



Fisheries Data Collection 20th Liaison Meeting

**Meeting between the Chairs of RCGs, key end users,
European Commission DG Mare and JRC**

Report

20th November 2023



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES
Fisheries Policy Atlantic, North Sea, Baltic and Outermost Regions
Unit C.3 — Scientific Advice and Data Collection

**REGIONAL COORDINATION GROUPS
For Fisheries Data Collection**

Edition support: RCGs' SECRETARIAT



TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	1
1 INTRODUCTION.....	2
1.1 Background	2
1.2 Adoption of the agenda	3
1.3 Terms of Reference.....	3
1.4 Participants (list in annex 1)	4
2 DISCUSSION WITH END-USERS (TOR 1A&1B).....	5
2.1 Setting the scene (ToR 1A)	5
2.2 End-user needs and interactions (ToR 1B)	5
2.2.1 IOTC presentation.....	5
2.2.2 ICCAT Presentation	6
2.2.3 SIOFA presentation	6
2.2.4 NAFO presentation	6
2.2.5 ICES presentation	7
2.2.6 GFCM presentation.....	7
2.2.7 STECF presentation.....	9
3 DATA MANAGEMENT (TOR 2A&2B).....	13
3.1 Highlights in progress achieved in 2022 - 2023 in the Regional Databases for RCGs in 2022 and problems identified (end users) RCG data calls (ToR 2A) and highlights in actions related to the future developments (ToR 2B).....	13
3.1.1 RDBFIS presentation	13
3.1.2 RDBES presentation	14
4 RCG ACTIVITIES (TOR 3).....	15
4.1 Highlights in RCG activities relevant to end users.....	15
4.1.1 RCG Long Distance Fisheries	15
4.1.2 RCG Large Pelagics	16
4.1.3 RCG NANSEA/BAL.....	17
4.1.4 RCG Med&BS.....	19
4.1.5 RCG ECON	19
4.1.6 ISSG Diadromous species	20
4.2 The 2023 RCGs - specific recommendations to be discussed at the Liaison Meeting and proposal for future intersessional work and streamlining work between RCGs (ToR 3A)	21
4.2.1 RCG Long Distance Fisheries	21
4.2.2 RCG Large Pelagics	22
4.2.3 RCG NANSEA/BAL.....	23
4.2.4 RCG Med&BS.....	24
4.2.5 RCG ECON	24
4.3 RCG data calls – overview of how MS responded and discussion on future use and further exploration by the RCGs (ToR 3B).....	25
4.3.1 RCG Long Distance Fisheries	25
4.3.2 RCG Large Pelagics	25
4.3.3 RCG NANSEA/BAL.....	25
4.3.4 RCG Med&BS.....	25
4.3.5 RCG ECON	26
4.4 Chairmanship and venues (ToR 3C)	26
4.4.1 Overview of chairs, dates and venues for 2024.....	26
4.5 Future steps in RCG pan-regional and intersessional work (i.e., regional work plans): exchange of ideas and discussion (ToR 3D).....	28
4.5.1 Regional Work Plans.....	28

5	GOVERNANCE (TOR 4)	29
5.1	Follow-up on RCG Rules of Procedures developments in each of the RCGs (ToR 4A)	29
5.1.1	RCG Long Distance Fisheries	29
5.1.2	RCG Large Pelagics	29
5.1.3	RCG NANSEA/BAL	29
5.1.4	RCG Med&BS	29
5.1.5	RCG ECON	29
5.2	Structure of RCGs and cooperation. Lessons learned from combined 2022 RCGs. Tentative changes in structure and in RCG number (ToR 4B).....	29
5.2.1	RCGs Secretariat situation and funding	29
6	AOB	30
6.1	RCG LDF ISSG on SPRFMO Observer Programme Accreditation.....	30
7	ANNEXES	31
	ANNEX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	31
	ANNEX 2: LIAISON MEETING 2023 AGENDA	33
	ANNEX 3: OVERVIEW OF ALL RECOMMENDATIONS	37

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Term	Description
AAC	Aquaculture Advisory Council
AC	Advisory Council
AER	Annual Economic Report (for the European fishing fleet)
BSA	Biologically Sensitive Area
BSAC	Black Sea Advisory Council
CECAF	Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
CKMR	Close-Kin-Mark-Recapture
CMMs	Conservation and Management Measures
CPCs	Cooperating non-Contracting Parties
DCF	Data Collection Framework (follow up of DCR)
DCRF	Data Collection Reference Framework
DG MARE	Commission's Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
DTMT	Data Transmission Monitoring Tool
EC (or COM)	European Commission
EMU	Eel Management Unit
ERA	Economic Report of EU Aquaculture
EU	European Union
EU-MAP	Multi Annual Programme for Data Collection
EWG	Expert Working Group
FDI	Fisheries-dependent information
FUI	Fuel Use Intensity
GFCM	General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
ICCAT	International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
ICES	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea
IOTC	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
ISSG	Intersessional Subgroup
JRC	Joint Research Centre
LDAC	Long Distance Advisory Council
LDF	Long Distance Fisheries
LM	Liaison Meeting
LP	Large Pelagics
MAC	Market Advisory Council
MAP	Marine Action Plan
Med&BS	Mediterranean & Black Sea (region)
MRF	Marine Recreational Fisheries
MS	Member State(s)
MSFD	Marine Strategy Framework Directive
NAFO	Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization
NC	National Correspondent (DCF)
NQSNPFC	North Pacific Fisheries Commission
PETS	Protected, Endangered and Threatened Species
PGECON	Planning Group on Economic Issues
RCG	Regional Coordination Group
RCM	Regional Coordination Meeting
RDB	Regional Data Base (of the RCM/RCG)
RDBES	Regional Data Base and Estimation System
RFMO	Regional Fisheries Management Organization
RoP	Rules of Procedure
RWP	Regional Work Plan
SAC	Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries
SAF	Stock Assessment Form
SIOFA	Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement
SoMFi	State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries
SPRMFO	South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization
SSC	Scientific Sub-Committee
SSF	Small Scale Fisheries
STECF	Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries

Fisheries Data Collection – 20th Liaison Meeting - Report

Term	Description
VMS	Vessel Monitoring System
WG	Working Group
WGRDBESGOV	Working Group on Regional Data Base and Estimation System Governance

Introduction

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

20th Liaison Meeting (LM) between the Chairs of RCGs, key end users (ICES, STECF, RFMOs), JRC and the Commission met on September 26 & 27, 2023 on a hybrid meeting. The meeting was opened by the chair introducing the ToRs. Following the ToRs, the meeting addressed common topics through interaction with end users of the first day as well as among the various RCGs on the second day. Due to the wide range of topics addressed during the meeting, some discussions and conclusions are only directly relevant to a specific group or end user. By discussing the topics in this forum, additional input and insights are gained as well as improved shared responsibility and commonalities.

On the end user interaction: the main end users acknowledged the good cooperation with relevant RCGs. In some cases, the interaction is formalised through dedicated meetings or even a dedicated RCG contact person. Other interactions are mainly built on the annual technical RCG meeting. Many of the end users have started to work on data platforms for data storing and /or data calls, making the end users requirement very clear and transparent and hopefully easier for the MS to respond to.

End user driven DCF data collection may not always suffice for end user needs and some end users also highlighted challenges with very late submission from EU fleet and for few countries no data submission at all. Improved interaction between data collectors and end users was discussed with some end users to better align needs and options to collect data. Some end users had planned workshops (GFCM) to improve the data collection and data quality as well as the interaction with data providers. Some planned updates on how to provide data call (SPRFMO), mapping tools for small scale fisheries (GFCM) and further developments in various Regional databases (ICES, GFCM) and recommendation databases (GitHub- ICES). STECF informed that in next year's data call the updated RCG metiers will be used in the FDI data call.

Regional databases are acknowledged as the backbone for storing and dissemination of DCF data. Dedicated developments were discussed as well as the current status of the development of a Regional Database for Med&BS as currently under development through a MARE framework contract study while for the RDBES an update on the implementation of the roadmap was presented. There were further discussions on how to align the FDI data call with the Annual Economic Report (AER) on capacity, effort and landings, as the data is transmitted repeatedly which leads to duplication of work and an increased number of inconsistencies. This was also highlighted by the STECF. Further, transferring biological data from Med&BS data call into the FDI data base was discussed during the meeting.

The scope of several subgroups (ISSGs) was discussed during the LM, discussions focused on the possibility of broadening their scope from regional to panregional level. It was decided instead that for the first online meeting on an ISSG group having a topic of interest for several regions, the chairs for the other regions should be invited. This was discussed for the Recreational ISSG, Stomach sampling ISSG and Diadromous ISSG. For the ISSG Diadromous a solution for the data storing was discussed and it was suggested that ICES should host the present databases which is including all the variables needed for the stock assessment.

On the RoPs there were no new updates.

