.fi
Elo Rasmann	Incoming co-Chair of RCG Baltic	elo.rasmann@envir.ee
Leonie O'Dowd	Co-Chair of RCG North Atlantic (RCG NA)	leonie.odowd@marine.ie
Els Torreele*	Co-Chair of RCG North Sea & Eastern Arctic (RCG NS&EA)	Els.Torreele@ilvo.vlaanderen.be
Lucia Zarauz	Incoming co-Chair of RCG North Sea & Eastern Arctic (RCG NS&EA)	lzarauz@azti.es
Jordi Guillen	JRC	Jordi.GUILLEN@ec.europa.eu
Simona Nicheva	Co- Chair of the RCG Med&BS	simona.nicheva@iara.government.bg
Apostolos Karagiannakos	Co- Chair of the RCG Med&BS	akaragiannakos@minagric.gr
Pedro Lino	Co-chair of the RCG Large pelagics (RCG LP)	plino@ipma.pt

Jon Ruiz	Co-chair of the RCG Large pelagics (RCG LP)	jruiz@azti.es
Mathieu Depetris	Incoming co-chair of the RCG Large pelagics (RCG LP)	mathieu.depetris@ird.fr
Dennis Ensing	Co-chair of the Diadromous Sub-Group	dennis.ensing@afbini.gov.uk
Arina Motova	Co-Chair of the PGECON	Arina.Motova@seafish.co.uk
Emmet Jackson	Co-Chair of the PGECON	Emmet.Jackson@bim.ie
Lotte Worsøe Clausen	ICES secretariat	Lotte.worsoe.clausen@ices.dk
Henrik Kjem Nielsen	ICES	henrikkn@ices.dk
David Currie	Co-Chair of the SCRDB	David.Currie@Marine.ie
Carlos Palma	ICCAT secretariat	carlos.palma@iccat.int
Joost Paardekooper*	European Commission	Joost.PAARDEKOOPER@ec.europa.eu
Annette Hurrelmann*	European Commission	Annette.HURRELMANN@ec.europa.eu
Venetia Kostopoulou	European Commission	Venetia.KOSTOPOULOU@ec.europa.eu
Jaana Mettala	European Commission	jaana.mettala@ec.europa.eu
Magdalena Urbanska	European Commission	Magdalena.URBANSKA@ec.europa.eu
Agnieszka Sadowska	European Commission	Agnieszka.SADOWSKA@ec.europa.eu
Monika Sterczewska	European Commission	Monika.STERCZEWSKA@ec.europa.eu
Blanca Garcia Alvarez	European Commission	Blanca.garcia-alvarez@ec.europa.eu
Franco Biagi*	European Commission	Franco.Biagi@ec.europa.eu
Stanislovas Jonusas*	European Commission	Stanislovas.JONUSAS@ec.europa.eu
Christos Maravelias	European Commission	Christos.maravelias@ec.europa.eu
Julia Eichhorst	European Commission	Julia.EICHHORST@ec.europa.eu
Zoi Konstantinou	European Commission	Zoi.KONSTANTINOOU@ec.europa.eu
Christian Tritten	European Commission	Christian.TRITTEN@ec.europa.eu
Anna Cheilari*	European Commission	Anna.CHEILARI@ec.europa.eu
David Connor*	European Commission	David.CONNOR@ec.europa.eu

*part-time

2. Discussion with end-users (ToR 1)

2.1. Setting the scene (ToR 1A)

The chair of the Liaison Meeting gave an account of achievements since the last LM. The LM 2019 was the third meeting based on the Data Collection Framework (DCF) Regulation 2017/1004. The first one, held in 2017, confirmed the role given to the LM, namely to ensure that RCGs coordinate with each other and with the Commission, where issues affect several marine regions, according to the article 9(6). Formally, the LM is a subgroup of the Commission expert group on data collection issues.

In 2019, as in 2018, a one-day meeting was dedicated to an exchange with end-users (ToR 1 and 2). ICCAT, ICES, STECF and the JRC (in its role of handling the STECF data calls) participated to the meeting, and GFCM sent a presentation by email, which was displayed to the group.

In 2019, the RCGs, PGECON and LM meetings were rescheduled from the usual September-October period, to allow for the finalisation of the recommendations and comments related to the EU MAP revision in time for the dedicated STECF EWG 19-12 planned from 16 to 20 September 2019. It was decided to hold two types of RCG meetings: one dedicated to science to be convened before summer (for most RCGs), and a National Correspondents (NC) decision meeting in a direct follow-up of the LM. The LM was advanced to early September (3-4 September). The aim of NC Decision meeting (5th September) was to inform the NC of all recommendations and decisions proposed by all RCGs and PGECON and to receive their approval where necessary. In that respect, the NC Decision meeting should be considered as a continuation of RCG meetings, and the report of this meeting will be appended to all RCGs and PGECON reports and mirrored in the LM report.

The exception to this schedule was the RCG Med&BS which could not accommodate a meeting before summer, only a meeting dedicated to the EU-MAP revision (June 2019). The main RCG Med&BS meeting was planned at the end of September 2019, and thus no outputs from this RCG have been considered during the LM nor during the NC decision meeting. Still, the synthesis of all agreements and recommendations - in annex 1 of the LM report -, comprises the RCG Med&BS recommendations, as they were made available before this report was finalised.

To underline the central role of the end-users (as per definition of users of data collected through the DCF), the first day of the LM (3 September) was dedicated to their topic.

2.2. End-user needs, present and future (ToR 1B&C)

2.2.1. ICCAT presentation

The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) participated for the first time in the Liaison Meeting. Its representative, Carlos Palma (biostatistician at the Secretariat, responsible for data management matters) presented shortly ICCAT in terms of mandate, scope, functional structure, regulatory process and the associated data requirements. ICCAT was established in 1966 with the mandate to “maintain the populations of tuna & tuna like species at levels which will permit the maximum sustainable catch for food and other purposes”. The Convention area covers all the Atlantic Ocean including the adjacent seas (figure 1). It has now 53 Contracting Parties plus 5 Parties with cooperating status. At present, about 160 data reporting requirements for management and scientific purposes govern the ICCAT data collection workload every year. The scientific data have a closer relation with the EU Data Collection Framework (DCF).

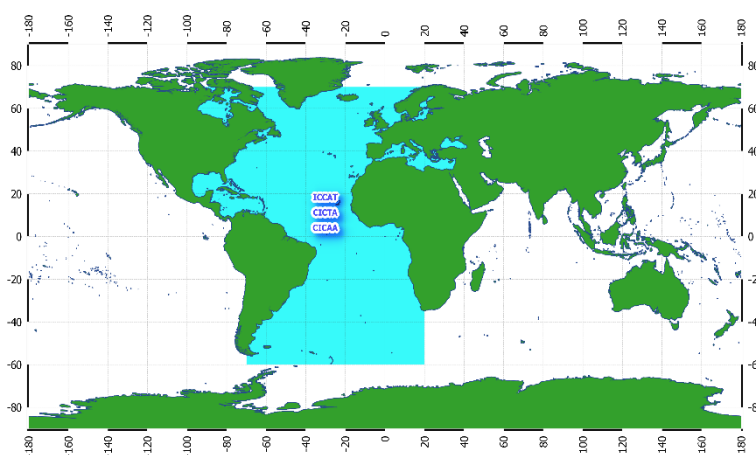


Figure 1: ICCAT convention area

The ICCAT Scientific Committee (SCRS) identifies which scientific data is required for the best scientific advice and establishes how ICCAT Parties should collect this information (formats, structures, quality criteria, etc.). Together with the Secretariat, the SCRS has also developed several tools intended to assure a minimum quality on each data set (filtering criteria), to evaluate the data reporting status by year (report cards), and to evaluate data completeness of each stock over time (catalogues, scorecards), as shown as an example in figure 2.

Table 2.1.2. Overall scorecard with small tuna species included

SCORECARD on Task I/II availability for the main ICCAT fisheries (final year: 2017)									
FisheryID	Sp. Group	Species	Species/stock	SCORES (by time series)			N. flag fisheries ranked		
				10 yr (2008-17)	20 yr (1998-17)	30 yr (1988-17)	10 yr (2008-17)	20 yr (1998-17)	30 yr (1988-17)
1	ALB	ALB-N stock		7.77	7.13	7.05	12	14	12
2		ALB-S stock		5.81	6.01	5.49	10	9	10
3	Temperate	ALB-M stock		5.75	2.82	1.89	6	9	12
4	tunas	BFT	BFT-E stock (ATE region)	9.32	6.63	5.71	6	9	10
5			BFT-E stock (MED region)	5.87	4.15	3.12	18	21	29
6			BFT-W stock	9.76	8.77	8.49	7	8	9
7	BET	BET-A stock (AT + MD)		8.09	7.29	6.49	26	27	27
8	Tropical tunas	YFT	YFT-E region	8.79	7.47	6.46	16	21	24
9			YFT-W region	5.00	4.73	4.36	23	25	26
10		SKJ	SKJ-E stock	8.62	7.86	7.05	15	17	18
11			SKJ-W stock	4.61	4.60	4.37	3	4	5
12	SWO	SWO-N stock		8.75	8.41	7.48	10	11	12
13		SWO-S stock		6.83	7.22	6.52	11	10	11
14		SWO-M stock		6.51	4.89	3.90	9	10	12
15	SWO & billfish	BUM	BUM-A stock (AT + MD)	3.84	4.02	4.11	28	28	29
16		WHM	WHM-A stock (AT + MD)	5.23	5.21	5.08	16	18	18
17		SAI	SAI-E stock	3.92	3.61	2.93	10	12	14
18			SAI-W stock	4.18	3.74	3.62	13	16	18
19		SPF	SPF-E stock	5.25	4.70	2.03	3	4	3
20			SPF-W stock	4.00	4.00	3.37	6	6	6
21	BSH	BSH-N region		6.58	4.58	3.30	3	4	5
22		BSH-S region		6.91	5.40	3.70	7	6	6
23	Major sharks	POR	POR-N region	3.30	2.16	1.24	13	11	8
24			POR-S region	2.85	1.58	0.93	4	4	5
25		SMA	SMA-N region	5.80	3.52	2.47	7	6	5
26			SMA-S region	7.32	5.50	3.25	7	8	7
27	BLF	ATL		3.92	3.84	3.17	11	14	14
28	BLT	A+M		2.06	1.25	0.74	17	20	21
29	BON	ATL		3.27	2.48	1.79	23	30	37
30		MED		1.53	0.94	0.86	8	7	8
31	BRS	A+M		2.00	1.38	0.92	2	3	3
32	DOL	A+M		2.69	1.81	1.27	19	18	17
33	Small tunas	FRI	ATL	6.29	5.49	4.25	21	26	28
34		KGM	A+M	0.60	1.10	1.10	4	7	7
35	LTA	ATL		5.63	4.59	3.46	21	27	33
36		MED		0.93	0.77	0.44	12	16	18
37	MAW	A+M		2.06	2.11	2.24	12	15	19
38	SSM	A+M		0.00	0.00	0.71	3	3	5
39	WAH	A+M		2.08	1.94	1.58	26	36	37

Figure 2: ICCAT scorecard on data availability

The LM welcomed ICCAT to the meeting and appreciated the exchange of views that took place, initiating a communication channel between ICCAT and the EU data collection coordination groups. The presentation was very much appreciated, especially regarding the quality checks applied, the database system in place and ongoing developments that will allow better data availability and exchange.

2.2.2. ICES presentation

ICES briefly presented the developments in terms of communicating data needs to the RCGs and LM and collaboration in general between ICES and RCGs. Having an annual meeting between the RCG chairs and ICES Secretariat in spring was concluded as a very good addition to usual correspondence, which will allow for adjustment in discussing data related issues early in the season, as well as developing and improving of existing structures. Within ICES data needs are identified through expert groups, benchmarks and workshops; these are peer-reviewed and consolidated within the ICES system before being communicated.

The RCGs welcomed the use of the Stock Information Database (SID) as a repository for data needs for each stock: the more automatized the set-up of data needs for upcoming data calls is, the easier the updates are, compared to the previous cumbersome spreadsheets. ICES and LM participants agreed that all data submitters and NCs should be made aware of these new options, of a more direct and easier communication of data needs. ICES will produce a quick user-guide to SID and make it available to the RCGs and NCs. The possibility for data providers to access and download upcoming data needs immediately after the working group was appreciated. This allows the data submitters to know at an early stage what will be included in the coming data call and to flag certain issues e.g. that requested data are not collected due to no fishery or quota.

ICES and the RCGs will further collaborate on the formulation of data calls; stability of requested format and content is of crucial importance. It was suggested that the LM could produce a draft time-line for data calls to be issued to data providers. ICES will try to cater as much as possible for planning needs of data providers. However, the ICES advice requesters set the final, hard deadline, which cannot be adjusted, and which is the baseline of the ICES annual work plan, including the deadlines of data calls. The big data call on catch and landings, etc., should only be issued once, early in the year, specifying the deadlines for various groups. This would ensure that data providers would only receive one data call and prepare the data compilation at an early stage. Data calls' deadlines should not coincide with the summer holiday seasons; this should be checked prior to a data call launch.

Regarding prioritization, ICES groups try to find a balance between which data to collect based on science, and what offsets can cover ICES' advice requesters' needs. At a more fundamental level, having the WGs to go through a detailed revision of data needs is part of the benchmarks. If this can be carried out already at the stage where the Issue Lists are being created, this would facilitate the data work related to the benchmark. ICES has initiated a prioritization process for benchmarks and ICES Secretariat was encouraged to investigate whether such data issues could be included in the prioritization process.

In terms of data transmission failures and their reporting, the pre-screening by data providers (dedicated meeting between RCG chairs and ICES) has greatly reduced the data transmission issues, which currently are marked as failures; only four issues were reported to the EC for 2018.

Recommendations from RCGs to ICES

During their 2019 session, the RCG Baltic and RCG NANS&EA issued the following recommendations to ICES (full details in annex):

- All data from mandatory research vessel surveys funded under EU MAP (Table 10 EU 2016/1251) and used for stock assessment should be made publicly available through an international database (**RCG NA NS&EA BAL R1**).
- Presently, many assessment working groups do not have the overview of the sampling level and variables sampled from surveys. As many biological variables such as maturity are derived from surveys, it would be beneficial if by default ICES could provide WGs with an inventory list to be used for preparation of the ISSUE list and benchmarks (**RCG NANS&EA R1**).
- During this year's RCG work, it was not possible to use the stock variable in the RDB to investigate the importance of the threshold values. This resulted in too many errors in the data for the stock variables. This has a severe impact on the improvement of a regional coordination of the stocks with a lower amount of landings. It is recommended to ICES to make sure that the stock column in the RDB is completely filled according to a reference list by area. Where there is a spatial or temporal overlap between stocks of the same species, ICES should contact the assessment group (**RCG NANS&EA R2**).
- Recreational fisheries data are no longer collated by the economic data call, so catch estimates should be included in the RDBES. ICES needs to develop a clear timescale and funding requirements, so that it is clear how to achieve this inclusion (**RCG NANS&EA R3**).

2.2.3. GFCM

The LM was briefed on current GFCM fisheries data needs stemming from existing GFCM recommendations, and which imply reporting obligations by Contracting Parties (CPCs) and Cooperating non-contracting Parties of the GFCM. In this regard, the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) still supports the implementation of the mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, identifying and collecting fisheries-related data, necessary to improve the formulation of sound scientific advice by relevant GFCM subsidiary bodies. Several tools support CPCs in their data reporting duties, such as the data submissions calendar on the GFCM website, the DCRF manual, available in English and French, and the DCRF online platform for the effective transmission of national datasets, in line with most of the GFCM recommendations. Among others, CPCs are requested to transmit information needed to assess the status of stocks considered priority by the GFCM Commission in each GFCM subregion (Western Mediterranean, Central Mediterranean, Adriatic Sea, Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea). Finally, GFCM made progress in implementing fisheries data quality indicators, namely timeliness, completeness, conformity, stability and consistency. In particular, subsequent to the decision taken at the GFCM 42nd session (October 2018), the feasibility phase for the implementation of these indicators on fisheries data transmitted by all CPCs in line with Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/6 (on the submission of data on fishing activities in the GFCM area of application) was extended. In order to streamline communication flows with CPCs, a data quality section was then released on the DCRF online platform with country-specific data quality assessment dashboards for each indicator (reference year 2017), with a notification system. The results of the feasibility phase, which confirmed the existence of differences in data quality across different topics and countries, were presented to the 2019 sessions of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) and the Compliance Committee (CoC). The committees highlighted the need for coordinated actions between GFCM and CPCs to be bolstered, in order to optimise the quality of data submitted, and agreed on a need for consolidated application of quality indicators through the DCRF online platform, including for

those data that were not addressed in the feasibility phase. The actions needed to improve data transmissions by CPCs and to streamline compliance assessments by GFCM, also include a dedicated workshop on fisheries data submissions and on implementation of quality indicators on the DCRF online platform, possibly to be held at the beginning of 2020, upon final decision of the 43rd session of the GFCM Commission (November 2019).

2.2.4. COM presentation of the revision of the EU MAP

COM gave a presentation on the EU MAP revision with an overview of work done so far and future milestones.

The current EU MAP decision 2016/1251 refers to the period 2017-2019 and expires at the end of the year. Therefore, and, in order to comply with the DCF recast Regulation 2017/1004, the Commission has extended the EU MAP decision with two legal acts for the period 2020-2021: Delegated Decision (EU) 2019/910 on the biological, environmental and socio-economic data; and Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/909 containing the thresholds for data collection and the list of mandatory surveys. The same pattern will be kept for the revised EU MAP.

The EU MAP revision comprises a broad stakeholder consultation, a STECF evaluation and a procedure of legal adoption. The process began in November 2018 with a first brainstorming during STECF EWG 18-18. In December 2018 RCGs, PGECON and main end-users were asked to provide their comments on the EU MAP revision. This information was compiled in July 2019 and subsequently submitted for preliminary consultation within Commission services. In September 2019, the STECF EWG 19-12 will analyse all contributions and provide a first draft of legal acts on the EU MAP (and work plan template) for the November STECF plenary.

The legislative procedure of consultation and adoption of the acts will then follow, involving consultation of expert groups, EU Member States and finally, an inter-institutional scrutiny of the adopted proposal of the delegated decision on EU MAP. Until new acts are adopted, the extended EU MAP 2020-2021 decisions will apply.

2.2.5. STECF presentation

STECF has a triple-role regarding its link to the EU-MAP

- data end-user,
- provision of advice on the revision of the EU-MAP
- Evaluation of Work Plans, Annual Reports and Data Transmission

As an end-user, STECF work is relying on data calls, with JRC managing the data upload process for up to 5 of the following data calls under the DCF: Annual (fleet) Economic Report, Aquaculture Economics, Mediterranean & Black Sea, Fisheries Dependent Information and Fish Processing Sector. The calls are issued by DG MARE based on an annual plan agreed by the STECF Bureau. It is also to be noted that the data call for processing industry is made on a bi-annual periodicity.

Fisheries-Dependent Information (FDI)

Main issues regarding DCF data (EWG 18-11):

- Data quality issues and misreporting were noted in general;
- The huge amount of data (all species, all areas, all discards, etc.) called for, lead to errors in submissions by all Member States;

- Confidentiality is not uniformly defined across MS; although confidentiality is defined by EU rules on data protection;
- Although problems were discovered at the meeting for different MS, no re-upload of data was possible. This led to unreliable data for major species and areas;

Suggestions for improvement:

- A second meeting to check and correct the data would help to produce reliable estimates: an EWG to do data checks before the main meeting where the outcome could be better followed up by MS, and authorisation given to MS to re-upload before the main meeting;
- Keep data call stable;
- Improved follow-up through DTMT could help to better identify issues that were not solved during the meeting and need to be followed up in the coming year.

Fleet economics (to produce the annual economic report, AER)

Main issues regarding DCF data (EWGs 19-04 and 19-06):

- Effort data was not always provided at the required level (i.e., FAO level 3 or 4);
- Value of landings significantly differed from Income from landings for some MS;
- Unnecessary clustering of some important fleet segments (e.g. Sweden demersal and pelagic trawlers);
- Requested data for n-1 was not always provided (e.g. capacity Denmark);
- EU-wide analysis was not possible due to incomplete and inconsistent data for Greece, outermost region fleets (France) and confidentiality issues (e.g. high-seas fleets for Estonia, Latvia, Poland, pelagic fleet Germany);
- It was not always possible to solve all data issues before the meetings; issues continued to arise during the 2nd EWG, when data was analysed in more depth (regional analysis).

Suggestions for improvement:

- Apply stricter rules during the submission phase (i.e. JRC uploading facility);
- Quicker MS response to data coverage and quality checks; follow up on DTMT;
- Resubmission of amended data should be strictly limited to 2 weeks after the 1st meeting, to allow JRC sufficient time to process all data;
- Add the requirement for National chapters in the DCF/EU-MAP to support the needs for the Annual Economic Report.

Aquaculture economics

Main issues regarding DCF data (EWG 18-19):

- Overall, MS submitted fewer data resulting from the new DCF provisions on thresholds;
- Data break between old EU MAP (i.e. before 2017) and current EU MAP (2017-2019 and 2020-2021);
- Romania did not deliver data in the formal way (done by email instead of through the online tool);
- Data collection for freshwater aquaculture is not mandatory (only 50% of weight and value are reported);
- Due to the new threshold under EU-MAP, 3 MS stopped providing data;
- Some countries still provide 'wrong' data, even though this has been addressed by STECF for several years.

Suggestions for improvement:

- Alignment of data break is necessary to enable time series analysis at the national and EU level;
- There is a need to better define thresholds.

Mediterranean & Black Sea stock assessment

Main issues regarding DCF data (EWGs 18-12 and 18-16):

- Most issues involve individual errors which are diverse and cannot be easily summarised. These occur right across data types and countries;
- The fisheries data submitted from France in 2018 was in a particularly poor state and caused considerable delays in the EWG.

Suggestions for improvement:

- follow-up remaining unresolved issues through DTMT;
- Direct contact with MS to clarify data issues during meeting as initiated recently;
- RCG Med&BS subgroup meeting with end- users, held for the first time in 2019, is expected to help in clarifying issues.

Social data

Main issues regarding DCF data (EWG 19-03):

- Very good data coverage overall;
- Disaggregation beyond required level was very useful;
- Some missing data from BE, DK, FR, MT, PL, PT;
- EWG represents first international analysis of DCF social data.

Suggestions for improvement:

- EU-MAP to be more specific on existing variables;
- Recommendations by STECF for potential new variables;
- Clarify possible integration with AER, aquaculture and processing data;
- Check social data before meeting;
- MS to prepare national profile before STECF EWG;
- Workshop under PGECON on social variables;
- Explore co-operation with ICES WGSOCIAL;
- Need to find and encourage the participation of qualified social scientists for this exercise.

The LM discussed the lack of expertise on social data and the lack of defined end- user needs. It was argued that social data might prove useful in the future for impact assessments and/or in the EMFF.

Recommendations from 2019 RCGs to STECF

During their 2019 session, RCG Baltic and RCG NANS&EA addressed the following recommendations to STECF (full details in annex):

- An evaluation of the outcomes of recreational fisheries pilot studies should be done by STECF to better define the needs for further data collection and inclusion of recreational fishing activities data in stock assessments (**RCG NANS&EA R4**).

2.3. Data transmission and quality reporting (ToR 1D)

2.3.1. Data transmission issues

STECF spring plenary 2019-01 produced Guidelines to report issues into the Data Transmission Monitoring Tool (DTMT), following recommendations of STECF EWGs 15-10, 16-08, 17-07, 17-11, 18-10, 18-18 and STECF plenaries 17-03 and 18-02 and Liaison Meeting 2018. The document provides guidance to all actors involved in reporting and handling data transmission issues, i.e. to end-users, member states, STECF and DG MARE as the final user of the DTMT.

STECF EWG 19-09 assessed data transmission issues from 2018 data calls; the report is available on the STECF website². Compared to previous years, the number of reported issues has decreased to only 85 issues reported by four end-users. This decreasing trend has been mainly due to the fact that ICES, together with RCG chairs, started to filter out the transmission failures, with a better focus on the ones which have an impact on stock assessment. Most issues were related to the Mediterranean and Black Sea and the Fisheries Dependent Information data calls. It should be noted that the 2018 data calls asked for data collected during 2017 (and before for economic data), the first year of current EU MAP format. The DTMT guidance proved to be a useful tool to assess issues in a more harmonised way.

COM presented the Data Transmission Monitoring Tool (DTMT). Together with the guidance, the DTMT is expected to progressively improve the communication of issues, pathing the way to clarify and solve them. In addition, COM is working towards improving the timeliness of DT evaluation to enable STECF to assess DT issues more in real time. The EWG in July will assess DT issues from the second half of the previous year, while the EWG in November will assess DT issues of the first half of the current year. STECF EWGs also try to feed the DTMT in real time, during the WG meetings, by the experts themselves. ICCAT acknowledged they were moving towards speeding up their reporting process as well. ICES will continue checking with MS the pre-filtering of DT issues before including them in the DTMT once a year. The process has already gone a step forward, however, difficulties are still encountered and STECF proposed the guidance for the use of DTMT to be a live document with new proposals for improvement after each EWG. STECF plenary will look at it once a year.

3. RCG data handling (ToR 2)

3.1. RCG data calls and use of the RDB for RCGs (ToR 2A&B)

3.3.1. RCG Baltic & RCG NANS&EA

There were two types of data calls sent to MS fishing in the Baltic Sea, North Atlantic, North Sea and Eastern Arctic in 2019. One standard data call and two specific data calls aimed at feeding the work of

- ISSG in the Baltic for fisheries targeting herring and /or sprat
- ISSG freezer trawler targeting small pelagics in NEA

Related to the classical data calls, all countries uploaded landings and effort data. There was a drop in number of métiers uploaded for effort data for one MS (182 to 70). All countries uploaded age and length sample data, with some drop in the number per species for length and some issues related to the historical information.

² <https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/dcf-dcr>

The data was used in ISSG on regional overviews of fisheries and sampling and, ISSG on métier issues. ISSG on quality assurance reviewed the upload logs. Issues relating to data availability and quality can be found in a publicly available collaborative document.

The data available in the RDB served also the purpose of the ISSG on Landing obligations, the ISSG on regional sampling plans, the ISSG on métier issues and the ISSG on Quality assurance (fisheries overviews). On the landing obligation, the ISSG provided recommendations on how to improve data collection and data quality of the BMS fraction and increase the availability of BMS data in the RDB. Confidentiality issues linked to the small number of vessels involved in the freezer trawler fishery were overcome and the full datasets were submitted for the data call.

The LM commented on the confusion created by the fisheries overviews prepared by the RCGs and the established ICES fisheries overviews, and suggested ISSG and RCGs to propose an alternative naming for this RCG new product.

3.3.2. RCG MED&BS

A data call has been issued for the forthcoming RCG meeting (24-26 September, Malta) but at the time of the LM meeting, no feedback was available on the provided data.

3.3.3. RCG LDF

A data call has been issued to all MS in 2019, and the RDB was used by RCG LDF to produce fisheries overviews for the first time. No substantial changes in fishing patterns were observed. The RCG has issued two recommendations related to the RDB (in Annex).

- **RCG LDF 2019 R1:** MS to continue updating their historical data prior to the 2020 data call
- **RCG LDF 2019 R4:** addressed to RDBES steering group: to facilitate data uploads of combined areas (RCG LDF 2019 R4).

3.3.4. RCG LP

Five separate case studies are currently tested with ICES (during October), to be presented at the RDB Steering Committee in December.

3.3.5. PGECON

PGECON does not process detailed data from MS.

3.3.6. Diadromous SG

In 2018, the data call for eel (WGEEL) gathered data which were processed using R scripts developed in the collaborative platform github.

The SG discussed a possibility to join the RDBES, knowing that eel assessment needs data from the Mediterranean and from freshwater, which are both absent from the RDB-ES today.

4. Future developments for Regional Databases (ToR 2C)

4.1. State of play

Like in 2018, the Regional DataBase (RDB) was used by the RCGs Baltic Sea and NANS & EA. For the first time in 2019, the RCG Long Distance Fisheries also used the RDB for handling their data needs. The existing RDB is currently used by the above mentioned RCGs, however the existing RDB does not support the landing obligations, and it does not store data in the way it was collected, nor support statistical sampling. It was therefore decided to develop a new version of the RDB called the Regional DataBase and Estimation System (RDBES).

At the request of ICES/WGBYC, data on sensitive species were accommodated to the database structure of the RDBES, with the addition of specific variables to a few tables. Overall, the data in the RDB is the basis for all the data work done in the RCGs, and a pan-regional RCG Sub-Group entitled 'Facilitate the production of regional overviews of fisheries and sampling' worked intersessionally to develop outputs from the RDB to serve RCG purposes (outputs publicly available here: [001_annual_fisheries_overview](#)).