Introduction

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

According to Article 8 of the Regulation (EC) No 2017/1004 (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. Regional coordination has been conducted through various constellations since 2004. In 2017, the following five Regional Coordination Groups (RCG) were operating under the DCF:

- RCG Baltic (Baltic)
- RCG North Atlantic, North Sea & Eastern Arctic (NANSEA)
- RCG Mediterranean and Black Sea (Med&BS)
- RCG Long Distance Fisheries (LDF)
- RCG Large Pelagics (LP)

In 2020, an RCG ECON dealing with data collection of economic data issues was established:

- RCG Economic Issues (ECON)

Table 1.1.1: RCGs chairs for the season 2023 – 2024, including incoming and outgoing chairs

RCG	Chairs 2023/2024	email
NANSEA	Dália Reis (outgoing)	Dalia.CC.Reis@azores.gov.pt
	Josefine Egekvist	jsv@aquadtu.dk
	Rita Vasconcelos (incoming)	rita.vasconcelos@ipma.pt
Baltic	Maciej Adamowicz	madamowicz@mir.gdynia.pl
	Lithuania (incoming)	TBC
LP	Hugo Maxwell (outgoing)	Hugo.Maxwell@Marine.ie
	Jurgen Mifsud	jurgen.a.mifsud@gov.mt
	Portugal (incoming)	TBC
LDF	Irek Wójcik (outgoing)	iwojcik@mir.gdynia.pl
	Maksims Kovsars (incoming)	maksims.kovsars@bior.lv
ECON	Heidi Pokki (outgoing)	heidi.pokki@luke.fi
	Hans van Oostenbrugge	hans.vanoostenbrugge@wur.nl
	Eirini Tzouramani (incoming)	tzouramani@agreri.gr
Med&BS	Beatriz Guijarro (outgoing)	beatriz.guijarro@ieo.csic.es
	Emmanuel Tessier (incoming)	Emmanuel.Tessier@ifremer.fr

Introduction

The RCG Baltic and RCG NANSEA are holding their meeting together although they are still formally two separate groups. In addition to the regional RCGs, a pan-regional RCG deals with collection of economic data: The Regional Coordination Group on Economic Issues (RCG ECON). This RCG is the successor of the previous group PGECON although the status of PGECON was slightly different as it a subgroup of the EU Expert ⁽¹⁾ group on Fisheries Data collection.

Similarly, the Liaison Meeting is a subgroup of the EU Expert ⁽²⁾ group on Fisheries Data collection, established to assist the Commission on data collection issues. As stipulated in 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, with participation of the chairs (incoming and outgoing) of all RCGs, key end users, and the Commission.

The 20th Liaison Meeting (LM) was held as a hybrid meeting in DG MARE, Brussels on September 26 & 27, 2023.

1.2 Adoption of the agenda

After opening of the meeting, the draft agenda was adopted by the participants. See Annex 2 for the agenda of the meeting.

1.3 Terms of Reference

TOR 1 Discussion with end users

- A. Setting the scene: End-user role and new data demands (Liaison Meeting chair and COM)
- B. End-user needs and interaction: presentations from end users (ICES, GFCM, STECF/JRC, IOTC, SIOFA) on:
 - current interaction between the end user and RCGs/data collectors and proposals for improvement
 - data needs and data quality
 - ongoing developments
 - main changes in data calls anticipated next year

TOR 2 Data management

- A. Highlights in progress achieved in 2022-2023 in the Regional Databases for RCGs and problems identified.
- B. Highlights in actions related to the future developments for Regional Databases (RCG chairs, RDBFIS, RDBES)

⁽¹⁾<https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/expert-groups/consult?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=2750>

⁽²⁾<https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/expert-groups/consult?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=2750>

Introduction

TOR 3 RCG activities (follow-up) Discussion on possible follow-up to the main outputs/recommendations

- A. Highlights in RCG activities
- B. The 2023 RCGs – recommendations and proposals for future intersessional work (Liaison Meeting and RCG chairs)
- C. RCG data calls – overview of how MS responded and discussion on future use (RCG chairs)
- D. Announcement of new chairs (where relevant), next meeting(s) and venues
- E. Future steps in RCG pan-regional and intersessional work (i.e., regional work plans, country profiles): exchange of ideas and discussion (COM, Liaison Meeting, RCG Chairs)

TOR 4 Governance

- A. Follow-up on RCG Rules of Procedures (RoP) developments in each of the RCGs (Liaison Meeting, RCG Chairs)
- B. Structure of RCGs and cooperation. Discuss needs for new pan-regional ISSGs (RCG chairs)
 - Status on Secretariat (current output available to RCGs)
 - Diadromous ISSG (position and future participation to LM)

TOR 5 AOB

1.4 Participants (list in annex 1)

The 20th Liaison Meeting was chaired by Marie Storr-Paulsen (Denmark) and the meeting was attended by the Commission, key end users of the data collection and the chairs of the RCGs. Annex 1 provides an overview of the participants to the meeting and their respective affiliation.

2 DISCUSSION WITH END-USERS (TOR 1A&1B)

2.1 Setting the scene (ToR 1A)

Mr Arnaud Peyronnet, DG MARE acting Head of Unit C3, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. He highlighted the importance of the interaction and dialogue with the end-users but also the Liaison meeting (LM) as a forum for the RCGs to share the output of their work, raise issues and present recommendations and future work plans. He further highlighted two key areas where a lot of progress was made during last year: 1) following on from the regional grants, Fishn'Co and Streamline, the RCGs have taken up the project outputs and have developed and presented regional work plans (RWP) for consideration and submission this year, and 2) acknowledge the progress in the area of DCF data management. The roadmap of the Regional Database Estimation System (RDBES), the ongoing development of the Regional Database Fisheries Information System (RDBFIS) in the Med & BS and the ongoing work by the RCGs in close cooperation with expert groups and end users to streamline data calls, such as RDBES, FDI, Med and Black Sea data call and Annual Economic Report. And finally, the DCF IT platform which is progressing well and is at the stage of user testing by DCF experts.

Next, the chair Marie Storr-Paulsen highlighted the importance of strengthening the link between data collectors and end users. With new incoming data sources such as genetics, stomach content analysis and, camera images, discussions are needed on prioritisation. She then presented the terms of reference, outlined where to find the documents, the timelines for the report writing and mentioned the legal reference to the Liaison meeting, its objectives and its evolution over time including the dedicated day for interaction with the end users. In the end, the LM chair highlighted some of the main issues that the different RCGs would like to discuss during this meeting: (LDF) issues with accreditation; (Large Pelagics) how to coordinate recreational fisheries (RF) data collection; (NANSEA & Baltic) questions on process of the RWP, scientific surveys and access in closed areas, inclusion of third countries in the RCG process; (Med & BS) Marine Action Plan (MAP), new data demands, better coordination with end user groups (to address the same data requested under different formats); (RCG ECON) RWP; (Diadromous ISSG) storage of data.

2.2 End-user needs and interactions (ToR 1B)

2.2.1 IOTC presentation

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) is an intergovernmental organisation responsible for the management of tuna and tuna-like species in the Indian Ocean. IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties are required to report information for the 16 species directly under the IOTC mandate as well another main shark species caught in IOTC Fisheries and ETP species.

Currently European Union contributes with around 10% of the total IOTC catches. The main catches of the EU are for Industrial fisheries (25%) and for tropical tuna species (19%).

The main and persistent issues identified in European Union data provided to the IOTC are: (i) late submission of mandatory statistical data for some EU fleets (Spain); (ii) missing information for some fleets, (Italy, Spain, and Portugal), possible related to both data collection and data reporting processes; (iii) discard levels, when provided, are not always raised to total discards; (iv) pending clarification on potential issues with species composition due to changes in the estimation process (Spain 2018).

Some improvement was noted in the EU purse seine fleets reporting effort as number of sets instead fishing hours or fishing days, according to the SC22 recommendation.

Discussion with end-users (ToR 1A&1B)

The Secretariat also acknowledge the feedback received from European Union on a set of new forms for the submission of mandatory statistical information, which will replace the current forms from next year.

Discussions and feed-back:

Following a discussion on how the data reporting and quality could be improved, IOTC informed that a reminder is circulated to all MS on relevant deadlines. Although, the new eMARIS platform is not fully operational yet, it will confirm data reception and validation automatically. Further, IOTC would like to have effort information on number of sets instead of fishing days, as it is currently provided, and a discussion took place on how the effort estimates could be improved. Unfortunately, this information is not mandatory in the current control regulation, although RFMOs are asking for it.

2.2.2 ICCAT Presentation

The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) did not have the possibility to give a presentation as they were engaged in one of the key annual ICCAT meetings. However, ICCAT has liaised with the RCG Large Pelagics during the season and participated in the annual technical meeting. ICCAT representatives attended the RCG LP 2023 and LM 2022 and the main messages from ICCAT have been passed through these meetings. Further it was explained that the ICCAT colleagues from Statistical department provided a revision of the situation during last year LM and also the inputs to the RCG LP meeting which were still relevant. If there was an issue to be highlighted, it was the lack of coordination between different sampling schemes.

2.2.3 SIOFA presentation

The Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) aims to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fishery resources in its area through cooperation among its Contracting Parties, and to promote the sustainable development of fisheries in the area.

This Agreement covers fishery resources including fish, molluscs, crustaceans and other sedentary species within the area, but excluding highly migratory species (Annex I of UNCLOS) and sedentary species subject to the fishery jurisdiction of coastal states (Article 77(4) of UNCLOS).