Additional work has been ongoing at the request of RCGs, but the follow-up of these initial analyses will be conditional to additional funding:

- Inclusion of data from the RCG large pelagics. A test was carried out, showing the need for developing some specific tables. The RCG LP issued a recommendation recognizing the need to set up a system like the RDB, but requesting more information on the RDBES. There are still a lot of open questions from the RCG on the potential benefits of joining the RDBES, some of which have been answered during the LM (role of experts in the RDBES). A training session is recommended to clarify all issues.
- ICES/WGRFS will receive an estimate of the cost of including the aggregated recreational data in separate tables in the RDBES, as the data does not fit into the commercial data. There remains a question of obtaining funding for getting the recreational data harmonised and documented in the RDBES;
- The diadromous subgroup is willing to progress towards inclusion of their data to the RDBES. Full analysis of the consequences on the structure of the RDBES still needs to be done;
- RCG LDF used the RDB for the first time in 2019 and produced fisheries overviews. RCG LDF recommended (**Recommendation 2019-R2**) that, the work of RCG LDF should be facilitated and funded, in line with the arrangements laid down in the agreement between the Commission and ICES regarding RDB work for other RCGs.

ICES Secretariat have continued the development of the Regional Database and Estimation System (RDBES). The first eight hierarchies are now completed and additionally 5 hierarchies have been added, and test data have been generated. A download functionality has been implemented, and conversion from csv files to XML has been validated. All code lists have been added to the RDBES and synchronisation with ICES vocabulary has been enabled. The next phase is now to release a second version of the RDBES (data model version 1.17) to be available on the internet. The full roadmap for replacing the current RDB and InterCatch facilities with the RDBES is presented below.

Year	RDB	InterCatch	RDBES
2019	Production Data in/out	Production Data in/out	Development Test data in/out
2020	Production Data in/out	Production Data in/out	Test by selected stocks
2021	Production Data in/out	Production Data in/out	Test by all stocks
2022	Stay alive Data out	Stay alive Data out	Production Data call for 2021 data
2023	Stay alive Data out	Stay alive Data out	Production Data call for 2022 and all year
2024	Terminated	Terminated	Production

In order to facilitate future development of the RDBES, the following RCGs and MS actions are needed. **By the end of October 2019, the RCGS should identify** 10 test stocks, to be used next year for the testing of upload and estimations of the RDBES. **By the end of November 2019, the concerned countries should evaluate** the updated data model for samples, landings and effort data, in order to prepare for the upload of data for selected test stocks to the RDBES and make estimations of discards and distributions (by 2020). MS should continue to send experts to the WKRDB-EST (30 September– 4 October) and to the Core Group that develops the RDBES specifications of the data model and the estimations.

The LM discussed also a possible move towards a regional database in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region and for the economic and social data. In the Mediterranean and Black Sea, discussions on hosting a regional database already occurred in 2018: whether it should be GFCM (which already expressed openness to consider the proposal), JRC (which has not received any formal request) or others. Following the RCG meeting in 2018 and a subsequent questionnaire sent to NC by COM, no agreement was reached on the issue. The forthcoming RCG Med and Black Sea meeting in September 2019 is expected to give further insight on the RDB.

For economic and social data, PGECON argued that the JRC database is fit for purpose. There is a need for disaggregation of data to the metier level, to allow comparison with fleet segments. A training workshop to address this issue will be organised.

4.2. RDBES governance

The RDB/RDBES governance function is performed by a Steering Committee (SCRDB). The Committee comprises:

- a) up to two representatives from each RCG that upload data to the RDB; RCGs that do not currently upload data but are intending to do so, may also send one representative after approval from the Chair(s);
- b) one representative from each ICES member country that wishes to attend;
- c) representatives from the ICES Secretariat;
- d) representatives from the European Commission;
- e) chair invited guests;
- f) observers.

The guidelines for the SCRDB follow the “ICES guidelines for Expert Groups” but chair(s) will be appointed only from the SCRDB members in categories (a) and (b) above. If voting is necessary then members from categories (a) and (b) have a single vote per person, members from categories (c), (d), (e), and (f) cannot vote. Should voting be necessary, the decision is taken by simple majority of the category (a) and (b) members who are present at the meeting.

During LM, it was agreed that participants from all RCGs are welcome to attend the SCRDB meeting, whether as a permanent member or as a participant to any meeting on specific issues.

4.3. RDBES funding

The RDBES was acknowledged as being the main prerequisite for development of regional sampling programmes, for standardisation of data, and as a tool for ensuring transparency and quality of input data for stock assessment in the North Eastern Atlantic area (SCRDB Report 2018, STEWF-EWG-17-11 Report on ‘Quality assurance for DCF data’).

Funding for hosting and maintenance of the current RDB at the ICES Secretariat is annually budgeted through the Grant Agreement with the European Commission. The funding of RDBES development is more precarious and ad hoc. Until now, the RDBES development funding has come from:

- through a request made to ICES’s own equity in 2016
- a special request to the European Commission covering two workshops,
- from ICES/EU member states via experts’ time, travel, and subsistence costs.

The RDBES has now entered one of the most resource-demanding phases, both within the ICES Secretariat and for the wider RCG community. The total annual development cost is estimated at €145,000. The Northern RCGs proposed a time limited funding contribution (4 years at €75,000 per year = €300,000) from EU member states, this would support RDBES development until the system is operational and has completely replaced the current RDB and InterCatch systems (**RCG NA NS&EA BAL 2019 – D5**).

COM highlighted the complexity of the funding process for such development within the current EMFF and drew attention of the participants to opportunities that could arise from future EMFF funding. COM would nevertheless appreciate more involvement of MS in the funding scheme, and then COM would accompany the move in a way that is still to be developed.

4.4. RDBES Data policy

The RCG NA NSEA recommends that the RDB/RDBES data policy be reviewed with respect to the access to detailed data by pre-approved ICES fisheries expert working groups (WG).

Under the RDB/RDBES [data policy](#), landings (CL) and effort data (CE) are considered aggregated data, whilst sample data (CS) are considered detailed data. Currently every pre-approved WG has access to aggregated data, but has to request access to detailed data from all relevant countries’ National Correspondents (or ACOM members for non-EU countries). This is burdensome for both the WG and the MS and can cause delays in the availability of RDB data for such WGs.

In 2018 the National Correspondents at the RCG Baltic 2018 agreed to grant access to detailed data for the sub-division 22-32 (Baltic Sea) stored in the RDBES for ICES expert

groups and related benchmark groups providing advice to fisheries management (RCG Baltic 2018-A7 - RDB Data Policy #2).

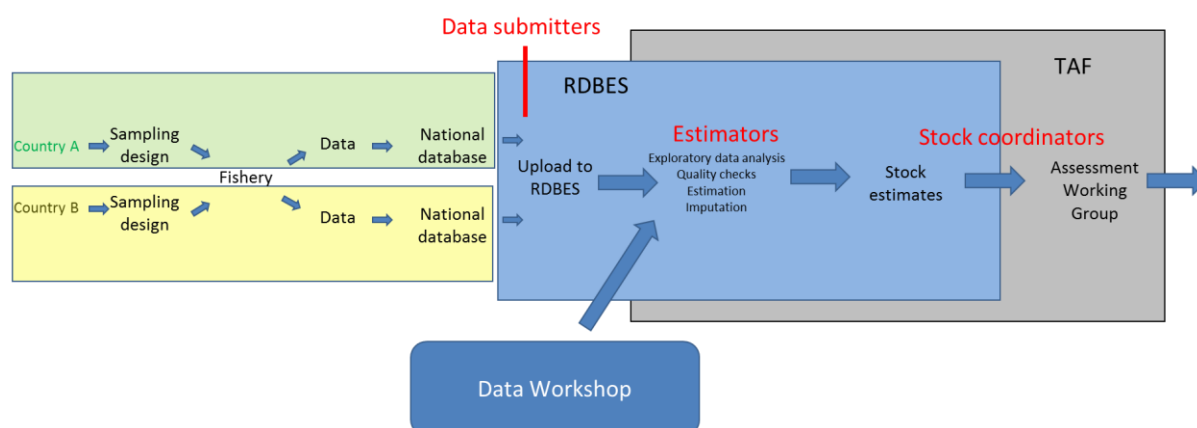
The SCRDB will draft the RDB/RDBES Data Policy, with the aim to improve the system for giving access to detailed data to pre-approved WGs during their 2019 meeting and then present it for discussion, review, and agreement during relevant 2020 RCG meetings.

COM recalled the need to respect confidentiality and protection of personal data, in line with EU regulations.

4.5. RDBES estimation methods

The RDBES will replace the RDB and InterCatch, and the intention is to ensure its integration with the new ICES Transparent Assessment Framework (TAF). According to this framework, a data workshop – this can either be a stock compilation workshop as part of a benchmark or a multi-stock RDBES data workshop – must precede a stock estimation using the RDBES.

This will require that relevant countries upload data in the new RDBES format. The experts at the workshop will then look at the data and the existing national estimation techniques, to agree on the stock estimation techniques to be used. A decision also needs to be taken on who will be responsible for performing the stock estimation.



According to RDBES stock estimation requirements, first national estimate for a stock has to be produced, then followed by a stock estimate for the whole stock. The national estimation can be delegated to an expert from another country, following a more regional approach versus a national approach.

The following RDBES user roles are relevant for producing stock estimates within the RDBES (note that a single person can hold multiple roles at the same time):

- **Data viewer:** Can view and export data and estimation scripts for the specific stock area.
- **Estimator:** Can create and run scripts to create national stock estimates for a specific country and stock area.
- **Stock coordinator:** Can create and run scripts to produce stock estimates for a specific stock.

Four models were identified on how the user roles could be allocated to different people, during RDBES stock estimation process. A simple example was given, where only four countries contribute data to a stock estimation (Country 1 – 4). A decision process was drafted on how to choose which model to use.

4.6. RDBES development priorities

The data model, database script and any associated source code will be made available under a General Public Open Licence. This does not apply to data held within the RDBES, the rights of which are governed by the RDB/RDBES Data Policy.

The two top priorities for development are:

- To ensure that data can be made available for the coordination of regional fisheries data sampling plans for the North Atlantic, North Sea & Eastern Arctic, and Baltic RCGs,
- To provide ICES with a regional estimation system that will allow statistical estimates for stock assessment from detailed sample data in a transparent manner.

There are also a number of other areas that the RDBES could be used for including:

- bycatch and PETS data,
- Large Pelagic RCG data,
- recreational data for the RCGs and ICES,
- diadromous data for the RCGs and ICES.

The development of these, and any further areas identified, will be reviewed and prioritised by the SCRDB, taking into account the progress made on the two highest priorities and the resources available.

4.7. RDBES confidentiality agreement

The RCG NA NS&EA (Recommendation 2019-R6) recommended that the best way of ensuring the use of RDB/RDBES data by ICES Expert Groups (EGs) is to have each member of the EG sign a standard “RDB/RDBES Data confidentiality agreement”, as a reminder of the RDB/RDBES data policy and related obligations.

4.8. Data check in the RDB

The RCG Baltic (Recommendation 2019-R1) recommended ICES data centre to compare data for 10 stocks (central herring, eastern Baltic cod, sprat 22-32 – from the Baltic) between InterCatch and the RDB. The outcome of this comparison needs to be sent to MS contact list before 1 October 2019. MS are then requested to look into any data differences and explain them, correct discovered mistakes and re-upload data before 1 December 2019.

The following questions and contentious points were raised by RCG LP during their 2019 session:

- on management and administration of the RDBES;
- on the timeline of the RDBES (see section 4.1 for a development roadmap);
- on the purpose of the RDBES: questions relate to specific ICCAT and IOTC data provisions and the potential of the RDBES to simplify the process;
- on the financial part (addressed in this section);
- on the upload process and confidentiality issues;
- on the use of the RDBES for providing data to the STECF FDI data call.

5. Data calls - main changes in data calls anticipated next year

There are no major changes anticipated next year on data calls, the potential merging of FDI and MED&BS data calls for STECF is still under discussion, and so is the inclusion of WGEF

and WGCEPH (and potentially others) data calls into the main ICES assessment data calls covering AWG needs.

6. Discussion on possible follow-up to the main outputs and recommendations

All recommendations issued by RCGs are detailed in annex 1 together with comments from the LM and the NC decision meeting.

6.1. PGECON – 2019 outcomes and recommendations (ToR 3B)

In its 2019 session, PGECON discussed the outcomes of the EU grant project SECFISH (MARE/2016/22). PGECON recommended to accept the conclusions of the SECFISH project, where appropriate. The deliverables will be made publicly available on the DCF website. PGECON endorsed the following proposals:

- a Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) subgroup workshop should take place to define the process of quality assessment and assurance and to revise the guidelines of the methodological report (with reference to the Handbook);
- a second workshop on disaggregation of economic variables to complete follow up work from the first workshop;
- the work from SECFISH work package should be incorporated into the planned PGECON workshop on the PIM methodology (October, 7-10th, 2019);
- the collection of raw material should remain optional and should be carried out as planned in the national work plans.

In its next sessions, PGECON should specifically consider freshwater aquaculture in maritime/coastal and landlocked MS, separately from fisheries/saltwater aquaculture. A workshop on aquaculture data collection is recommended before the DG MARE data call in 2020, to discuss a range of issues, including, but not limited to, environmental variables, segmentation, data reporting structure etc. All of these are listed in the extended recommendations, which can be found in the PGECON 2019 Report.

PGECON proposed that the date of the DG MARE fish processing data call should be moved from mid-October to mid-November 2019. This would result in a STECF EWG meeting in late November/early December³. These dates will need to be approved by STECF. There was a clear indication from PGECON, supported by the results of the EU grant project SECFISH (Work Package 5), that data collection on weight of raw material per species and origin (Table 11 – (EU) 2016/1251) should remain voluntary.

PGECON presented their numerous recommendations to the LM (see annex 1), expressing their willingness to reduce their number in the future and use the same format as RCGs, in order to better identify the recipients for the response and the timing.

³ EWG 19-15: Economic Report on the EU Fish Processing Sector, 18th November

6.2. Revision of EU-MAP

6.2.1. PGECON

Based on the list of questions from STECF EWG 18-18, PGECON provided recommendations to include or revise parameters in the EU-MAP Commission Decision 2016/1251 and guidelines (COM 2016/1701) with clear explanations on reasons for the parameters inclusion or revision.

PGECON should develop and maintain a live guidance document, tracking all variable definitions, amendments, clarifications etc., to make it easier for MS to understand the evolution in the variable definitions.

In its 2019 session, PGECON issued a number of recommendations on the revision of EU-MAP in the fields of:

- economic data collection for the fleet,
- data collection for aquaculture,
- data collection for fish processing,
- social data collection,
- economic data for recreational fisheries,
- environmental data for aquaculture.