The European Union, as a Contracting Party to SIOFA, provides its relevant fisheries data following the measures adopted by the Meeting of the Parties. In 2023, the EU fishery in the SIOFA Area consist of 1 active vessel, which fishing activities information is smoothly reported to the SIOFA Secretariat, and the annual data submissions follow the specifications provided in the conservation and management measure on data standards (CMM 02).

Please visit the SIOFA website: <https://siofa.org/>

Discussions and feed-back:

During the meeting there were questions regarding the sampling scheme conducted by SIOFA, either through self-reporting or observers. It was explained that a combination of both is used, with a 20% coverage of observers. The majority of the biological sampling is conducted by observers.

2.2.4 NAFO presentation

The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO) did not attend the meeting.

2.2.5 ICES presentation

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) highly value the good dialogue with RCGs Chairs, both formal and informal. ICES has now a dedicated Officer for the RCGs linked to the Benchmark Overview Group and data groups which should facilitate that the overall information flow is coherent across relevant groups in ICES, at least in the Secretariat. In terms of recommendations, a new process has been established by the RCG Chairs and the ICES Secretariat ensuring an agile approach to responding to recommendations and as well a sense-checking of recommendations prior to communication of these to recipients.

In terms of data and upcoming challenges, ICES highlighted the following points:

- Recreational fisheries - ICES is setting up a workshop (WKRFSa) to build a roadmap to include recreational catches in stock assessments; we do however have serious issues on getting data on recreational fisheries, seems almost like a different 'segment' of data provision?
- Genetic information – increasing need for genetic data to separate stocks (cod, herring...); how should this data be collected, stored, etc. across data providers?
- Socio-economic data – primarily so far associated with non-recurrent requests, but also the EOs. So far not part of data calls, however, this could be the future. Need to look into how to align this across needs.
- Descriptor data in general; much is collected through the surveys, are the needs clearly communicated?
- Better structure for levelling expectations of data availabilities for e.g., bycatch, often advice requests are based on unrealistic impressions of what data is available.

How does ICES define data needs? This is an outcome based on feedback from several sources:

- Expert WGs.
- Benchmark workshops.
- Other workshops addressing calibration and data issues.
- No recurrent requests (becoming more and more frequent and representing a challenge: this is also an area for further dialogue with RCGs).

Discussions and feed-back:

The recreational data and the reasons for the relatively poor feed-back from MS on recreational data calls was discussed. ICES explained that some of the challenges could be caused by the lack of communication between data collectors and those getting the data and launching the call. Recreational data is also important for the tuna fishery in the LP and this RCG would be interested in learning from an existing data call.

The MSFD descriptors and awareness about those and related data needs (EU- 2021/1167 article 4.2) was discussed. It was not clear if this is the case in the DCF community or if that should be presented in future meetings for a better understanding. Last year, the RCG Med&BS and Streamline facilitated a workshop on the MSFD descriptors.

On new data demands, ICES highlighted that there is an increased demand for genetic data in stock assessment. Discussions on funding for the genetic analysis took place.

2.2.6 GFCM presentation

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Secretariat representative provided an overview of the functioning of the GFCM, the main achievements in recent years, the interaction

Discussion with end-users (ToR 1A&1B)

between GFCM and RCG Med&BS, the GFCM fisheries data needs and data quality, the ongoing GFCM development, and finally reported information on foreseen changes in data calls and future GFCM fisheries meetings.

Functioning and main recent achievements

From the functioning point of view, the decision-making process of the GFCM is supported by the scientific advice produced by the GFCM subsidiary bodies that review the conclusions of existing GFCM technical working groups which compile and analyse evidence regularly. Based on the proposals advanced by Member states (Contracting Parties), the Commission adopts either binding recommendations or non-binding resolutions. Then, data reporting obligations of Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties (CPCs) as well as the implementation of GFCM decisions at national level are assessed by the GFCM Compliance Committee annually.

The implementation of Mediterranean and Black Sea priorities through tailor-made capacity development activities is provided by the MedSea4Fish programme ⁽³⁾ and the BlackSea4Fish ⁽⁴⁾ project, aiming at putting the GFCM 2030 Strategy ⁽⁵⁾ for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture into action in the GFCM area of application.

In terms of main achievements in recent years, among others, GFCM adopted ten management plans, four decisions setting management measures, a 10-year Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries, improved data collection through 9 scientific surveys-at-sea, launched six large-scale research programmes, implemented 10 Fisheries Restricted Areas and the discards monitoring programmes in 9 countries, conducted socio-economic surveys in 8 countries.

GFCM further advanced on the consolidation of regional databases, including data dissemination through interactive online dashboards to consult those public data that are gathered in accordance with relevant GFCM recommendations.

Interaction with RCG

In the context of the useful the exchanges with RCG Med&BS, GFCM continued participating to the annual meeting to discuss about GFCM data calls, data quality and relevant outcomes of the GFCM Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) which may have an impact on future GFCM requested for fisheries data to the EU countries.

Data needs and data quality

Through both the online GFCM data submission calendar ⁽⁶⁾ and the GFCM deadline reminders (emails in English and French) sent to national contacts when a deadline for data submission is approaching, GFCM is used to communicate its data needs to CPCs, with the data calls now reaching more than 100 in 2013.

About data quality towards the consolidation of the data use for scientific advice and compliance assessment of CPCs with existing GFCM decisions, two different mechanisms are currently in place at the GFCM level according to the data. Information transmitted by both CPCs and national experts through the Stock Assessment Forms (SAFs) input data calls is regularly evaluated by existing GFCM stock assessment working groups and benchmark sessions held during the year and, at least, for the

⁽³⁾ <https://www.fao.org/gfcm/activities/fisheries/cooperation/medsea4fish/en/>

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.fao.org/gfcm/activities/fisheries/cooperation/blacksea4fish/en/>

⁽⁵⁾ <https://www.fao.org/gfcm/2030strategy/en/>

⁽⁶⁾ <https://www.fao.org/gfcm/data/calendar/en/>

Discussion with end-users (ToR 1A&1B)

species identified as priority by the SAC. On the other hand, the quality of the fisheries data received through the Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) online platform from CPCs in reply to existing GFCM Recommendations is ensured thanks to the regular application of fisheries quality indicators [timeliness, completeness, conformity, stability and consistency] on the DCRF database: the results are put back at disposal of concerned CPCs via online dashboards under the DCRF online platform.

Ongoing developments

With specific reference to GFCM request for stock assessment data, based on a decision taken at the twenty-fourth session of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries - SAC (20-23 June 2023), work will start to develop a standardized reporting tool and align stock assessment data call structure to contemporary assessment models (reflection launched during data preparation meetings) towards optimizing data submission.

Both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the provisions in GFCM management plans, against the information transmitted by CPCs, will be ensured and strengthened with a view to allowing an evaluation of the effectiveness and impacts of existing management measures/plans. Effort will continue to be devoted to enhancing data collection for all fleet segments including small-scale fisheries towards better integration of this information into existing stock assessments. Focus will also be given to better integrate socio-economic data into management decision-making process, and to facilitate the collection of harmonized recreational fisheries catch, effort and economic data for integration into stock assessment and decision-making as well.

At the end of 2023 a special edition of The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries (SoMFi) ⁽⁷⁾ will be released with the aim of providing an up-to-date review of the status and trends of fisheries in the GFCM area of application based on the data regularly submitted by GFCM member countries and on the most recent information produced by the GFCM scientific bodies.

Discussions and feed-back:

Regarding data quality use in stock assessment, the GFCM Secretariat explained that the indicators are used in all data received based on GFCM Recommendations (mainly linked to management plans). The Stock Assessment Forms (SAF) data is checked in the Working Group (both Country/official data and data coming from experts). The Compliance Committee (CoC) will continue working on the indicators, although the indicators are not used formally for compliance evaluation. There is presently a quality chapter in the working group report and work on data quality is in progress.

2.2.7 STECF presentation

Since the last LM, there have been the following STECF Expert Working Groups (EWGs) using DCF data calls:

- Aquaculture economics (EWG 22-17, Oct 2022)
- Social data (EWG 22-14, Nov 2022)
- Fleet economics (Annual Economic Report, AER) (EWG 23-03 & 23-07, Apr/Jun 2023)
- Fisheries-Dependent Information (FDI) (EWG 23-05 & 23-10, May/Sep 2023)
- Mediterranean & Black Sea stock assessment (EWG 23-09, Sep 2023)

(7) <https://www.fao.org/gfcm/publications/somfi/en/>

Discussion with end-users (ToR 1A&1B)

Aquaculture data

Concerning aquaculture data, there is interaction between the EWG and RCG ECON, where data collectors are present. Workshops and meetings are held on a regular basis and changes are implemented. Results have been presented to the Market Advisory Council (MAC) and the Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC). Normally, the EWG chair is asked to present the main outcomes of the Economic Report of EU Aquaculture (ERA). The most recent report includes three special chapters:

- increasing energy prices and its impact on the EU aquaculture sector
- latest nowcast analysis
- analysis of the social data collected under EU-MAP (for the second time).