On new data collection requirements, PGECON requested that biologists consider the possibility of including biological data collection for freshwater commercial and recreational fisheries under the EU-MAP biological sections as optional.

One of the major proposed changes for the future submission of NWP is the recommendation to delete Table 5B and replace it with a quality assurance framework and methodological report with reference to handbook, which should be included under the new EU-MAP Chapter III (5,6,[7]).

There was a lot of discussion on the usefulness of social variables and environmental aquaculture variables. For the time being, their added value is not immediately evident. However, COM reminded that the social dimension is part of the CFP and there is need to build knowledge. The same applies to the environmental aspects of aquaculture.

All the recommendations are presented in Annex 1.

6.2.2. STECF

STECF presented all last year's initiatives related to the revision of the EU-MAP. In November 2018, during the evaluation of NWP (STECF EWG-18-18), the work of ad-hoc contractors on the compilation of all past recommendations made by STECF on the revision of EU-MAP was discussed. STECF also developed a questionnaire for consultation by RCGs and end users. The STECF EWG 19-05 proposed a new list of mandatory surveys and identified routes for progress.

COM and STECF have been preparing actively the EWG-19-12 on the revision of the EU-MAP. The COM has set up ad hoc contracts, seeking additional inputs and selecting appropriate experts for the meeting. STECF has then discussed these inputs and the results of the contracts to incorporate this information in the EU-MAP revision process.

6.2.3. RCGs

The pan-regional ISSG on the revision of the EU-MAP (May 2019) compiled the STECF questionnaire and proposed revised text and tables for the future EU-MAP legislation. The ISSG proposed that the future EU-MAP should:

- receive minor changes from the current regulatory texts,
- aim at improving the process of setting up national data collection work plans,
- aim at simplifying the requirements and reference tables;
- not compensate for gaps and weaknesses of the Control Regulation (i.e. small vessels).

The ISSG Report was sent to all NCs and COM, was used as background document for the ad-hoc contract work and for EWG STECF on the revision of the EU-MAP.

RCG LP, not represented in the ISSG meeting, acknowledged that their recommendations made in 2018 were taken into account by the ISSG and ad hoc contract work.

RCG LDF, also not represented in the ISSG meeting, reviewed the responses made by the ISSG and made some additions to their reports.

The RCG Med&BS had a dedicated meeting in June on the revision of the EU-MAP. The final report was made available in time for consideration by the COM and included as input in the July ad hoc contracts.

Given the complexity and volume of modifications proposed by different expert groups, the LM agreed with DG-MARE that the work done by ad hoc contract in July be double checked by RCG chairs before the STECF meeting on the revision of EU-MAP in order to ensure that all recommendations were included in the proposals made.

The LM highlighted the need to identify end-users and their justified needs for every field of the new data requirements of the EU-MAP (e.g. environmental variables for aquaculture), and the need to clarify that freshwater data (except for diadromous species) should not be part of the EU-MAP.

7. Governance (ToR 4)

7.1. Follow-up of RCG RoP adoption in each of the RCGs (ToR 4A)

7.1.1. Status of RoP

All RCGs have now developed and agreed their RoP, which are made publicly available on the DCF website⁴, as displayed in the table below. In 2019, after the agreement on the merging of RCG NS&EA and RCG NA, the newly formed RCG NANS&EA adopted the RCG NS&EA RoP.

	Initiated	Drafted	Finalised	Adopted	Availability
RCG Baltic	2017	2017	2018	2018	RoP

⁴https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/docs/rcg/-/document_library_display/FMxyil88Aos3/view/1228330?_110_INSTANCE_FMxyil88Aos3_redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fdatacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu%2Fdocs%2Frcg%3Fp_p_id%3D110_INSTANCE_FMxyil88Aos3%26p_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_state%3Dnormal%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26p_p_col_id%3Dcolumn-2%26p_p_col_count%3D1

RCG NANS&EA	2019	2019	2019	2019	RoP
RCG MED&BS	2017	2017	2018	2018	RoP
RCG LDF	2018	2018	2018	2018	RoP
RCG LP	2018	2018	2018	2018	RoP
PGECON	2018	2018	2019	(2020)	

The question was raised on the possibility for RCG Baltic to apply the same RoP as the RCG NANS&EA, and eventually for **all RCG to share the same RoP**. This could be an agreed goal in order to simplify the appropriation of the RoPs by MS, as many of them participate into more than one RCGs.

LM discussed the need for diadromous SG to develop RoP, since they expressed the importance of having rules of procedures for their work. It was concluded that there was no need for separate RoP for RCG ISSG, even though they are panregional and cannot decide which RCG RoPs they should follow. It is the responsibility of RCGs to set the ISSG and define the ToRs and mandates, as legally defined in the Regulation.

Following recommendations from the PGECON 2018, draft RoP were developed. These were reviewed and updated during the PGECON 2019 and should now be reviewed by DG MARE. The final version of RoP, irrespective of PGECON status, should be adopted at the PGECON 2020.

7.1.2. Agreements and recommendations on Governance issues

The 6th PGECON meeting discussed and approved a governance structure and the 7th PGECON meeting in 2018 went further in opening a debate to discuss changing PGECON status from an “Expert Group on Fisheries Data collection (E02750)” to a pan-European Regional Coordination Group to align PGECON with article 9 of EU Regulation 2017/1004.

In 2018, under the MARE/2016/22 regional grant SECFISH (Work Package 1), a survey was conducted, including a question on PGECON status. Overall, 52% (7% partly, 26% mostly, 19% totally), of respondents agreed that PGECON should become an RCG, 41% took a neutral position and 7% disagreed. However, only 27 answers were received to this question.

Following PGECON 2018, all NC were contacted to give their opinion on the change of the status to an RCG. Nine MS responded: six were in favour and three against. The position of the DG MARE legal unit is that ‘PGECON would require consensus/unanimity from MS to become an RCG (even if there would be a broader interpretation of the term “region” in Article 9, point 2 of the DCF Regulation 2017/1004 in the sense in which this could be extended to a pan-regional interpretation). As there is no unanimity, the change in status is not possible at this point in time.

PGECON status should be discussed during the National Correspondents Meeting 2019 (6th September).

Planned workshops:

- Workshop on Capital Value estimations and PIM & Intangible assets. 7-10th October, 2019. Salerno, Italy. Chairs: Evelina Sabatella, Jarno Virtanen
- PGECON 2020. May 2020 [either 4-8th or 18-22nd]. Sophia, Bulgaria. Chairs: Arina Motova, Monica Gambino.

- Workshops on QAF/‘Handbook’ needs to be planned for in 2020. Other workshops on fleet segmentation and aquaculture could form part of ToRs for PGECON 2020.

7.1.3. Proposed intersessional sub-groups work 2019-2020

The ISSG work achieved in 2018-19 has significantly increased the overall RCG output. The work done during the start-up year was impressive and of high quality, and this effort should be maintained and consolidated. The ISSG list and mandate for 2019-20 are given in Annex 2.

The LM discussed the pan-regional characteristics of ISSG, suggesting that ‘pan-regional’ should mean ‘more than one’ (and not necessarily all). In this way, a pan-regional ISSG will not create the obligation for participation from all RCGs.

The LM also discussed the overlap between the ISSG on stomach sampling and ICES WG on the subject, and the risk of overlapping/duplicating work, often with the involvement of the same experts. It is recommended that ISSG experts make sure that ISSGs are complementary and in line with end users WG. Such complementarity could be achieved through, for example, the ISSGs focusing more on the implementation and coordination of sampling.

The RCG NANS&EA encouraged MS to pay attention when filling in table 5A with regards to data quality information and drafted some good principles to follow when drafting the NWP 2020-21. The LM noted that the information included in table 5A is very useful for RCG work.

The LM reiterated the message from the RCGs on the need for more participants to ICES/PGDATA in its mandate to strengthen the communication between data collection and end-users and identify improvements in data quality that have the greatest impacts on the quality of advice.

8. List of recommended meetings for 2020 as guidance for MS. (ToR 5D)

The LM was not in a position to compile a list of recommended meetings.

9. AOB

9.1. Discussion on the preparation of the NC decision meeting

The shift towards having technical RCG meetings in advance of the LM and a National Correspondent decision-making meeting (NC-DM) following the LM was a novelty this year. It was meant to alleviate the NC from participating to all discussions on technicalities, and to dedicate one day instead to take decisions. Therefore, all recommendations should be submitted for approval to the NC DM, but not necessarily the suggestions and technical agreements.

This shift between RCG technical and NC-DM was agreed during LM 2018, but this move was not aligned with the RoPs, which has caused confusion. The LM reflected on the way forward, considering that 2019 was an exceptional year, at least in the timing of the meetings. The 2019 sequence and the timing of LM in September have benefits, especially in order to prepare the new or amended NWP by the end of October, but this may cause difficulties in some RCGs such as the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

In order to better explain and provide the necessary background on the topics discussed during the technical RCGs, an early dialogue should be established between the national experts participating to the technical RCGs and the NC at the end of the RCG technical meetings, as well as internally within each MS during the course of the year. Effort was put to provide all RCG materials to NC in advance of the NC technical meeting. The RCG chairs prepared a standard way of presenting their recommendations and decisions for NC feedback on proposed technical issues and the subsequent decision-making procedure.

A new form on presentation of decision and recommendation were proposed by RCGs NANS&EA and Baltic, to be discussed in the NC decision-making meeting.

An agreement was reached during the LM to create a standalone document on recommendations and decisions. It was mentioned that in the future, these agreed recommendations and decisions should be simply included in a Regional Work Plan.

9.2. Announcement of new chairs, next meetings and venues (ToR 5E)

The sequence and timing of the RCGs and the Liaison meeting in 2020 should follow the example of 2019, with agreements on the exact dates still to be decided.

- PGECON: 4-8 or 18-22 May 2020, Sofia, Bulgaria.
 - chairs: Arina Motova, Monica Gambino
- RCG Baltic: 8-12 June 2020, Poland tbd. Same dates and venue as RCG NANS&EA.
 - chairs: Maria Hansson and Elo Rasmann
- RCG NA – NS&EA (+ Diadromous ISSG) 8-12 June 2020, Poland, tbd. Same dates and venue as RCG Baltic.
 - chairs: Els Torreele and Lucia Zarauz
- RCG MED&BS: last week of April/ first week of May 2020, Paris
 - chairs : Simona Nicheva and Ivana Vukov
- RCG LDF : 25 – 27 June 2020 (to be confirmed), Funchal (Azores, Portugal).
 - chair: Irek Wójcik
- RCG LP : 11 – 15 May 2020, Horta, Ilha do Faial (Azores, Portugal)
 - Chair: Mathieu de Petris
- LM 2020 : September 2020, Bruxelles.
 - chair : tbd

10. Glossary

AWG; Assessment Working Group

COM: European Commission ([COM](#))

CFP: Common fishery Policy ([CFP](#))

CPC: Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities

DCF: Data Collection Framework

DG MARE: Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries ([DG MARE](#))

DTMT: Data Transmission Monitoring Tool

EU-MAP: European Union Multi Annual Plan

FDI: Fisheries Dependent Information, data call operated by JRC for STECF

GFCM: General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean ([GFCM](#))

ICCAT: International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas ([ICCAT](#))

ICES: International Council for the exploration of the sea ([ICES](#))

ISSG: InterSessional Sub-group (of the RCG)

JRC: Joint research Center ([JRC](#))

LM: Liaison Meeting ([LM](#))

MS: Member States

NC: National Correspondents

NC-DM: National Correspondent decision-making meeting

NWP: National Work Plan

PETS: Protected, Endangered and Threatened species

PGECON: Planning Group on Economic Issues ([PGECON](#))

RCG: Regional Coordination Group ([RCG](#))

RDB: Regional Data Base (hosted by ICES)

RDBES: Regional Data Base and Estimation System (in development by ICES to replace the RDB)

RoP: Rules of Procedures for RCG

SCRF: ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics ([SCRS](#))

STECF; Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries ([STECF](#))

STECF EWG: Expert Working Group of STECF ([Meetings](#))

WG: Working Group

Annex 1 – Recommendations from RCGs and the PGECON

LM agreed to follow the same process as in 2018 and send for STECF information and opinion on the recommendations stemming from RCG 2019 work. The RCG Med&BS did not present any recommendations to the LM due to their meeting being held at the end of September 2019, but their recommendations are included in this document since they were received before the release of the LM report. RCGs will forward the recommendations to the responsible persons for the follow-up actions.

The LM agreed to summarize and present the recommendations for each field of the DCF. This approach will bring a panoramic view of the work of RCGs and PGECON and give prominence to issues affecting several sea basins.

1. On surveys

1.1. On Survey data

NA NS&EA BAL R1 Data from mandatory surveys to be publicly available	
Recommendation	All data from mandatory research vessel surveys (Table 10 EU 2016/1251) should be made publicly available through an international database
Justification	Mandatory surveys funded under EUMAP and used for stock assessment, should be made publicly available.
Follow-up actions needed	MS to start the process of making all surveys in table 10 public available through an ICES data base.
Responsible persons for follow up actions	RCGs and ICES to identify missing data and the appropriate international database. MS to start the process on providing survey data
Time frame (deadline)	Before 2020.
LM comment	The process is ongoing to put all surveys indices into DATRAS. A list of surveys not included in DATRAS will be compiled during the 2020 RCG in order to provide help to ICES in prioritizing the completion. The recommendation will also be put forward to survey groups LM also suggests that the information should be put into EMODNET if publicly available. The suggestion was received positively by ICES..

RCG NA NS&EA 2019 R1 - Inventory list from the survey databases	
Recommendation	Develop an inventory list from the survey databases
Justification	Presently, many assessment working groups do not have the overview of the sampling level and variables sampled from surveys. As many biological variables such as maturity are derived from surveys, it would be beneficial if ICES as a standard could provide the EG with an inventory list to be used for preparation of the ISSUE list and benchmarks.
Follow-up actions needed	ICES data center to develop an inventory list (Datras) by species and area.
Responsible persons for follow up actions	RCG NA NS&EA and ICES data center, DIG
Time frame (deadline)	Before 2021.
LM comment	The recommendation will be put forward to survey groups

1.2. On Costs-sharing

RCG NANS&EA 2019 – D1 – Cost-sharing agreement for participation to the International Ecosystem Survey in the Nordic Seas 2020-2021	
Relates to	Outcome of Subgroup Surveys
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	Agree on cost-sharing agreement for participation to the International Ecosystem Survey in the Nordic Seas 2020-2021. The cost-sharing will follow a distribution key based on TAC shares, in line with the Gothenburg-model ⁵ .
Implication	Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, The Netherlands, United Kingdom will cost-share the vessel costs of the International Ecosystem Survey in the Nordic Seas in 2020 and 2021. The survey will be carried out by Denmark (carried out by R/V Dana).
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of NA NS&EA
Supporting Documentation	See text in Section 5.5.3 in RCG NANS&EA report
LM comment	No comment

⁵ Report of the pan-regional RCG subgroup on cost sharing of research surveys at sea, Gothenburg 2016.