A need has been identified in the past for better quality control of data before expert meetings. Therefore, the aquaculture expert group suggested to hold two meetings in a cycle (like AER): one for data-checking, and another for compiling the EU overview and special chapters with deeper economics analysis.

The group produced a nowcast analysis that will need further improvement in terms of standardisation and tools for the nowcasting and forecasting procedure. Social data have been reported and analysed, but some harmonisation of the reported data is still necessary.

Social data

Regarding social data, STECF has started developing and applying analytical tools for the social dimension of the CFP. The framework, definitions, methods, and application of National and Community profiles have been thoroughly discussed. As they will underpin the analysis of fisheries social aspects, together with the data collected under the DCF, their further development is of utmost importance. The EWG 22-14 noted that the end-users and/or stakeholders must be involved in developing the framework and its indicators, so that the collected data provides useful information. The definitions and methodology used across the different fora currently developing social indicators (next to STECF, these are RCG ECON and ICES WGSOCIAL) need to be aligned, beginning with the definitions of indicators across STECF reports. Representatives of RCG ECON are part of the STECF EWG.

Currently, the social data collected are of limited scope. In the near future, scope, range and quality aspects will be further detailed. The upcoming EWG 23-17 (Oct 2023) will advance on the principle of National Profiles and will identify/define, based on end-user perception, the data to be collected, the appropriate methodology, the frequency of collection, and means of reporting, in accordance with bio-ecological and economic data collection.

Fleet economics

As for fleet economics, there is a seamless interaction between the AER EWGs, RCG ECON and the data collectors. Workshops and meetings are held on a regular basis and changes are implemented. There is also an open interaction between AER and the ACs. LDAC, BSAC and MAC usually ask the EWG chairs to present the main outcomes of the AER. They also take part as observers in the AER II meeting.

The AER includes useful information for the improvement of data quality provided by MS. In particular, this year's AER started checking the quality and usefulness of the fuel use data provided in the data call. The AER contains statistical ranges and a literature list on Fuel Use Intensity (FUI) that could be used by MS to check data on fuel use before submission. The analysis was based on merging AER and FDI data. This analysis identified a lack of consistency of effort data by fishing technique between AER and FDI for some MS and segments. This issue is worth investigating.

Discussion with end-users (ToR 1A&1B)

JRC implemented a new dashboard that allows to visualise the data, inform on the timeliness, identify coverage issues (at MS and fleet segment level) and report cross-checks between data for different variables. This tool proved to be very useful in checking the data quality prior and during the EWGs.

In the AER 2023, the long- and short-term break-even fuel price were calculated at segment level and average national values.

AER EWGs considered that the process of forecasting the year t+1 should be further analysed and suggested that RCG ECON could facilitate a workshop to develop a common method for nowcasting for the year t+1. Such methodology could be applied by MS to provide the nowcast for the year t+1 in the yearly data call. Nowcasting of year t+2 will continue to be performed under the AER EWGs.

In the 2023 data call, two improvements were introduced: the additional field on the “level of activity” and the new vessel length classes for the SSCF in the Baltic Sea (in accordance with the revised EU-MAP). It was noted that not all concerned MS applied the changes and therefore it is recommended to further assess their correct implementation in next year’s data call. The AER data call continues to request additional dimensions on gear and fisheries. The objective is to identify specific fisheries, in particular LDFs operating in RFMOs and Outermost Regions. A re-assessment of those criteria and a description of them is considered necessary to increase the transparency of the whole process and to streamline the content of the report.

FDI data

FDI data collectors are part of the experts attending the EWG, including some National Correspondents. The continuation of the methodological meeting every two years is beneficial for future development and coordination of the FDI submissions.

The data quality is improving annually with MSs gaining more experience in data submission and requirements. The huge amount of data (all species, all areas, all discards, etc.), however, leads to higher probability of errors in submissions by all MS. FDI biological data are not fully covering all EU fishing regions because biological data for the Med&BS regions are not requested in the data call.

The FDI EWG agreed on the approach to be used for the publication of biological data when landings weight and discards are marked confidential in the catches table. A script to merge biological data with catch data was developed in 2022. During the EWG 23-05, this script has been tested and improved. This script can be applied on published information and is available for end users together with FDI data published. The EWG agreed not to disseminate Table B (refusal rate information) for this year.

The EWG 23-10 analysed comparability of the AER and FDI activity and capacity data. There are still issues outstanding for some countries, e.g., difference in use of the GEO indicator in both data calls. There is a suggestion to have a workshop between economists and FDI experts on definitions of fleets and activity indicators to further harmonise the approaches.

Next year’s data call will request data for 2023 and (on a voluntary basis) for 2012. For MSs who this year did not re-submit the whole time series, there will be the opportunity to send data for the period 2013-2022 to update métier codes and EEZ indicator codes (for the areas including the UK EEZ). In Tables H and I, the code NK will not be available anymore for the sub-region. Data for the sub-region ‘BSA’ (Biologically Sensitive Area) will no longer be requested.

The work towards transferring biological data from the Mediterranean and Black Sea data call into the FDI database has progressed. The ad-hoc contract that dealt with this transfer concluded that this can be done by modifying the existing script originally developed by the STREAM project. However, in order to link the biological data in the FDI to the catch summary table, the information of DOMAIN will be missing. This DOMAIN was suggested by the FDI EWG 23-05 methodology group

Discussion with end-users (ToR 1A&1B)

to be provided to the Med&BS data call under the ID column which will not require any change in the data call and would be no additional burden to the MS. The STECF EWG 23-05 together with RCG Med&BS propose to MS and the Commission to have a pilot study with 2023 data during the 2024 Med&BS data call.

The STECF EWG 23-10 also had a ToR for the harmonization of the variables that are submitted to AER and FDI data calls. The ultimate goal is for MS to submit the fishing activity data only in the FDI data call, whereas in the AER data call, only socio-economic data will be provided. The ToR included to repeat analysis from FDI 2021 on newly submitted AER and FDI time series (2017-2021) and check if the coding of fleet segments is consistent on national level between both data submissions; and to compare capacity, landings and effort data sets between AER and FDI data calls. The EWG followed up on Data Transmission Monitoring Tool (DTMT) issues reported in the STECF EWG-21-12 report in relation to the AER and FDI comparison. Furthermore, the EWG reviewed the results of the RCG questionnaire related to the comparison of the definitions within the data submitted to FDI and AER data calls. Finally, the conclusion is that AER and FDI contain the same fishing activity information but description of the codes differs slightly. EWG 23-10 supports RCG ECON's proposal to have a specific workshop to follow-up the work engaged and focus on these mismatches in order to discuss all these issues in detail. This workshop will involve economists, biologists and data scientists that submit data to the AER and FDI. The aim of the workshop will be to better align definitions of the population and fleet segmentation (assignment of fishing technique, vessel length and GEO indicator) as well as to further harmonize codifications and reference tables between the two data calls.

Mediterranean & Black Sea stock assessment data

For Mediterranean & Black Sea stock assessment data, improved follow-up through the DTMT is facilitating the interaction between the EWG and data collectors. The MS should, however, be encouraged to routinely check data before uploading. It is likely that training will be required. Progress is being made to provide R scripts and web-based checking. These have been compared and are broadly compatible. MS should choose the method that suits them, but should take responsibility for this checking stage. Most issues involve individual errors with diverse data and cannot be easily summarised. These occur right across data types (e.g. MEDITS, landings, etc.) and countries. These have been documented in the report of EWG 22-03. Extensive evaluation carried out in EWG 22-03 has only been partly completed; results found were passed to National Correspondents in April 2022. A list of species-GSA combinations remains to be checked. MS should be encouraged to do the data checking before uploading, as routines are available but not always being used.

There is cooperation with two EU projects: QUALITRAIN⁽⁸⁾ on the refinement of data quality check tools and RDBFIS II⁽⁹⁾ on the further development of the regional database for the Med&BS. The two projects shall provide MS with tools for storing the data, perform data quality checks, and prepare the data in the correct format requested by the different data calls. This shall streamline the work of the stock assessment EWGs.

Data calls will be similar, except there is now a requirement to obtain recreational fisheries data for future analyses. So far, this has not yet been implemented; it seems likely this will take some time

⁽⁸⁾ "Quality checking of Mediterranean & Black Sea data and training for Member State experts" (QualiTrain). The project is funded under FRAMEWORK CONTRACT MED & BS – EASME/EMFF/2020/OP/0021.

⁽⁹⁾ 'Hosting, maintenance and further development of the Regional Database for the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (RDBFIS)'. The project is funded under FRAMEWORK CONTRACT MED & BS – EASME/2020/OP/0021.

Data management (ToR 2A&2B)

to be transmitted/collected. In addition, there is a proposal for requesting quarterly instead of annually aggregated data.

Discussions and feedback:

A DG MARE representative explained that the STECF EWG 22-03 remaining work will be completed by QUALITRAIN project and clarified that quarterly reporting is already in Med & BS data call, for certain stocks.