RCG NANS&EA 2019 – D2 – Cost-sharing agreement for participation to the International Blue Whiting survey 2020-2021	
Relates to	Outcome of Subgroup Surveys
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	Agree on cost-sharing agreement for participation to the International Blue Whiting survey 2020-2021. 2020-2021. The cost-sharing will follow a distribution key based on TAC shares, in line with the Gothenburg-model ⁶ .
Implication	Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Spain, The Netherlands, United Kingdom will cost-share the vessel costs of the International Blue Whiting Survey in 2020 and 2021. The survey will be carried out by Ireland (R/V Celtic Explorer), The Netherlands (R/V Tridens) and Spain (R/V Miguel Oliver).
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Spain, The Netherlands, United Kingdom
Supporting Documentation	See text in Section 5.5.3 in RCG NANS&EA report
LM comment	No comment

RCG NANS&EA 2019 – D3 – Cost-sharing agreement for participation to the International Blue Whiting survey 2020-2021	
Relates to	Outcome of Subgroup Surveys
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	Chapter II.7 of COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION (EU) 2019/909 allows for setting an alternative threshold for participation to a survey at regional level. Under the same article, the threshold for participation is set at 3%. For the revision of EU-MAP, establishing the threshold at 5% has been proposed by various respondents in the consultation round, following this line and to reduce the administrative burden, this decision adapts the threshold for participation to the International Blue Whiting Survey 2020-2021 to 5%.
Implication	1 MS previously contributing to the survey costs will be excluded from 2020-2021 cost-sharing.
Who needs to take decision/agree	All NCs RCG NA NS&EA.
Supporting Documentation	See text in Section 5.5.3 in RCG NA NS&EA report
LM comment	No comment

⁶ Report of the pan-regional RCG subgroup on cost sharing of research surveys at sea, Gothenburg 2016.

2. On RDB

2.1. On RDB data

RCG NA NS&EA 2019 R2 - Stock column in the RDB is completely filled according to a reference list based on area	
Recommendation	ICES to ensure that the stock column in the RDB is completely filled according to a reference list based on area. Where there is spatial or temporal overlap between stocks of the same species ICES should contact the assessment group (by month / area).
Justification	During this year's RCG it was not possible to use the stock variable in the RDB to investigate the importance of the thresh hold values and thereby improve the regional coordination of the stocks with a lower amount of landings as too many data mistakes were discovered in the stock variable.
Follow-up actions needed	ICES data center
Responsible persons for follow up actions	RCG NA NS&EA and ICES data center
Time frame (deadline)	Before Q1 2020.
LM comment	ICES is aware of the issue and commits to complete the stock column information.

RCG Baltic 2019-R1 Data check in RDB	
Recommendation	Data check in the RDB
Justification	Presently there seems to be a difference between data uploaded to the RDB and IC.
Follow-up actions needed	ICES data centre to compare data for 10 stocks (central herring, eastern Baltic cod, sprat 22-32 – from the Baltic) between IC and RDB. This information needs to be sent to MS contact list before 1. October 2019. MS to look into data difference and explain difference, correct them if mistakes are discovered and re-uploaded before 1. December 2019.
Responsible persons for follow up actions	ICES data centre and MS
Time frame (deadline)	Before 2020.
LM comment	ICES will be in dialog with RCGs to see where the differences are and try to resolve this issue.

Recommendation 2019-R1 : Updating national data to the RDB		
RCG-LDF Recommendation	2019	RCG LDF recommends that MS continue to update historical data as well as most recent data prior to the 2020 RCG LDF data call.
Follow-up actions needed		MS to update their data and promote set up of routine procedures to provide data to the RDB.
Responsible persons for follow-up actions		NCs of all RCG LDF MS.
Time frame (Deadline)		Prior to the RCG LDF 2020 data call.
LM comment		No comment

Recommendation 2019-R4 : Facilitate combined area upload.		
RCG-LDF Recommendation	2019	SC-RDB to discuss and seek a solution to facilitate future uploads for combined areas in the RDB
Follow-up actions needed		Contact SCRDB and put request on agenda for December meeting
Responsible persons for follow-up actions		Chair RCG LDF
Time frame (Deadline)		After LM 2019
LM comment		No comment

RCG LP 2019 – R6 . Regional Database and Estimation System (RDBES)	
Relates to	RDBES
When	
Details of Decision to be taken	The subgroup recognizes the need to have a system like a regional database, but more information on the RDBES is requested before taking a decision
Implication	
Who needs to take decision/agree	ICES
Supporting Documentation	RCG LP 2019 report
LM comment	No comment

2.2. On RDB data policy and confidentiality

RCG NA NS&EA 2019 – R5 – Revision of RDB/RDBES Data Policy to improve the process to give pre-approved ICES expert groups access to detailed data	
Recommendation	SCRDB to review the RDB/RDBES Data Policy to improve the process to give pre-approved ICES expert groups access to detailed data
Justification	<p>The RCG NA NS&EA recommends that the RDB/RDBES data policy is reviewed with respect to the access to detailed data by preapproved ICES fisheries expert groups (EG). Under the RDB/RDBES Data policy https://www.ices.dk/marine-data/Documents/Data_Policy_RDB.pdf landings (CL) and effort data (CE) are considered aggregated data, whilst sample data (CS) are considered detailed data</p> <p>Currently every pre-approved EG has access to aggregated data but has to request access to detailed data from all relevant countries' National Correspondents (or ACOM member for non-EU countries). This is burdensome both to the EG and to the MS, and can cause delays in the availability of RDB data for those EG.</p> <p>In 2018 the National Correspondents at the RCG Baltic 2018 agreed to grant ICES expert groups and related benchmark groups providing advice to fisheries management access to detailed data for the sub-division 22-32 (Baltic Sea) stored in the RDBES (RCG Baltic 2018-A7 - RDB Data Policy #2).</p> <p>The SCRDB should draft a revision to the RDB/RDBES Data Policy which would improve the system for giving access to detailed data to pre-approved EGs during their 2019 meeting and then present it for discussion, review, and agreement during the 2020 RCG meetings.</p>
Follow-up actions needed	Draft a revision to the RDB/RDBES Data Policy.
Responsible persons for follow up actions	SCRDB
Time frame (deadline)	April 2020
LM comment	No comment

RCG NA NS&EA 2019 – R6 – Create an RDB/RDBES Data confidentiality agreement to be signed by detailed data users	
Recommendation	SCRDB and ICES Data Centre to create an RDB/RDBES Data confidentiality agreement to be signed by detailed data users
Justification	<p>It is recommended that the best way of ensuring the use of RDB/RDBES data by ICES Expert Groups (EGs) is in line with the RDB/RDBES Data Policy is to have each member of the EG sign a standard “RDB/RDBES Data confidentiality agreement” which will remind people of the RDB/RDBES Data Policy and their obligations under it.</p> <p>For the existing RDB</p> <p>It is recommended that the Chair of the EG will have all participants with access to the RDB data sign a standard “RDB/RDBES Data confidentiality agreement”, which will be scanned and uploaded on the EG’s SharePoint site in the Data folder.</p> <p>For the forth-coming RDBES</p> <p>It is recommended that the Chair of the group will have all participants with access to the RDBES data sign a standard “RDB/RDBES Data confidentiality document”, which will be scanned and uploaded on EG’s SharePoint site in the Data folder.</p> <p>It is recommended that if the data is downloaded via an RDBES web application then a pop- up window is shown where the user is required to tick a box to say they have read and understood the RDB/RDBES Data Policy.</p>
Follow-up actions needed	<p>Create a RDB/RDBES Data confidentiality agreement.</p> <p>Create a procedure to ensure EG members who use detailed data sign the agreement.</p>
Responsible persons for follow up actions	SCRDB, ICES Data Centre
Time frame (deadline)	March 2020
LM comment	No comment

2.3. On Funding issues

Recommendation 2019-R2 : Funding of RBD work for RCG LDF	
RCG-LDF Recommendation	2019 RCG LDF recommends that, in line with the arrangements for RDB work for other RCGs, the RDB activities by ICES to facilitate RCG LDF work are funded through the agreement between the Commission and ICES
Follow-up actions needed	Include the costs in future agreement between Commission and ICES.
Responsible persons for follow-up actions	Commission representatives and ICES
Time frame (Deadline)	When agreement is renewed
LM comment	LM precises that new species, areas and metiers means extra workload and time allocation for RDB development.

NA NS&EA BAL 2019 – D5 – Central resources to support work in the RCGs - a need for robust long term funding of the RDBES development	
Relates to	RDBES Development – support of RCGs and ICES stock assessment expert groups
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	a) NCs to decide if their MS will finance the technical development, project management and dedicated workshops of the RDBES at an annual cost of €75,000 between 2020 and 2023; b) NCs to decide on which model to use for costsharing, flat rate or pro rata of EMFF DCF funding allocation as outlined in table XX and further elaborated in section YY;
Implication	RDBES development will be completed and it will be available to support the RCGs and ICES stock assessment expert groups according to the development road-map.
Who needs to take decision/agree	RCG NA NS&EA Baltic National Correspondents
Supporting Documentation	Above and Section YY
LM comment	No comment

NA NS&EA R3 – Funding requirements and timescales for inclusion of recreational fisheries data in RDBES.	
Recommendation	STECF to consider a workshop in September 2020 to review the impact of recreational fisheries based on the outcomes from pilot studies and make recommendations for future data collection.
Justification	It was proposed that an evaluation of recreational fisheries pilot studies should be done by STECF to support the need for further data collection and inclusion of recreational caught fish in stock assessments.
Follow-up actions needed	STECF
Responsible persons for follow up actions	RCG
Time frame (deadline)	Before 2021.
LM comment	See section on funding

RCG Baltic 2019 – D6 – Central resources to support work in the RCGs - a need for robust long term funding	
Relates to	Outcome of FishPi2 WP1 on governance of RCGs
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	<p>a) NCs to decide if they will finance the central resources</p> <p>b) NCs to decide on which model to use for cost sharing, either to use the models presented in 5.5.1 or another model.</p> <p>c) NC to decide on starting year, if 2020, include in WP 2020-2021.</p>
Implication	The central resources will support regional management of fishery dependent data necessary for regional workplans and regional sampling plans. They will further contribute to make end-users aware of ongoing work in the RCGs and support overall outreach. A secretariat will ease the burden for chairs and participants in the RCGs and assure consistency in outputs over time when chairs are changing.
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of NANSEA and Baltic
Supporting Documentation	See text in chapter 5.5.1 and for details regarding funding for RDBES see chapter 5.2.3
LM comment	No comment

3. Internal matters

3.1. On Fisheries overviews and data quality

NA NS&EA BS D1 and RCG Baltic D2 : Annual fisheries overview – approve content	
Relates to	Outcome of ISSG 'Facilitate the production of regional overviews of fisheries and sampling'
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	Approve routine use of 001_annual_fisheries_overview. Suggestions made during the RCGs in June 2019 will be included in the next version of this document. NCs to approve the idea, concept and content of the annual fisheries overview document and whether this is a document that will be beneficial to the work of RCG and the assessment working groups.
Implication	The approval would finalize the first document of the ISSG and establish it as a standard document which will be produced before the RCGs (and preferably before the assessment working groups).
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs NA NS&EA and Baltic region
Supporting Documentation	Section 5.2.1, Google Docs: 001_annual_fisheries_overview
Liaison Meeting comment	Support for the work done and continuation of the development but reflexion to be engaged internally to name the product differently in order to avoid confusion with already established ICES fisheries overviews.

NA NS&EA BS D2 Annual fisheries overview – to be public available	
Relates to	Outcome of ISSG 'Facilitate the production of regional overviews of fisheries and sampling'
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	NCs to approve whether the overviews can be made public as a stand-alone published document after RCG use The document will be reviewed before publication. Decide on who to review and approve (RCGs, SC-RDB, other ?)
Implication	The report of the latest fisheries overview (one year back) would be made public after the RCGs
Who needs to take decision/agree	NC's NA NS&EA and Baltic region
Supporting Documentation	Section 5.2.1, Google Docs: 001_annual_fisheries_overview

RCG MED&BS 2019 Recommendation 5: Data quality checks developed under the STREAM project	
	RCG Med&BS 2019 recommends applying the data quality checks developed under the WP6 of the STREAM project before submitting data to the relevant Data Calls
Justification	<p>Procedures for improving and enhancing quality checks to detect and flag potential outliers and sources of bias in biological data can streamline the process of data preparation and submission to respond to the different data calls.</p> <p>WP6 of the STREAM project developed a set of quality checks to detect errors in both raw data (<i>a priori</i> quality checks) and in the raised data required by the end-users (<i>a posteriori</i> quality checks), using R-scripts. The <i>a priori</i> data quality checks aim at detecting errors directly on sampling data in the Regional Coordination Group for the Mediterranean and Black Sea (RCG Med&BS) formats for commercial sampling and commercial landings (CS and CL formats) concerning the measurements of biological variables (length, weight, maturity, sex, age) and landings. The <i>a posteriori</i> data quality checks are applied to the EU Mediterranean and Black Sea Data Call formats and provide information on the spatial coverage among the strata (i.e. quarter, metier) and on the assessment of the completeness of biological information. It also allows detecting records with discrepancies between the product of number of raised individuals and individual weight at age in the landings/discards and the total landings/discards by metier, quarter, species and GSA.</p>
Follow-up actions needed	<p>To support MSs experts to familiarize with the R tools developed to perform data quality checks, the network on the sampling strategy optimization will also use those scripts during their activity. This will also streamline the training workshop in view of the network.</p> <p>A calendar for the implementation of the quality checks was also provided by the STREAM project (see STREAM Final Report).</p>
Responsible persons for follow-up actions	RCG, NCs
Time frame (Deadline)	2020
LM comment	No comment
LM comment	No comment

RCG LP 2019 - R1 . ● Develop common descriptive Indicators of the national fleets	
Relates to	RCG internal matters
When	
Details of Decision to be taken	Initiate collaborative work between Spain, Seychelles, Senegal and France
Implication	
Who needs to take decision/agree	Spain, France
Supporting Documentation	RCG LP 2019 report
LM comment	No comment

RCG LP 2019 – R4 . Fishing logbook data collection based on Electronic Report System (ERS): differences between formats used by France and Spain	
Relates to	Data quality
When	
Details of Decision to be taken	The EU should adopt a common format for ERS, including all FAD operations, with the objective of improving cooperation and data collection exchange between members of the group, especially France and Spain
Implication	
Who needs to take decision/agree	EU
Supporting Documentation	RCG LP 2019 report
LM comment	No comment

RCG LP 2019 – R5 . Improvement of data collection on species composition and size distribution of tropical tuna in purse-seine fishery	
Relates to	Data quality
When	
Details of Decision to be taken	A period of 2-3 years is recommended to test the new Regional Sampling Plan (RSP) proposed in the RECOLAPE project
Implication	
Who needs to take decision/agree	All MS involved
Supporting Documentation	RCG LP 2019 report
LM comment	No comment

3.2. On Regional sampling plan

RCG Baltic 2019 – D5 – Moving towards Regional Sampling Plan on fisheries for small pelagic in the Baltic	
Relates to	Outcome of ISSG `Towards a regional sampling programme – Case study of fisheries for small pelagics in the Baltic`
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	<p>General decision: NC to decide on if the Baltic region should continue and develop a regional sampling plan for the small pelagic fisheries, agree to continue the work in this ISSG.</p> <p>Short term decision:</p> <p>a) All MS to plan for participation in the ISSG workshop and development of the sampling plan</p> <p>b) Denmark and Sweden would try to set up a bilateral sampling protocol from 2020 as a test case.</p> <p>Long term decision: MS to plan for adaptation of their current sampling plan in line with the findings on the development of regional sampling plan.</p>
Implication	To make progress and move towards a regional sampling programme in the Baltic it is of major importance that the MS are involved and participate in the development and the planned Workshop
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of Baltic
Supporting Documentation	Report from ISSG `Towards Regional Sampling Plan for fisheries on small pelagic in the Baltic` found in RCG ISSG 2018-2019, Annex 10
LM comment	No comment

RCG MED & BS 2019 Recommendation 1: Establishment of regional sampling plan for small pelagic fish in the Adriatic Sea	
	RCG MED&BS 2019 recommends establishment of WGSPF-AS involving the relevant countries.
Justification	<p>STREAM regional grant (MARE/2016/22) identified the most commercially important stocks and fisheries (métiers), beneficial for regional sampling, for which relevant Member States could share sampling tasks using agreed methodologies, ensuring coherent regional data sets with sufficient quality for the end-user needs, one of which is small pelagic fisheries in the Adriatic Sea (GSA 17 and 18).</p> <p>Main objectives for the establishment of the working group is to ensure level play in the area, coordinate activities with third countries and FAO AdriaMed and more closely follow management needs in the area (multiannual management plan for fisheries on small pelagic stocks in the GFCM-GSA 17 and 18) in order to harmonize data collection methodologies for fisheries dependent and fisheries independent information.</p>
Follow-up actions needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of national coordinators by relevant MS and establishment of a working group for the coordination of data collection for small pelagic fish in the Adriatic Sea (WG SPF-AS). • Establishment of a regional sampling plan for small pelagic fish in the Adriatic Sea (RSP SPF-AS). • Establishment of a regional work plan for small pelagic fish in the Adriatic Sea (RWP SPF-AS).
Responsible persons for follow-up actions	relevant MSs
Time frame (Deadline)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WG SPF-AS in December 2019 • RSP SPF-AS from 2021 • RWP SPF-AS from 2022
LM Comment	No comment

3.3. On secretariat funding

RCG NANS&EA and RCG Baltic 2019 – D6 – Central resources to support work in the RCGs - a need for robust long term funding	
Relates to	Outcome of FishPi2 WP1 on governance of RCGs
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	<p>a) NCs to decide if their MS will finance the central resources</p> <p>b) NCs to decide on which model to use for cost sharing, either to use the models presented in 5.5.1 or another model.</p> <p>c) NC to decide on starting year, if 2020, include in WP 2020-2021.</p>
Implication	The central resources will support regional management of fishery dependent data necessary for regional workplans and regional sampling plans. They will further contribute to make end-users aware of ongoing work in the RCGs and support overall outreach. A secretariat will ease the burden for chairs and participants in the RCGs and assure consistency in outputs over time when chairs are changing.
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of NA NS&EA and Baltic
Supporting Documentation	See text in chapter 5.5.1 and for details regarding funding for RDBES see chapter 5.2.3
LM comment	No comment

3.4. On rules of procedure

RCG NA NS&EA 2019 – D4 – Establish the current RCG NS&EA RoP as the RoP for the merged RCG NA and RCG NS&EA group.	
Relates to	RCG governance
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	Accept the RCG NS&EA RoPs as the RoP for the merged RCG NA and RCG NS&EA group. The area of competence of the RCG is updated to reflect the renewed area.
Implication	The RoP of the RCG NA are no longer applicable to this group. The RoP of RCG NS&EA are directly applicable to this group.
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.
Supporting Documentation	See text in Section 5.5.4 and Annex 3 in RCG NANS&EA report: RoP and RoP comparison table
LM comment	No comment

3.5. On Inter-sessional sub-groups

Recommendation 2019-R3 : RCG LDF participation to intersessional RCG subgroup on fisheries and sampling overviews	
RCG-LDF Recommendation 2019	RCG LDF to seek contact with the intersessional RCG subgroup on fisheries and sampling overviews as organised by RCG Baltic and RCG NANSEA ensure a direct link between this subgroup and the RCG LDF.
Follow-up actions needed	Contact sub groupchair (Nuno Prista) to discuss and conclude on the participation of a RCG LDF representative. It is anticipated that the current Polish participant to the subgroup can extend its task to include the RCG LDF representation.
Responsible persons for follow-up actions	Chair RCG LDF
Time frame (Deadline)	After LM 2019
LM comment	The pan-regional status of the related ISSG means that participants from all RCGs having their data in the RDB should contribute to the ISSG.

RCG Baltic and RCG NA NSEA 2019: D9 - Decision to be taken on ISSG 2019-2020	
Relates to	Outcome of all ISSG work presented in the different TORS in the report
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	NC to agree on the list of ISSG that are suggested for 2019-2020.
Implication	<p>Work in ISSG needs experts and manpower (1 week of work / ISSG and person).</p> <p>The ISSG work force the MS to switch from working with a national focus to work with a more regional focus which is in line with idea of EU-MAP.</p>
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of NA NSEA and Baltic
Supporting Documentation	<p>Table 5.6.2.2 overview of ISSG work 2019-2020.</p> <p>Section 5.1 – 5.6 in this report</p> <p>Part II of the RCG Baltic 2019 report “Reports on Intersessional SubGroup (ISSG) work 2018-2019”, Annex 1-12</p>
LM comment	No comment

3.6. On governance

RCG MED & BS 2019 Recommendation 2: Governance	
	RCG MED&BS 2019 recommends continuation of the workshop for RF.
Justification	<p>MS should collect data on marine RF on a regular basis, as official statistics are missing in most Med&BS countries. Moreover, there is a need to finalize the pilot studies, assess the outcomes and use them in order to generate plans for regular data collection as well as to identify survey methods and data to be collected and adapted to the specific situation of each MS, on the basis of end user's needs. Finally, a common framework for sampling methodology is needed to assure that data collected is comparable among MS. Regional coordination for data collection is needed to ensure that data provided are at the required spatial resolution, temporal coverage and quality are provided to support scientific advice and management.</p> <p>On this basis, a workshop on RF for the Mediterranean basin is necessary, where all countries will participate, in order to finalize a list of species to be sampled, methodologies and type of data to be collected.</p>
Follow-up actions needed	<p>Workshop for RF with TORs: List of species; methodologies; type of data to be collected.</p> <p>A common list of species for all countries. If RCG chooses other species, request confirmation of country. Propose update of the list after a number of years.</p>
Responsible persons for follow-up actions	MSs, RCG
Time frame (Deadline)	2020 (if possible before the RCG meeting 2020)
Comments	<p>Include end users in this workgroup.</p> <p>LM : No comment</p>

3.7. On statistical network and training

RCG MED & BS 2019 Recommendation 3: <i>Speeding up the establishment of a scientific network for sampling optimization.</i>	
	RCG MED&BS 2019 recommends speeding up the establishment of a scientific network for sampling optimization.
Justification	The 2018 RCG Med&BS agreed on the need to set up a network of experts to be trained and use the tool developed under MARE/2016/22 STREAM project on sampling stratification and optimization of biological data. It was further agreed that MS should nominate experts to be part of the network. However, the scientific network for sampling optimization has not been established so far, since most of the MS have not nominated experts to be part of the network.
Follow-up actions needed	Med&BS NCs should nominate national experts for participating in the network on sampling optimization; the nominations should be communicated to the RCG Med&BS chairs. A training workshop should be organized on the use of the sampling optimization tools developed under STREAM project.
Responsible persons for follow-up actions	RCG Med&BS NCs, RCG Med&BS chairs, moderators of the scientific network for sampling optimization.
Time frame (Deadline)	November 2019
Comments	LM : No comment

RCG MED & BS 2019 Recommendation 4; <i>Training workshop on the use of the sampling optimization tools developed under STREAM project.</i>	
	RCG MED&BS 2019 recommends the organization of a training workshop on the use of the sampling optimization tools developed under MARE/2016/22 STREAM project.
Justification	Though training workshops have been organized under STREAM project on the use of the tools developed on sampling optimization, the RCG Med&BS 2019 identifies further training needs on the use of the developed tools, following feedback with the national experts involved in sampling optimization.
Follow-up actions needed	A training workshop should be organized on the use of the sampling optimization tools developed under STREAM project, addressing the needs of the national experts participating in the network for sampling optimization.
Responsible persons for follow-up actions	RCG chairs, MSs, moderators of the scientific network for sampling optimization.
Time frame (Deadline)	Within 2020.
LM Comments	No comment

NA NS&EA BAL D4: 'Back to back meeting' RCG Baltic and RCG NA NS&EA	
Relates to	Outcome from RCG Baltic Plenary
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	RCG Baltic suggest to test that the RCG Baltic technical meeting in June 2020 will be held at the same time as RCG NA NS&EA with a joint venue with shared plenaries on pan regional issues. Since almost all intersessional work is panregional, outcome from fishPi2 to be included in new suggested pan regional ISSG, and that all MS in the Baltic also are participating in the RCG NA &NSEA, the joint meeting will save valuable time and money for all experts and seems to be an appropriate way to move forward.
Implication	A joint meeting with RCG NA NS&EA and RCG Baltic will increase the size of the group (In total 45-55 participants), having implications on venue. The venue needs to fit a large group of people, preferably easy to access for most MS.
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of NA NS&EA and Baltic
Supporting Documentation	None
LM comment	No comment

4. Others

4.1. On new workshops and STECF expert groups

RCG NA NS&EA 2019 R3 - Workshop to review the impact of recreational fisheries on stock assessments.	
Recommendation	STECF to consider a workshop in September 2020 to review the impact of recreational fisheries based on the outcomes from pilot studies
Justification	It was proposed that an evaluation of recreational fisheries pilot studies should be done by STECF to support the need for further inclusion of recreational caught fish in stock assessments. Further, that multispecies surveys on recreational fishery catches should only include volume in weight by species.
Follow-up actions needed	STECF
Responsible persons for follow up actions	RCG
Time frame (deadline)	Before 2021.
LM comment	STECF representative proposes that the evaluation of all pilot studies be done during the two sessions in 2020 dealing with EU-MAP reporting (Annual report in June and National Work Plan in November).

RCG NA NS&EA 2019 R4 - Workshop to review the impact of recreational fisheries and provide recommendations for future data collection.	
Recommendation	ICES to consider funding requirements and timescales for inclusion of recreational fisheries data in the RDBES.
Justification	Recreational fisheries data are no longer collated by the economic data call, so catch estimates should be included in the RDBES. A clear timescale and funding requirements need to be developed by ICES, so that it is clear how this can be achieved.
Follow-up actions needed	ICES
Responsible persons for follow up actions	RCG
Time frame (deadline)	October 2019
LM comments	No comment

RCG LP 2019 – R8 .Developments in Electronic Observer: perspectives of this system	
Relates to	New meeting
When	
Details of Decision to be taken	It was recommended to organize a meeting, involving scientists dealing with Electronic Monitoring Systems programs on Purse Seiners, on data quality checks, to ensure compatibility with the of RFMOs databases format (data not yet included)
Implication	
Who needs to take decision/agree	All MS involved
Supporting Documentation	RCG LP 2019 report
LM comment	No comment

RCG LP 2019 – R7 . Production of data to be submitted to ICCAT/IOTC: issue on raising method for coverage, which does not reach 100%	
Relates to	Data quality
When	
Details of Decision to be taken	It was recommended to establish a workshop to decide on the best stratification and raising methodology, to be held on the 25-27 February 2020 in IEO in Madrid It was recommended to increase the observer coverage from current 10% to 20% (the RFMO minimum requirement is 5%).
Implication	
Who needs to take decision/agree	All MS involved
Supporting Documentation	RCG LP 2019 report
LM comment	No comment

4.2. On age reading and collection of biological parameters

RCG Baltic 2019 – D1 - To terminate the age readings for dab, flounder, brill and turbot from the commercial fishery in the Baltic sea (SD 22-32)	
Relates to	Outcome from ISSG “End user” and according to EU-MAP 2016/1251 that data should be collected based on end user needs agreed at marine regional level.
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	<p>NCs to decide on: To terminate the age readings for dab, flounder, brill and turbot from the commercial fishery in the Baltic sea (SD 22-32)</p> <p>Presently age readings from the commercial fishery is not used in the stock assessment for the given stocks, and these data is not asked for in the ICES data call. Sampling of the ages from the commercial fishery should continue if end-users at a certain point would need ages again.</p> <p>Age readings are however, used from the surveys and it is important to keep conducting the age readings from these species from surveys.</p>
Implication	<p>As ICES in the new data call will not ask for age readings from the commercial data, MS can already in 2019 stop aging the commercial samples from the given species.</p> <p>Start 2020 when the new data call is launched by ICES</p> <p>RCG chairs to send the decision to the ICES secretary and WGBFAS</p>
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs Baltic
Supporting Documentation	
LM comment	No comment