3 DATA MANAGEMENT (ToR 2A&2B)

3.1 Highlights in progress achieved in 2022 - 2023 in the Regional Databases for RCGs in 2022 and problems identified (end users) RCG data calls (ToR 2A) and highlights in actions related to the future developments (ToR 2B)

3.1.1 RDBFIS presentation

An overview of the MARE 2020/08 grant RDBFIS was presented by the coordinator (S. Kavadas). A web-based integrated fisheries information system for the Med&BS was delivered to DG MARE. The main features and advantages of RDBFIS were mentioned: (1) centralize Regional Data Base for Data Collection Framework data; (2) is a power full tool for RCG Med&BS, Med&BS MS and end users; (3) a security subsystem ensures data access and protection (<https://medbs-rdbfis.hcmr.gr:8443>); (4) common quality data checks, processing and reporting possibilities are supported; (5) surveys are included; (6) spatial information has been integrated. For the construction of the database and the application, open source in information technologies were fully adopted (2020-2023 EC strategy "Think Open"). The MARE 2020/08 grant was successfully finished on February 28, 2023. A new project was funded under the framework contract "EASME/EMFF/2020/OP/0021" with the aim to work on the hosting, maintenance, fine-tuning and further development of the end product of regional grant RDBFIS and to provide support to the users of the end product. The project started on April 1, 2023 and will be completed within 24 months. Twelve partners and three non-partners but with a significant contribution are involved in the development of the project.

The main activities were highlighted as following: (0) hosting, maintenance and fine-tuning RDBFIS at HCMR; (1) populate the system with data via a data call that will be addressed to the relevant MS and actors of the Med&BS; (2) further development of the RDBFIS which will generally include the following activities: consistency of data quality checks; improvement of R package BioIndex (providing relevant statistics on MEDITS data) and its integration into RDBFIS; integration of MEDIAS survey into RDBFIS; integration of fleet economic data; construction of data elaboration routines as well as data entry forms for stomach content, PETS, alien species, Eggs&Larvae and recreational fisheries; develop a dynamic tool portraying the evolution of fleet dynamics of EU MS; integration of checks and mapping on spatial landings and effort data provided in FDI datacall; perform syntax and consistency checks on Work Plan and Annual Reports tables.

An overview of the progress work done during the 6-month implementation period was also presented. The project is disseminated through the website <http://rdbfis.eu/>

Discussion & feedback:

No time for comments

3.1.2 RDBES presentation

ICES Secretariat gave a presentation on the RDBES updates. The ICES Council's 4 years RDBES project funding ends in December 2023. There are many new requested functionalities: Recreational fisheries data, Diadromous fisheries data, Upload Log, Improvement of data viewing and adding summarising for data quality control, other quality checks and FDI export module. There are also ongoing developments regarding roles, stock definitions and data viewing, which might not be completed in Dec. 2023. The RDBES was in August moved to a production environment for the 4th RDBES data call. In 2023 the following two workshops regarding the RDBES have been held: WKRDBES-Raise TAFFLOW (22-26 May) and WKRDBES-INTRO 2 (13-15 June, chaired by ICES Sec.). The following two will be held WKRDBES-Raise & TAF 2 (2-6 October) and WGRDBES-EST 3 (16-20 October). The plan is that from next year the RCG NANSEA, Baltic and LDF should use the RDBES data, and not the RDB data. It is essential for the requested developments that funding is found.

Discussion & feedback:

There were some comments on the level of detailed data provided to the RDBES from the MS. It was clarified that detailed data has to be anonymized before being transmitted. The data that is currently in RDBES is on a very detailed level and cannot, by default, be public available in the present format.

4 RCG ACTIVITIES (TOR 3)

4.1 Highlights in RCG activities relevant to end users

4.1.1 RCG Long Distance Fisheries

The RCG LDF reviewed the progress in regional coordination in 2022 and the Long Distance Fisheries activity by MS in CECAF, SPRFMO, NAFO and other areas with the use of updated 2022 data provided by MS through the Regional Database (RDB).

With respect to the CECAF area, the group reviewed and addressed outcomes of the CECAF Scientific Subcommittee and adopted recommendations of four assessment Working Groups carried out in 2022: Demersal Species Working Group – North, Small Pelagic Working Group – North, Demersal species Working Group – South and Small Pelagic Working Group – South.

Regarding data collection activities in the CECAF area, for Madeira and Canary Islands data were routinely collected in accordance with the PRT and ESP programs respectively. Regarding West Africa region data could not be collected for another year from EU small pelagics fishery. One of the EU vessel's operators offered to take a scientific observer onboard, and the observer was ready to travel early June. However, in May, a fire broke out on the vessel causing the vessel to leave the fishing ground in an emergency, and thus cancelling the plans to send an observer. It was not possible to deploy observers on board the vessels fishing in the CECAF area in the second half of 2022 due to reluctance of the vessel operators to take scientific observers on board vessels fishing in because of lack of space. Some issues were also noted regarding data collection on the Spanish demersal metiers operating in West Africa due to e.g., lack of space, refusals, travel difficulties, etc. the common problem affecting all Spanish demersal fleets was the lack of observers available for embarking, as they refuse to do it in hard working and living conditions with the low incentives they are currently receiving. Ideally, this problem should be tackled by the competent authorities to avoid the non-compliance with the DCF, and thus to the end users' requirements.

Regarding data collection activities in the SPRFMO area, two EU vessels were active in 2022. Two observers were placed onboard *one of the vessels* in April in Panama – after one fishing trip one observer returned *home* in May and the second one stayed onboard for next two fishing trip until the end of June. In July, another observer boarded the *second* vessel in Chile and collected data over the course of two fishing trips. The SPRFMO requirement to have a minimum 10% observer coverage in terms of fishing trips was achieved and exceeded by having five fishing trips observed out of total of nine fishing trips executed by EU vessels in 2022.

In 2023, being the second year the RCG LDF dealt with the NAFO area, following a decision taken in 2021 to move the NAFO area under the realm of the RCG LDF, the Group continued to familiarize with NAFO procedures and MS activity in the NAFO area. *The overview of targeted species and stocks revealed that* different metiers are used for describing similar fisheries. The problem with using different overlapping metiers will be solved in the near future when all data will be stored in the new RDBES database where non-overlapping metiers are agreed.

The EU accession to the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC) potentially adds new fishing areas to the competence of the RCG LDF and new needs for data collection coordination. However, as the EU fleet is not authorised yet to undertake any fishing operation in the NPFC area, there are no data collection needs yet.

Discussion & feedback:

During the meeting there were some discussions on a RWP for the RCG LDF. The RCG has several times mentioned that they in reality have a RWP as they have had for several years a joint sampling programme agreed and implemented among the MS. However, it was mentioned for the first time in

RCG activities (ToR 3)

the NWP that it was not accepted by the Commission as such, because it was not aligned with the guidelines/definition. Nevertheless, it was agreed that the form for alignment between MS is actually a RWP and it could relatively easy be converted into a “true” RWP. Furthermore, there were some discussions on sampling protocols and data submission. It was explained that only one MS (The Netherlands) is submitting data and a common protocol, based on the CECAF end-user needs, has been incorporated. NAFO is a new area for the RCG to collect data. It was highlighted that the metiers are not similar for the NAFO area compared to the regular RCG area, however this would probably be resolved in next years if the new metier list is used.

4.1.2 RCG Large Pelagics

The 2023 RCG LP annual technical meeting was held in St Julian, Malta, 26th to 28th of June, with a possibility to attend online as a hybrid meeting.

During the meeting ISSGs presented their work as well as presentations from ICCAT, the Commission and relevant research projects.

Highlights in RCG activities relevant to end-users

The main highlights from the RCG LP 2023 were:

- 1) **Regional Work Plan:** Draft RWP for the regional coordination group on Large Pelagics has been finalized and is now ready to be submitted to STECF for evaluation. Only a small part of the RCG LP dealing with activities has been integrated into the RWP, which focuses on the purse seiner tropical tuna’s fishery. There was also a discussion to include bait boat and long liners in the activities for tropical tunas, however this will not be done in time to be included in the 2025-2027 RWP for LP.
 - o The RWP reflects the coordination efforts between France and Spain on the LP sampling schemes, as this has always been a soft agreement but needs to be brought forward into the RWP for large pelagics.
- 2) **ISSG Tropical Tunas:** Work on expanding the current sampling on bycatch species of interest as well as biological variables of interest through the DCF an BAOBAB was discussed as 2024 work for this ISSG. The group implemented the new version of the Tropical Tuna Treatment (T3) which will also be applied to historical catch series for consistency. The Sub group on Observers introduced a new species identification guide and new database (ObServe V9). Fishing industry representatives were present at this sub group for the first time for increased collaboration on observer programmes and electronic monitoring systems. Finally, a need to implement an action plan for observer’s safety at sea was raised.
- 3) **ISSG Regional Database Development:** A reduction in the level of ambition was suggested by this ISSG in order to progress the selection of an eventual database which is an ongoing issue for the RCG LP since 2021. A reduction in the level of ambition would mean the selection of a common data format rather than committing to one regional database. Once the data format has been agreed upon, the selection and methods for inputting data into the respective regional databases can then be discussed alongside the choice of regional database. During the 2023 T.M., the RDBES format for data was put forward as the most accepted format for data entry to regional databases, be it RDBFIS or RDBES.
- 4) **Feedback from ICCAT (RFMO):** Updates on the GBYP bluefin tuna tagging and sampling programmes were presented by ICCAT alongside a review of DCF sampling activities extracted from annual reports. A number of issues were highlighted with regards to the ARs: lack of database integrating information contained in the AR; location of sample locations collected by DCF unknown; insufficient metadata to link samples with results obtained from their analyses and finally the DCF large pelagics biological sampling does not provide enough coverage for ICCAT’s stock assessment model’s needs. A request for more detailed metadata

RCG activities (ToR 3)

in the AR which would include sample locations as well as a system to update information on the availability and use of these biological samples. ICCAT also recommended the DCF sampling scheme be updated and optimised in the case of large pelagics as the data provided is currently insufficient for ICCAT's needs.

- 5) **During the meeting**, EU Commission proposed ICCAT launch a data call in order to get more precise information on existing DCF samples of interest to ICCAT (not all are of interest).
- 6) Finally, the need for a new sampling design and the implementation of a new sampling scheme will be required should Close-Kin-Mark-Recapture (CKMR) be selected as the stock assessment/management tool by ICCAT. ICCAT stated they cannot assume the massive genetic sampling required by this methodology in any of their special programmes therefore it will have to be implemented by contracting parties.

Discussion & feedback:

As many of the NC do not attend the RCG LP annual technical meeting, it is important that the experts are given a mandate to take decisions. However, it would be beneficial if NC could attend the last day of the meeting. In addition, there were some discussions on the biological sampling on genetics (CKMR) and that a sampling protocol on these sampling types needs to be developed. Further, presently it was not clear how to link the biological samples with the catch data.

4.1.3 RCG NANSEA/BAL

The RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic Technical meeting 2023 was held as one online day 25th May and a physical meeting in Gdansk, Poland 6-9 June, with a possibility to attend online. During the meeting ISSGs presented their work as well as presentations from ICES, the Commission and relevant research projects.

Highlights in RCG activities relevant to end-users

The main highlights from the RCG NANSEA and Baltic 2023 were:

- 1) **Regional Work Plans:** RWPs for NANSEA and Baltic have been finalized and are ready to be submitted to STECF for evaluation.
- 2) **RCG and end-user interaction:** A description of what the RCGs can facilitate is described in the [RCG Mandates and Remits](#) document. The following sentence was added and agreed with ICES: "RCGs work with RDBES data from EU countries, and can quality ensure the data in relation to RCG work. RDBES based outputs for ICES EGs and ensuring the data quality of RDBES data from non-EU countries should be done by ICES".
- 3) **Streamlined métier codes:** The ISSG on Métier and transversal variable issues have supported the implementation of revised métier codes in STECF FDI, ICES RDBES, ICES WGBYC and ICES VMS/Logbook data calls.
- 4) Coordination of **genetic sampling** is included in the task list of three different ISSGs.
- 5) **Regional database:** Cooperation with ICES on the inclusion of new data in RDBES.
- 6) **Stomach Sampling:** Methods and manuals for regionally coordinated stomach sampling plan in the North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat.

New data collection of interest for end-users highlighted at the Liaison meeting were:

- The ISSG EMT made an inventory of already used data collection technologies by MS, e.g., electronic monitoring, Machine Learning development, electronic measuring boards eDNA etc. In addition, the ISSG examined possibilities for a shared machine learning database

RCG activities (ToR 3)

(pictures or video footage of fish and shellfish) to be made available for participating MS to develop machine learning algorithms for species identification.

- The ISSG Stomach sampling finished a stomach sampling plan, methods and manuals for the regionally coordinated stomach sampling plan in the North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat.
- The SmartDots tool which is a platform for quality assurance of biological parameters as input for stock assessment.
- In addition, the genetics sampling for stock assessment will be coordinated in three different ISSGs: genetic analysis of collected stomach contents will be included in ISSG Stomach sampling, eDNA will be included in ISSG EMT and tissue samples for stock identification studies will be included in ISSG Surveys.
- The ISSG on métier and transversal variables issues manages the reference list of métier codes, coordinates and advises regarding the new métier codes requested to ensure that it follows agreed principles on a pan-regional level. The ISSG is coordinating and advising on the métier code reference list between the different RCGs (NANSEA, Baltic, Med&BS, Large Pelagics, Long Distance Fisheries) and this list is used by end-users (STECF FDI, ICES RDBES, ICES WGBYC, ICES VMS/Logbook data calls). The STECF FDI have requested the full time series (2013-2022) updated with new métier codes, and the ICES VMS/Logbook data call also requested the full time series (2009-2022) with new codes in 2023. The RCGs have the final responsibility of the reference list of métier codes for their region. Requests for new métier codes should be sent to the ISSG, who will be in contact with relevant RCG chairs before final approval. Communication with third countries can be done via ICES or directly.

The ISSGs for 2023/2024 were presented, and it was discussed to coordinate pan-regionally with other RCGs where relevant to keep in line.

The ISSG 'End users' are keeping in contact with the main end users (i.e., ICES and DG MARE) via meetings during the year to keep updated and exchange and follow up on recommendations. From the RCG side, the recommendations and decisions are managed through an excel table. ICES is managing the recommendations to/from ICES in a GitHub project where it is possible to keep track of the recommendations and comments, and a channel to keep each other updated throughout the year. A meeting was arranged by ICES to sense check recommendations from ICES expert groups to RCGs. Additionally, annual information meetings with end users (ICES and COM) are held usually in March, to ensure cooperation.

During the RCG technical meeting, the RCG role in relation to third countries was discussed, and it was agreed that the communication is mainly taking place through e.g., ICES. This is also reflected in the update of the RCG Mandate and Remits document in relation to RDBES data quality checks, as the RCG can only be responsible for checking data from EU MS in relation to RCG work, that e.g., will be used for RWP tables.

The RCG chairs also followed up on the questionnaire regarding any factors disrupting data collection, e.g., covid, war in Ukraine etc. Heatmaps and supplementary plots showing the impact on data collection were prepared, and feedback from the year 2022 was presented at the RCG end users meeting in March 2023. Overall, the trend is moving towards less impact compared to 2020 and 2021. DG MARE informed that they are currently planning to develop an online tool for real-time warning if sampling from commercial fisheries or surveys is disrupted by any factor, and it was suggested that the RCGs could cooperate with DG MARE on this initiative. Therefore, it was decided that the questionnaire on impact factors designed by the RCG will not be continued.

Discussion & feedback:

The RDBES priorities were discussed and it was highlighted that this is done under WGRDBESGOV. It was further discussed if the LM should issue on a recommendation on the variables of the EU MAP table 6 becoming mandatory in the new control regulation. A representative from the Commission

RCG activities (ToR 3)

replied that the details in the control regulation will be in the implementation act and that the MS scientist should ensure that the variables needed for the EU MAP are highlighted by MS and by RCGs as these details have not been decided yet.

4.1.4 RCG Med&BS

During the last year, work in five intersessional groups (ISSG) was carried out, mainly focusing on developing the Regional Work Plan. RCG Med&BS experts also participated in ISSGs from other regions.

Highlights in RCG activities relevant to end-users

- 1) Regarding the data calls, it is highlighted that before any modification is done in the Med&BS data call, the RCG Med&BS should be informed.
- 2) Due to the increasing number of data calls, the RCG considered relevant to reconvene the end users group to facilitate the managing of the increasing workload of MS.
- 3) New data checks have been developed and it is recommended that MS use them.
- 4) The effects of the implementation of the Marine Action Plan should take into consideration the RFMOs of the area (GFCM, ICCAT), and clear guidelines on how MS can communicate activities outside DCF need to be developed.
- 5) Regarding the surveys, new type of sampling could lead to a modification in the data submitted.

Discussion & feedback:

There were questions during the meeting to what extent the RDBFIS could improve the data call load for the MS. The RDBFIS coordinator will consult the RCG Med&BS on the draft RDBFIS data call, before launching it officially.

4.1.5 RCG ECON

RCG ECON reconvened in Brussels from 5th – 8th June in a hybrid meeting. RCG ECON discussed a large variety of topics. First of all, the outcomes of the 4 ISSG groups were discussed: Fish Processing; Regional work plan; Evaluation of tangible and intangible capital values; and the Effects of alternative segmentation. These discussions resulted in an agreed draft of the RWP, to be proposed to the NCs during the decision meeting in September. Moreover, the ISSGs resulted in improved guidance for the MS about the variables to be collected for data calls and the information to be reported in the NWP and AR. Other important topics that were discussed included the further development of the quality assurance framework in the coming years including better guidelines for quality reporting/evaluation, the ongoing work on minimizing double reporting on fishing activity variables i.e., the integration of the FDI and AER data calls and the development of the extension of the social data collection and reporting on National and Community profiles. For this last point intensive cooperation with STECF and ICES is needed to take this forward, taking into account both end user needs and practical data collection considerations. Because of the increasing interest in energy consumption, the group discussed options to inquire how the data collection could facilitate this information need. As a result of the discussions, RCG ECON 2023 suggested 5 workshops for 2023-2024 including further work on 1) Alternative fleet segmentation, 2) Developing quality assessment system, 3) Raising transversal data from FDI data call for the AER report, 4) Exchanging experiences on data collection and estimation of the energy consumption and 5) Valuation of intangible assets. Dr. Irene Tzouramani was elected as the new Co-chair for the next two years.