RCG MED&BS 2019 Recommendation 7: <i>Biological parameters – ageing protocols</i>	
	<p>RCG Med&BS 2019 recommends MSs to follow the agreed protocols from workshops for age reading. All MSs to harmonize age reading protocols for all target species, in case it is not already done.</p> <p>workshops for age reading</p>
Justification	<p>Considering the possibility that different scientists/experts responsible for the research surveys and the biological monitoring, might use different age reading protocols for the same species within the same stock unit and at a regional level that may result in different age estimates, with aim to minimize uncertainties in age data, it is recommended MSs to ensure harmonized age readings among experts by developing and adopting common age reading protocols for target species that belong to the same stock unit and also same species at regional level.</p> <p>Different biological parameters are calculated from age data, and most of stock assessment models used are age-structured. Uncertainties in input data (i.e. age data) may consequently result in uncertainties of stock assessment outcomes.</p>
Follow-up actions needed	MSs should make every effort to harmonize age reading and achieve common age reading protocols for fisheries dependent and fisheries independent data, on the level of MS and regional level.
Responsible persons for follow-up actions	RCG, MSs
Time frame (Deadline)	2020 onwards
LM comment	No comment

RCG LP 2019 – R3 .Improvement of the Weight Length Relationship (WLR): to address current lack of knowledge	
Relates to	Data quality
When	
Details of Decision to be taken	CPCs should either share already collected biological data to improve WLR modelling for the 3 major tuna species or CPCs should collect additional biological data for that purpose
Implication	
Who needs to take decision/agree	All MS involved
Supporting Documentation	RCG LP 2019 report
LM comment	No comment

RCG LP 2019 – R2. Support biological data collection: difficulty of sampling major tuna for biological data due to an informal agreement with the canneries	
Relates to	Data quality
When	
Details of Decision to be taken	Request DG-MARE to write a letter to the CEO's cannery (Abidjan and Victoria) to facilitate access of biologists involved in biological data collection
Implication	
Who needs to take decision/agree	DG MARE
Supporting Documentation	RCG LP 2019 report
LM comment	Point taken by DG-MARE that is going to investigate the issue further

4.3. On fish stomach content analysis

RCG MED&BS 2019 Recommendation 6: <i>Fish stomach content analysis</i>	
	RCG Med&BS 2019 recommends implementing the monitoring of fish stomach contents following the protocols provided by the STREAM project
Justification	Stomach contents analysis is the primary method for qualitative estimation of dietary composition by investigating the prey items in the fish stomachs. The study of the feeding habits of fish based on the analysis of stomach content can provide important insights not only to assess food spectra at species level but also to understand the prey-predator relationships, useful aspects to contribute to multispecies stock assessment or to be included in ecological models as mentioned before. Stomach content data are also useful to evaluate the resource partitioning among the species inhabiting a particular habitat/fishing ground. At species level, the information on predator-prey relationship can also be helpful for a better evaluation of the natural mortality of the key exploited stocks.
Follow-up actions needed	The sampling and analysis protocols provided by STREAM (see Deliverable D4.1) will represent the basis for designing and implementing the data collection and analysis of stomach contents. Pilot studies on the species proposed by STREAM should be implemented under the Work Plans.
Responsible persons for follow-up actions	RCG, NCs
Time frame (Deadline)	2021
LM comment	No comment

4.4. On cost-sharing for index rivers

RCG Baltic 2019 – D7 Index rivers and potential cost sharing	
Relates to	Outcome of ISSG Diadromous Fish
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) NCs to agree that MSs should start to define their Index river selection procedures 2) NC to agree on if cost sharing should be applied between countries having few rivers and countries having many rivers in Baltic. If yes, discuss and suggest on a plan for how to proceed.
Implication	Enhances the integration of diadromous fish work in the data collection and consequently improves the data quality and potentially fits the data collection better to the needs of end-users (ICES EWGs).
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of NANSEA and Baltic
Supporting Documentation	RCG ISSG 2018-2019, Annex 8.
LM comment	No comment

5. PGECON

Recommendation Reference	Recommendations/Conclusions
ToR 1 – SECFISH Project Results	
1.1	PGECON recommends accepting the conclusions from the SECFISH project where appropriate. It was also agreed to share the deliverables publicly on the DCF website.
1.2	Work Package 2: Harmonization of methodologies for sampling design and estimation methods for fleet and aquaculture economic data collection. It was agreed that each MS should try to follow the suggested procedure. MS experience with the handbook can be presented at PGECON 2020. A Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) subgroup workshop should take place to define the process of quality assessment and assurance and revise the guidelines of the methodological report (with reference to the Handbook). Then as outcome, PGECON could provide recommendations and guidelines to AR evaluation EWG how to improve quality evaluation of DCF data and to complement the currently existing quality evaluation procedures.
1.3	Work Package 3: Development and implementation of common methodologies to disaggregate economic variables by activity and area. It was suggested to hold a second workshop on disaggregation of economic variables to complete follow up work from the workshop at this meeting.
1.4	Work Package 4: Methodologies for estimation of intangible assets in EU fisheries. It was agreed that the work from this work package should be incorporated into the planned PGECON workshop on PIM method that is planned for October 2019.
1.5	Work Package 5: Origin and sources of raw material in the EU seafood processing industry. PGECON recommends that the collection of raw material should remain optional and should be carried out as planned in the national work plan. If collected, the raw material data can be included in the national chapter of Economic Report on the EU processing industry.
TOR 2 – PGECON Governance and Rules of Procedure	
2.1	PGECON status should be placed as an agenda point on the National Coordination Meeting to discuss and decide if PGECON should have same status as the RCGs.
2.2	Following recommendations from PGECON 2018 a draft RoP was created. This was reviewed and updated during PGECON 2019 and should be reviewed by DG MARE. The final draft, regardless of PGECON status, should be adopted at PGECON 2020.
ToR 3 - Freshwater Aquaculture in Maritime and Landlocked Countries	
3.1	PGECON should specifically consider (marine + freshwater) aquaculture sessions in the PGECON meetings' agenda, separated from fisheries.
3.2	A workshop on aquaculture data collection is recommended before the data call in 2020 to discuss a range of issues, including, and not limited to, environmental variables, segmentation, data reporting structure etc. All of these are listed in the extended recommendation in the report.
LM comments	PGECON decided to consider marine and freshwater aquaculture during their 2018 session. LM appreciated the move and suggested promoting the need for experts in the field to PGECON.
ToR 4. PGECON Workshop Results 2019	
4.1	The Guidance Document updated following the work during the workshop should be maintained as a living document and made accessible to all MS. However, the section on Fish Processing needs to be revised and updated.
4.2	PGECON 2019 discussed how to include new segments with thresholds to report low activity vessels to avoid distortions in performance results. It was agreed that MS can use

Recommendation Reference	Recommendations/Conclusions
4.3	<p>the GEO indicator in the data call templates to split low activity vessels and use a threshold in next data call.</p> <p>STECF EWG meetings on the Annual Economic Report of the EU fisheries and Social data in the EU Fisheries Sector should not be held at the same time, or if they are that experts are not requested to split their time between the meetings.</p>
ToR 5. Processing	
5.1	<p>Considering the dates of proposed data calls, MSs data collection calendars, dates for EWGs and MS concerns to be able to provide data for a 2019 EWG report based on 2017 data, the group proposed that the date for the fish processing data call should be from mid of October to mid of November 2019. This would result in an EWG meeting in late November/early December. These dates will need to be approved by STECF.</p>
5.2	<p>There was a clear indication from the group, supported by the results of WP5 SECFISH, that data collection on raw material should remain voluntary.</p>
ToR 6 - Recommendations for the revision of the Multiannual Union Programme	
6.1	<p>PGECON should administer a live guidance document tracking all variable definitions, amendments, clarifications etc. to make it easier for MS to understand variable definition evolution.</p>
6.2	<p>Economic data collection in fleet: There is no need for revisions to any definitions. Specifically, there is no need to change, at this moment, the definitions to 'active fleet' or 'fleet segment' or the text under Chapter III Data requirements 5(a).</p>
6.3	<p>Economic data collection in fleet: Reinstate FTE into Table 5a so to reflect the data call which still requires FTE as part of the economic data (separate to the social data).</p>
6.4	<p>Economic data collection in fleet: Divide 'Engaged Crew' into 'Paid' and 'Unpaid'. The division of employment into paid and unpaid will give clarity to the figures provided by MS.</p>
6.5	<p>Economic data collection in fleet: Include a footnote under Table 5B to reinstate the definition of the dominance criteria from EU Dec. 93/2010: 'The dominance criteria shall be used to allocate each vessel to a segment based on the number of fishing days used with each gear. If a fishing gear is used by more than the sum of all the others (i.e. a vessel spends more than 50 % of its fishing time using that gear), the vessel shall be allocated to that segment. If not, the vessel shall be allocated to the following fleet segment: (a) 'Vessels using Polyvalent active gears' if it only uses active gears; (b) 'Vessels using Polyvalent passive gears' if it only uses passive gears; (c) 'Vessels using active and passive gears'.</p>
6.6	<p>Economic data collection in fleet: at present, no changes to Table 5B should be made. However, there was discussion about the utility of the current fleet segmentations definition and while PGECON does not recommend a change to these, at present, it does recommend a workshop to investigate alternate methods of segmentation as defined by 'fisheries' rather than dominant gear. The following terms of reference are proposed for this WS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group vessels by characteristic types of fisheries (based on expert knowledge), • Analyse the cost structure of vessels grouped accordingly, • Compile principles for grouping vessels (e.g. targeted stocks, targeted species groups, pursuing typical fishing patterns over the year), • Apply different approaches to MS fleets to investigate if fleets can be thoroughly covered, • Compare applicability of different approaches to different regions.
6.7	<p>Data collection in aquaculture: No revision is currently needed for Table 9 in the revised EU-MAP. Segmentation itself is clear, but more guidance for MS is needed on how to allocate</p>

Recommendation Reference	Recommendations/Conclusions
	production and economic variables into the EU-MAP segments. Currently it is too early to give an official recommendation by PGECON, but a footnote to Table 9 could be added referring to recommendations by aquaculture EWG and PGECON.
6.8	Data collection in aquaculture: to include FTE national (annual data collection) in Table 7 in the new EU-MAP and to make “number of hours worked by employees and unpaid workers” from the Table 7 optional.
6.9	Data collection in aquaculture: adding a new heading to EU-MAP Chapter III: 7 “Social and economic data on fish processing, to enable the assessment of the social and economic performance of the Union fish processing sector”. The Chapter III.7 should include the definition referring to the definition provided under DCF (Chapter 4, section B.4 of COMMISSION DECISION 2010/93/EU) “The population shall refer to enterprises whose main activity is defined according to the EUROSTAT definition under NACE Code 15.20: ‘Processing and preserving of fish and fish products’”, currently NACE code 10.20.” Only number of firms and turnover for the secondary activity companies should be reported. For enterprises that carry out fish processing, not as a main activity, only number of firms and turnover should be reported.
6.10	<p>Data collection in fish processing: the segmentation on fish processing should be provided in new EU-MAP Chapter III under new heading 7. The definition of size classes should be in line with the Eurostat definition for SBS. The recommendation comes from the discrepancy with DCF and first EUMAP definitions where the first class was <=10 employees while in Eurostat (SBS regulation) the first class is <9 employees (enterprises with 10 employees are included in the second class).</p> <p>Considering that EUMAP is based on the recommendation of alignment with Eurostat and some MS use SBS we suggest using the same size classes. A reference to size classification of SBS 11 11 0 according to commission regulation (EC) 251/2009 (from STECF 13-31 (EWG 13-15) recommendation) should be added. The segmentation in the EU-MAP guidelines table 3C should be revised accordingly (COM 2016/1701).</p>
6.11	Data collection in fish processing: to make “number of hours worked by employees and unpaid workers” optional in the table 11.
6.12	Social data collection: continue using the current frequency - every three years starting in 2018 when first data was collected for 2017 until further experience has been gained from both end users and experts.
6.13	Social data collection: no revision needed in the table 6 and 11 but the pilot study should be deleted from the new EU-MAP text (Chapter III 5 (b); 6 (b)) and the text box for the pilot study in the new EU-MAP guidelines should be revised accordingly (COM 2016/1701). The pilot study results should be included in the new EU-MAP on the ongoing basis.
6.14	<p>Social data collection: the option for two types of age categories for variable "Employment by age" in fish processing Table 11 should be provided for MS. The Table 11 does not require the revision but in the document for definitions the two types of age categories should be included. In the first instance MS should use PGECON age categories and, only as a second option, to align with other EU standards (Eurostat LFS). Otherwise, MS should justify different choices.</p> <p>Age categories for Fisheries should be broken down further and updated in PGECON definitions. The age category '40-64' should be broken down, at least, by '40-54' and '55-64'. The variable "Employment by education level" should be optional in the table 6 and table 11 and where possible for those MS reporting this a variable on Vocational/Technical training should be included.</p>
6.15	The collection of raw material should remain optional and be carried out as planned in the national work plan. The recommendation is based on the outcome from the SECFISH project and the discussion at the PGECON meeting. If collected, the raw material data can be included in the national chapter of Economic Report on the EU processing industry

Recommendation Reference	Recommendations/Conclusions
6.16	PGECON recommendations on economic data for recreational fishery: PGECON agreed that any outcome from the results of the SECFISH project on recreational fishery (WP7) should be consulted as there was not enough expertise at the meeting to address this issue.
6.17	PGECON recommendation on new data collection: to request biologists to take into consideration the possibility of including biological data collection for freshwater commercial and recreational fisheries under the EU-MAP biological sections as optional. The inclusion of biological data is requested by landlocked MS based on pilot study results, showing that the quantitative and qualitative information received could in turn improve the analysis of the freshwater aquaculture sector. Especially sound data on fish biomass are of interest for the aquaculture sector that produces stocking/restocking material and economically rely on this activity. In fact, freshwater fish biomass data serve as an important demand indicator for the production of native species' fingerlings /juveniles in freshwater aquaculture.
6.18	PGECON recommendation on environmental data for aquaculture: the purpose of the data collection should be clarified and decision to keep or delete Table 8 Environmental variables for the aquaculture sector from the new EU-MAP should be discussed.
6.19	<p>PGECON recommends: quality assurance framework and methodological report with reference to handbook should be included under the new EU-MAP Chapter III (5,6,7). The EU-MAP format for submission of WP should be revised accordingly (COM 2016/1701). The table 5B should be deleted from EU-MAP guidelines (COM 2016/1701) as it does not provide the comprehensive information about quality.</p> <p>PGECON recommends making a revision under Annex 1 Methodology in the Methodological document "Methodologies for the socio-economic data described in EU-MAP Ad hoc Contract Commitment No SI2 725 694 Ref. Ares (2016)22440332 - 26/05/2016.</p> <p>PGECON (Zagreb 2016) considered that it is not feasible to obtain a complete and fully defined document on methodologies for calculation and collection of each economic variable through a (short) ad hoc contract. Therefore, PGECON suggested to implement the following procedure:</p>
ToR 7 – PGECON Calendar 2019-2020	
7.1	<p>The following meetings and chairs were decided for the remaining meeting in 2019 and for workshops in 2020. It was decided that the other workshops identified could take place in parallel to other workshops and/or could be run as specific extended ToR at PGECON 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop on Capital Value estimations and PIM & Intangible assets. 7-10 October 2019, Salerno, Italy. Chairs: Evelina Sabatela, Jarno Virtanen. • PGECON 2020, May 2020, Bulgaria. Hosted by Simona Nicheva and Kolyo Zhelev. Chaired by Arina Motova, Monica Gambino • Workshop on fleet and aquaculture segmentations. TBC. • Workshop on aquaculture topics. TBC. • Quality Assurance Framework Subgroup Workshop. TBC.