RCG activities (ToR 3)

Discussion & feedback:

There was some discussion on the additional information that might be needed if a harmonization with the FDI data call is required. It was suggested that this could be explored as a Workshop on transversal data, including the RCG ECON and FDI.

4.1.6 ISSG Diadromous species

The ISSG Diadromous Fish held its annual meeting virtually in May 23rd 2023 with 24 experts from 15 different countries. The group discussed several issues and topics associated with diadromous fish data collection, that were raised by participating experts or that were derived from RCG-related work and ICES EG workshops and meetings. Data used in assessments, end-user needs and also data storage on ICES servers as well as opportunities for regional work plans were topic of high priority during this year's meeting. Presentations during the meeting held by ICES end-users WGNAS, WGEEL, WGBAST and GFCM eel project gave updates on their current state of play as well as informal feedbacks on data needs in current assessment. Additionally, a presentation on the structure and capabilities of the ICES-hosted RDBES data storage system was held in order to find solutions for central storage of DCF-collected data for diadromous species.

WGBAST reported no urgent updates or issues. WGNAS presented background information on the new life cycle model development for North Atlantic salmon, that currently undergoes a benchmark process until the end of 2023. This model tracks the abundance of fish through time and life stages from eggs to adults that return to spawn in their homewater after one or two sea winters spent at sea for all stock units (SU) in northern Europe, southern Europe and North America (total 25 SU) and can be officially used for assessment, multiple years forecast and catch advice in 2024 (WGNAS 2024, full assessment year). With regards to eel, WGEEL gave an update on the current stock advice and stock assessment approaches and presented a glimpse into possible future assessment methodologies. Also, an update was given regarding current data explorations analyses of individual and group metrics, collected in line with DCF. WGEEL is still in the process to develop an assessment model for the eel stock with additional input parameters to the currently used recruitment time-series. For this, outcomes from SUDOANG but also the Workshop of future eel advice (WKFEA) propose a shift to a spatial and thus more holistic stock assessment model for the European eel, which would be able to incorporate abundance and density data of also later continental life stages. This offers opportunities to cope with spatial and regional differences in fishing regimes, productivity but also fish-quality data and is thus able to provide for estimates on the stock on both, EMU (EU) and whole stock level (ICES). In order to provide for the necessary steps to continue the development of the model, assess data sources and initiate the respective infra structure, the group has recently submitted a project proposal and applied for funding.

The subject of centrally hosting data collected in line with DCF on the infrastructure of ICES databases (e.g., RDBES, DATRAS, RDBFIS etc) was also discussed within the ISSG as well as between ISSG Diadromous and the respective ICES end-users. RDBES is, in general, not adapted to store data on diadromous species, but some developments have already been made to include commercial and recreational salmon and sea trout data in the landing table. New categories such as "Freshwater name", "Fishing area category" and other metrics have been added to accommodate the needs for information on eel landings in inland waters. However, WGEEL is in contact with ICES and is actively working on a solution for salmon and sea trout. In order to store eel data, additional adaptations (such as creating new tables and hierarchies) will be needed, which takes time. Generally, WGNAS and WGEEL have developed and currently use own specific databases, that host data beyond DCF-collected data, for their assessment needs.

Tapani Pakarinen has co-chaired the group since 2020 and will resign by the end of this year. A new co-chair will be selected and take over beginning in 2024.

RCG activities (ToR 3)

Discussion & feedback:

Regarding data storing of eel data, it was discussed that it is probably not the best solution to store the eel data in either the RDBES, RDBFIS or the DATRAS, as these databases are presently not optimal for the purpose and there is already a database in place, which is fit for purpose. The only challenge is that this database is hosted by an institute instead of an international body. A solution could be to host the presently used database on an ICES server, as long as accessibility for MS is granted. However, although a designated database for the eel data would be the optimal solution there will still be an annual RDBES data call for landings and effort data. RDBES does not yet have all the capabilities to capture commercial eel fishery conducted in inland waters presently. It still needs to be solved if this solution is also acceptable for RCG Med&BS.

4.2 The 2023 RCGs - specific recommendations to be discussed at the Liaison Meeting and proposal for future intersessional work and streamlining work between RCGs (ToR 3A)

4.2.1 RCG Long Distance Fisheries

Recommendations:

No formal recommendations were proposed by the RCG LDF 2023.

The group discussed suggestion from STECF EWG 23-08 that MS should report the achievements under multilateral agreements in their respective Annual Reports, even when that particular MS did not conduct the respective sampling. In contrast, the RCG LDF recommends that only the MS that conducted the sampling under a multilateral agreement should report on the achievements (i.e., in order to avoid multiple counting of samples) and the MSs participating in the agreement, but not having conducted the sampling, refer to the MS' Annual Report being responsible for the sampling. The RCG LDF also suggests that the guidance on reporting achievements under multilateral agreements in the Annual Reports should be revised to clearly refer to the MS having conducted the sampling. The matter was further presented and discussed at STECF Plenary 23-02. The STECF took the same position as the RCG LDF and recommended that only the MS having conducted the sampling should report the achievements and the other MS(s) participating in the agreement should refer to the AR of the Member State responsible for sampling and that the AR submission guidance should be amended accordingly to clarify the reporting obligations.

Decisions:

For Decision Meeting in September 2023 – approval by the relevant NCs:

- The proposed agreements on the extension of the CECAF and SPRFMO Multilateral Agreements.
- Approval of Maksims Kovsars (LVA) unanimously elected by the Group as the new chair of the RCG LDF.

Discussion points:

The RCG LDF is in many ways a good example on a RWP as a common sampling has been agreed and one country is conducting the sampling on behalf of all MS. However, some challenges were highlighted with the reporting, as one MS is reporting but only comparing the result with the flag states numbers of trips/ vessel etc. This needs to be aligned. A way forward would be to include the total numbers in brackets in the column for comments.

RCG activities (ToR 3)

4.2.2 RCG Large Pelagics

The Large pelagics RCG had the following recommendations and decisions to be put forward.

Recommendations (those not relevant to end-users are shown in grey):

- Recommendation 01. Transport/Movement of samples listed under CITES.
Ongoing issue since 2019, which has remained unresolved. Biological samples (mainly sensitive by-catch species) are not allowed to be transported or shipped owing to CITES protocol. Recommended to reactive the former recommendation from 2019 on this issue with support from the E.U. Commission to agree upon an exception on samples movements from CITES.
- Recommendation 02. Common Sampling Approach for EM
- Recommendation 03. CKMR implementation plan
Implementation plan is required in order to obtain a suitable level of sampling for CKMR. This proposed genomics tool requires a large sampling programme to be useable as a stock assessment method by the RFMO. This will therefore necessitate coordination between national sampling schemes and the DCF. Additionally, coordination with ICCAT on standardized procedure for this sampling will be needed.
- Recommendation 04. Data requirements and data transmission issues
- Recommendation 05. ISSG Métiers and transversal issues.
- Recommendation 06. ISSG Recreational Fisheries.
- Recommendation 07. Pan-regional ISSG Mediterranean Sea Large Pelagics
- Recommendation 08. NC Attendance of RCG LP Technical Meetings.
- Recommendation 09. RWP – Roadmap

Decisions:

In addition, the decisions listed below were forwarded to the Decision meeting 2023.

- Selection of a common data format (ISSG RDB Development)

In order to move forward and propose a partial solution, a reduction in the level of ambition was suggested by the ISSG during the TM. Instead of trying to select a unique database, the group focused on selecting a single database format. During the meeting feedback from ISSG RDBES on the matter was received. According to this ISSG, this proposed solution would be very similar to the way that recreational data is currently being approached. The working group associated have proposed a format for recreational data which similar to the RDBES commercial catch and effort data format (data call with a submission of excel files in the proposed format sent to the RDBES system). RDBFIS did not provide feedback on this solution during the RCG LP T.M. 2023. In any case further development will be necessary in all the different scenarios to fit with all the LP fisheries specificities. However, it was noted that the RDBES format is included (at least several hierarchies) in the RDBFIS database, which mimics these RDBES hierarchies.

There were some concerns by MS on with the added workload which could be incurred, if RDBES is ultimately selected over RDBFIS, to which some member states contribute to. In addition, some MS requested further information with regards to the integration of this data format into the RFMO's database, given they are the end user of most of the data on large pelagics.

Discussion points:

The Commission stated they would bring the issue with R01 (CITES protocols) to the next ICCAT meeting agenda. For R02 there was a suggestion for electronic monitoring to be a pan regional ISSG.

RCG activities (ToR 3)

There was some discussion on how R06 on recreational fishery would be dealt with, as this is both an area specific issue and a pan regional one. However, it is difficult to have the manpower to participate to all meetings. A compromise could be that the first (online) recreational ISSG meeting is held as a pan regional ISSG and the next meetings during 2024 will be by region. The recreational ISSG from the NANSEA/BAL will be responsible for inviting an expert from the LP RCG.