ANNEX 2 – List of Inter-Sessional Sub-Groups (ISSG)

In 2019, 3-year TORs were agreed for the first time in the RCGs Baltic, NA NS&EA. Intersessional subgroup work has intensified for all RCGs and PGECON in recent years.

The participation of experts from MS in the following ISSG was still under development at the time of finalizing the LM report. As a consequence, the ticks in MS participation for each of the ISSG are preliminary information at this stage.

ISSG on Development of Draft Regional work plan

Subgroup heading	ISSG on Development of Draft Regional work plan															Panregional or regional	
Governance	1. To draft a test regional work plan with limited elements covering the aspects of procedures, methods, quality assurance and quality control for collecting and processing of data and regionally coordinated sampling strategies. 2. To develop the format and content for future submission of a RWP containing : a) a table 1A filled automatically together with an updated code on a github b) Finalisation of all candidate tables as suggested by RCGs c) Inclusion of Regional Sampling Plan ready to be implemented															Panregional	
	Chair	BEL	DEN	ESP	EST	FIN	FRA	GER	IRE	LAT	LIT	NL	POL	POR	SWE	UK	COM
	France					✓		✓	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓

ISSG on Development of code tools

Subgroup heading	ISSG on Implementation of generic tools for RCGs															Panregional or regional	
Governance	Implementation of tools addressing the RDB information for the use of RCGs Development of products to be made available on web pages ToRs to be further developed															Panregional	
	Chair	BEL	DEN	ESP	EST	FIN	FRA	GER	IRE	LAT	LIT	NL	POL	POR	SWE	UK	COM
		✓		✓		✓									✓		

ISSG on Metier Issues

Subgroup heading	ISSG on Metier Issues															Panregional or regional	
Data analysis and Quality	i. If the new system for métier codes are approved: Make an operational métier list with all relevant métiers and test it. • Ensure all relevant métiers are included? • Agree on codes for selectivity devices between relevant countries. ii. Further develop métier descriptions based on new métier codes. These will be used both as descriptions and for quality checking. iii. If a list of non-overlapping métiers is approved, the R script to designate métiers can be used and further developed/refined e.g. to analyse vessel patterns. iv. Investigate other species lists (e.g. Fish Pi) with similar usage and consolidate into a single reference list. v. Investigate further subdivision/refinement of métiers which would benefit from further refinement – eg. OTB_DEF_XX															Panregional	
	Chair	BEL	DEN	ESP	EST	FIN	FRA	GER	IRE	LAT	LIT	NL	POL	POR	SWE	UK	COM
	Denmark		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

ISSG on quality assurance of data and sampling programmes

Subgroup heading	ISSG on quality assurance of data and sampling programmes															Panregional or regional	
Data analysis and Quality	Multi-annual ToRs. Remaining work: Task 2) Develop indicators to monitor overall progress (based on table 5A) on quality assurance in the region over time. Task 3) Collate relevant tools developed for quality control and quality assurance in data collection developed by other groups and projects (e.g. fishPi2 WP6, ICES WGCATCH, BIOPTIM) and make plans (including accessibility, storage and training) for how these can be integrated in regional work and how MS can be supported to integrate them in national work. Task 4) Compile uploads logs retrieved through the RCG data call and prepare feedback to MS on data anomalies. IN THE RCG NANSEA IT WAS AGREED TO MOVE TASK 4 TO THE "Regional overviews of fisheries and sampling" GROUP Task 5) Discuss data checks for the new RDBES.															Panregional	
	Chair	BEL	DEN	ESP	EST	FIN	FRA	GER	IRE	LAT	LIT	NL	POL	POR	SWE	UK	COM
	Ireland	✓				✓	✓				✓		✓		✓	✓	

ISSG on Regional overviews of fisheries and sampling

Subgroup heading	ISSG on Regional overviews of fisheries and sampling															Panregional or regional	
Data analysis and Quality	1. Incorporate RCG feedback. Produce final reports for NC approval 2. Develop tools for quality checking of data by data submitters 3. Develop the Sampling and Stock overviews, in consultation with SC-RDB with regards to data policy issues. 4. Collaborate with ICES WGBIOP on the stock overview and other end-users interested in using the different products. 5. Document functions, develop R-package and a Shiny app 6. Decide on regional specifications in the documents 7. Review and analyse 2019 BMS and logbook registered discards present in CS and CL data in the RDB, making these data visible as graphs in the different types of overviews RCG NA NS EA 2019 Report 8. Consider incorporating the information in RDB upload logs into the different reports 9. Consider the incorporation of LM and DM feedback: i) to change title to distinguish with ICES overviews, ii) to complete work on confidentiality agreement (SGRDB), iii) draft and agree on disclaimer to be placed on report covering the concerns on the data quality/completeness of data, and iv) to complete the descriptive text on figures. replace fisheries overviews with another naming to avoid confusion with ICES initiatives.															Panregional	
	Chair	BEL	DEN	ESP	EST	FIN	FRA	GER	IRE	LAT	LIT	NL	POL	POR	SWE	UK	COM
	Sweden, Germany		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓				✓			✓	

ISSG on End-Users and RCGs

Subgroup heading	ISSG on End-Users and RCGs															Panregional or regional	
End-users and RCGs	Task 1. Review and streamline dialogue between data providers (RCGs) and Endusers (ICES) in order to identify effective processes to meet enduser needs. a) Maintain and update, in collaboration with the ICES secretariat, the stock and survey databases developed for the 2019 evaluation of DCF surveys. Agree on a final naming of surveys for the databases and harmonize this with ICES (and databases). b) Common annual meeting with ICES c) EU MAP – has several sections on end-user needs. (recreational, additional sampling ect.) EU-MAP (chapter V, 4, III,2, iii). d) Make sure to strengthen the Link to WGRFS															Panregional	
	Chair	BEL	DEN	ESP	EST	FIN	FRA	GER	IRE	LAT	LIT	NL	POL	POR	SWE	UK	COM
	Denmark UK	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	

ISSG on Regional Sampling plan for Diadromous fishes

Subgroup heading	ISSG on Regional Sampling plan for Diadromous fishes																Panregional or regional
Diadromous Fishes	1) Work towards regional sampling plans (depending on FishPi2 outcomes) 2) Work towards a pilot study to identify a standardised method for the collection of catch and biological data on recreational fishing for eel, both retained and released catch 3) Investigate levels and effects of mis- and unreporting of diadromous fish in fisheries 4) Work with end-users on issues such as evaluation of electrofishing programmes for salmon and sea trout, and establishment of Data Quality Assurance Systems for diadromous fish. 5) Work with the end-users and the RDBES steering group and developers to make best use of the RDBES 6) Continue work with end users on selection of index rivers for eel, and sea trout (Baltic) 7) Keep abreast of Data Calls for diadromous fish 8) Consider the collection of economic data of migratory species in freshwater 9) In the Baltic investigate different possibilities to share costs between countries with few and countries with many salmon rivers according to their stock exploitation level.																Panregional Regional
	Chair	BEL	DEN	ESP	EST	FIN	FRA	GER	IRE	LAT	LIT	NL	POL	POR	SWE	UK	COM
	UK/UK					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	

ISSG on RDB Core Group

Subgroup heading	ISSG on RDB Core Group																Panregional or regional
Regional database	Group to provide practical input, advice and guidance for ICES during development of the new RDBES.																Panregional
	Chair	BEL	DEN	ESP	EST	FIN	FRA	GER	IRE	LAT	LIT	NL	POL	POR	SWE	UK	COM
	ICES		✓			TBD							✓		✓		

ISSG on SCRDBES

Subgroup heading	ISSG on SCRDBES																Panregional or regional
Regional database	The aims of the Regional Database and Estimation System (RDBES) are: 1) To ensure that data can be made available for the coordination of regional fisheries data sampling plans, including for the EU Data Collection Framework (DCF) Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs), 2) To provide a regional estimation system such that statistical estimates of quantities of interest can be produced from sample data, 3) To serve and facilitate the production of fisheries management advice and status reports, 4) To increase the awareness of fisheries data collected by the users of the RDBES and the overall usage of these data. The use of the data held in the RDBES is regulated by the RDBES Data Policy . The RDBES is overseen by a steering committee – the SCRDBES. The SCRDBES is responsible for: a) Strategic Planning, b) Data and Technical Governance, c) Prioritisation of work, d) Cost estimations e) Promotion of the RDBES, f) Overseeing the RDBES's operational effectiveness.																Panregional
	Chair	BEL	DEN	ESP	EST	FIN	FRA	GER	IRE	LAT	LIT	NL	POL	POR	SWE	UK	COM
	Sweden Ireland		✓												✓		

ISSG on Generic issues for Regional Sampling Plans

Subgroup heading	ISSG on Generic issues for Regional Sampling Plans															Panregional or regional	
Regional Sampling Plans	1. To compile and review the output of FishPi 1&2, STREAM, RECOLAPE, WKBIOPTIM, in order to produce guidelines 2. To address the theoretical gaps to progress in 4S regional sampling plans															Panregional	
	Chair	BEL	DEN	ESP	EST	FIN	FRA	GER	IRE	LAT	LIT	NL	POL	POR	SWE	UK	COM
	UK																

ISSG on Risk Assessment for by-catch in the North Atlantic

Subgroup heading	ISSG on Risk Assessment for by-catch in the North Atlantic															Panregional or regional	
Regional Sampling Plans	1. Identify several case studies covering different fisheries and regions with high risk bycatch rates based on the risk assessment update (2018) 2. The case studies selected can consider high risk fisheries with important at sea observers coverage (i.e. trawlers) and fisheries with low coverage (i.e. longlines, netters), different fleet segments and PETS groups 3. Suitability of the onboard sampling for sampling bycatch and other potential methodologies 4. Feasibility of monitoring the selected case studies under a regional sampling															Regional NA	
	Chair	BEL	DEN	ESP	EST	FIN	FRA	GER	IRE	LAT	LIT	NL	POL	POR	SWE	UK	COM
	Spain / Netherlands			✓					✓			✓				✓	

ISSG on Regional Sampling Plan for freezer trawlers exploiting small pelagic fish in the NorthWest Atlantic

Subgroup heading	ISSG on Regional Sampling Plan for freezer trawlers exploiting small pelagic fish in the NorthWest Atlantic															Panregional or regional	
Regional Sampling Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final analysis of freezer trawler fishing activity and historical catch sampling (dependent on the completion of the data call) Analysis of the national observer programmes / coverage / national resources for sampling Development of a simulation framework to test candidate sampling schemes Evaluation of the potential suitability for a regional sampling plan and drafting of a proposed sampling agreement. This will be done in form of a workshop involving all participants of the subgroup, with the format (e.g. online/physical) to be decided closer to the time. Proposal for a statistically robust regional sampling scheme which then can be forwarded to NCs/EU for evaluation (September 2019 dependent on the completion of the data call) Inclusion of the regional sampling plan for the freezer trawlers in the national work plans (October 2019 dependent on the completion of the data call) 															Regional NA	
	Chair	BEL	DEN	ESP	EST	FIN	FRA	GER	IRE	LAT	LIT	NL	POL	POR	SWE	UK	COM
	Germany Ireland							✓	✓							✓	

ISSG on Regional Sampling Plan for small pelagics in the Baltic

Subgroup heading	ISSG on Regional Sampling Plan for small pelagics in the Baltic															Panregional or regional	
Regional Sampling Plans	Continue to work on tasks defined for the period 2018-2019. Specific tasks 2019-2020: 1. 3-days Workshop in November 2019 2. Discussions of different scenarios 3. Compare sampling schemes 4. Denmark and Sweden as a test case															Regional Baltic	
	Chair	BEL	DEN	ESP	EST	FIN	FRA	GER	IRE	LAT	LIT	NL	POL	POR	SWE	UK	COM
	Denmark; Sweden		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓		

ISSG on evaluation of data collected for the SSF at EU level

Subgroup heading	ISSG on Evaluation of data collected for the SSF at EU level															Panregional or regional	
Regional Sampling Plans	1. Assessment of the coverage/completeness and the quality /reliability of the data collected 2. Sampling effort allocated to these fisheries at regional level under the EU MAP sampling programmes 3. Analysis of differences between transversal data (sale notes/logbook) and scientific estimates coming from specific sampling programmes 4. Data collection on biological data (length frequencies, discards etc.)															Panregional	
	Chair	BEL	DEN	ESP	EST	FIN	FRA	GER	IRE	LAT	LIT	NL	POL	POR	SWE	UK	COM
	Spain		✓		✓	✓				✓	✓		✓		✓		

ISSG on Regionally coordinated stomach sampling

Subgroup heading	ISSG on Regionally coordinated stomach sampling															Panregional or regional	
Regional Sampling Plans	a) Define key biological parameters (e.g. natural mortality) that are needed for stock assessments (single- and multispecies) and can be deduced from coordinated stomach analysis studies. b) Compile and review available information on stomach sampling manuals and best practice from relevant previous studies and Wks (WKSTCON1, WKSTCON2, WKOISS). c) Identify international and national surveys that may be available for the stomach sampling (time of the year, duration, number of stations, spatial distribution) d) Develop suggestion/roadmap for a database on data for stomach sampling e) Develop (or adopt) an appropriate stomach sampling manual or guidelines for best practice. (Estimate expected expenditure of time and costs for analysis – per stomach, per haul, per species, per country involved) f) Suggest a regional stomach sampling plan for the North Sea: Period, timing, sample sizes, surveys to be sampled, and predator species to be sampled. g) Communicate and circulate this plan to relevant countries that are involved in the fishery on the sampled species and/or are participating in the scientific surveys. Ask for feedback. h) Incorporate the suggestions from the feedback into the sampling plan. i) Suggest a starting date and sampling period for the first sampling campaign. j) Liaise with end-user ISSG															Panregional	
	Chair	BEL	DEN	ESP	EST	FIN	FRA	GER	IRE	ITA	LIT	NL	POL	POR	SWE	UK	COM
	France / Italy						✓			✓					✓	✓	