4.2.3 RCG NANSEA/BAL

During the TM 2023, the RCG formulated the recommendations listed below which are relevant for end-users. During the Liaison meeting in agreement with ISSG Diadromous, the recommendation R03 and R08 were reformulated, and R09 was merged with recommendation R08. See RCG NANSEA & Baltic Technical Meeting Report part I for the original recommendations.

Recommendations (those not relevant to end-users are shown in grey):

- R01: Recommendation to ICES WGRDBESGOV to consider how ICES can take over the outputs created by ISSG RDB Overviews for ICES (WGs, Benchmarks). [ICES WGRDBESGOV]
- R02: The RCG recommends that when giving new legislative proposals on fisheries control, the European Commission takes into account that adequate estimation of bycatch rates to meet the conservation objectives of the CFP, requires adequate monitoring of PETS incidental bycatch, adequate data on fishing effort, as well as adequate monitoring of PETS species abundance and distribution. The proposals from the European Commission should include the enforcement for all fishing vessels to report in the relevant catch documents all events of incidental bycatch of PETS, and obligation and enforcement to report fishing effort variables listed in EU-MAP Table 6, in a manner that allows for adequate estimation of fishing effort (see ICES WGBYC reports). [COM]
- R03: It is recommended that the WGRDBESGOV and ICES Secretariat work together to find funding to develop 'RDBES functionalities prioritized'. Among the most important for RCG NANSEA Baltic are FDI export module and inclusion of recreational data. [ICES WGRDBESGOV, ICES Secretariat]
- R04: Request commercial landings and effort data from 2019-2023 in the 2024 RDBES data call. [ICES WGRDBESGOV]
- R05: Provide guidance on the tools to be used to ensure the continuation of scientific monitoring in spatially restricted zones. [DG MARE]
- R06: Each MS to assign at least one expert to participate in ISSG EMT. [NCs]
- R07: Identify and conduct two pilot studies in 2023/2024 (one by NLD and one by DEU) and further harmonize protocol for sampling EU pelagic freezer trawler fleet in dialogue with the NLD and DEU NC [NCs (DE, NL)]
- R08: Explore the feasibility and ensure the resources required for hosting the existing databases which are serving end-user needs of WGEEL in ICES servers [ICES Secretariat, ICES DIG, COM, Non-EU Countries]
- R10: MS participating in IBTS to incorporate not only stomach sampling but also stomach content analysis in the national work plans. [NCs (DE, DK, FR, NL, SE)]
- R11: All MS to include the text about the long-term funding of the Secretariat under Textbox 1.B. Other collection activities in their national work plans. [NCs]

Decisions:

In addition, the decisions listed below were forwarded to the Decision meeting (those not relevant to end-users are shown in grey)

- D01: NCs to approve the updates for the 'Mandates and Remits' document specifying the roles of RCGs vs. ICES
- D02: Renewal cost-sharing agreement for IBWSS Survey
- D03: Renewal cost-sharing agreement for IESNS Survey
- D04: MS to agree on all Agreements and commitments contained in the Draft RWP Baltic.

RCG activities (ToR 3)

- D05: MS to agree on all Agreements and commitments contained in the Draft RWP NANSEA.
- D06: Agree on proposed ISSGs to work during season 2023-2024 and ensure that experts and manpower is assigned to ISSG work.

The ISSG RWP under the RCG NANSEA and Baltic has followed up on the Regional Work Plans that were developed under the Fishn'Co project. It was decided that the RWP is a 'book of agreements' and the agreements are highlighted in agreement boxes. The RWPs were sent to NCs for comments in July, and many comments were received by the end of August 2023. Most of them were incorporated, and a new version was forwarded to NCs on 13th September. The RWPs will be submitted to STECF for evaluation on 15th October 2023.

Discussion points:

Further potential pan regional ISSGs were discussed: Metier, SSF, Stomach sampling, EMT, Diadromous, besides the Recreational ISSG. However, as with the ISSG Recreational there can be regional differences and a suggestion would be to invite other region RCG chairs for the first online meeting. Regarding the ISSG Stomach sampling, the Med&BS will invite the NANSEA&Baltic.

4.2.4 RCG Med&BS

Recommendations:

Five recommendations were highlighted by RCG Med& BS:

- The RCG Med&BS should be included in the transferring of biological data from Med&BS to FDI.
- The roles of GFCM and ICCAT and the existing RFMOs guidelines to be taken into account in the Marine Action Plan (MAP).
- To agree on how to include work related to the MAP done by other projects (not DCF) in the WP. During the discussion, Text Box 1B of the WP was proposed as a possible solution. More discussions are expected in the joint special group in support of the MAP meeting on 6 October 2023.
- Need to facilitate the management of data calls. The RCG Med&BS will reconvene the end user subgroup and DG MARE will liaise with different end users.
- The roadmap of the RWP that will lead to submission to COM after the Decision meeting.

Discussion points:

The RCG Med&BS stressed the increasing amount of data calls and how to find commonalities to help MS in the submission of data. Although, in the mid-term the RDBFIS can address this need, still, a short term solution is required.

4.2.5 RCG ECON

Recommendations:

- Fish processing to include another turnover variable in the future DCF / EU MAP.
- Need to keep track of all recommendations.
- STECF and ICES WGs to take into consideration the practical aspects of social data collection, data availability and timelines.
- Costs of data collection has increased due to inflation, so there needs to be special consideration if new variables are to be included.
- Draft RWP to be submitted this year.

RCG activities (ToR 3)

Discussion points:

It was discussed how to retain an overview of the recommendations that were made during previous technical meetings and ISSGs. The RCG NANSEA&Baltic recommendations are retained in a system from ICES and an Excel sheet which can be used and in the new Secweb 2.0 proposal the development of such a system has been foreseen.

The upcoming ISSG on raising the transversal variables for Annual Economic Report for the EU fleet were discussed and this group will be organised in close cooperation with the chairs of the STECF EWG on FDI. As a result, this group will build on the outcomes of this EWG.

The planned ISSG on the alternative segmentation will work in close cooperation with the ISSG Metier in order to prevent duplication of work and to streamline the ToRs of the two ISSGs.

4.3 RCG data calls – overview of how MS responded and discussion on future use and further exploration by the RCGs (ToR 3B)

4.3.1 RCG Long Distance Fisheries

In 2022, the RCG LDF stated that: “As a baseline, from 2023 onwards, only the MS contributing to the relevant areas under the remit of the RCG LDF (based on the 2022 response) will be asked yearly, while the data call is expanded to all non-landlocked MS once every three years. The next data call addressing all non-landlocked MS will be in 2025”. In line with this statement, a selection of MS was addressed with the 2023 call. The data call requests to upload the data into the RCG Regional Database (RDB), hosted and maintained by ICES in Copenhagen. As in previous years, a request for an active response indicating the absence of long-distance fisheries was also included in the data call and a specific request to also upload data when only a few vessels are active in the region. Some contributions were updated beyond the deadline for various reasons; however, this was not considered a major issue as the work could be completed in time. MS are reminded that data can be updated throughout the year, and MS are encouraged to do so where applicable. In particular, some MS still may update historic data.

4.3.2 RCG Large Pelagics

RCG LP does not currently have a data call.

4.3.3 RCG NANSEA/BAL

The RCG issued a data call for RDB data, which all MS responded to. In 2024 the RCG data call in March will be for the RDBES format, and the data will be used to update table 2.1 in the RWPs with the most recent reference data.

4.3.4 RCG Med&BS

All MS responded to the RCG Med&BS data call and information was used during the group. In the medium term, this process will be simplified thanks to the RDBFIS. Regarding data calls, it is necessary that the RCG Med&BS is informed for any modification in the Med&BS data call in advance. The effects of the implementation of the Marine Action Plan should take into consideration the RFMOs of the area (GFCM, ICCAT) and clear guidelines on how MS can communicate activities outside DCF need to be developed. Due to the increasing number of data calls, the RCG considered relevant to

RCG activities (ToR 3)

reconvene the end users group, to facilitate the managing of the increasing workload of MS. As mentioned before, this workload will be reduced after the implementation of the RDBFIS.

A RWP draft was agreed and will be submitted for review, although there are still points that would need future development (such as PETs by-catch monitoring programmes).

4.3.5 RCG ECON

RCG ECON does not organise data calls.

4.4 Chairmanship and venues (ToR 3C)

4.4.1 Overview of chairs, dates and venues for 2024

RCG LP

Chairs: Jurgen Mifsud (MAL) and co-chair from PRT TBD. Please note that Portugal raised the issue that they may not be able to chair. Should this be the case, Portugal will arrange for another MS to chair in 2024.

Dates: Preliminary dates for the next RCG LP TM are the last week of June 2024

Venue: in Portugal to be determined (Algarve or Azores)

RCG LDF

Chair: Maksims Kovsars (LVA)

Dates: Early July 2024 (the week 2–5 of July or alternatively 9–12 July)

Venue: Spain kindly offered to host this meeting in Cadiz or Tenerife (TBD). As a back-up options, Poland and The Netherlands also flagged the offer to host next RCG LDF meeting.

RCG NANSEA

Chairs: Josefine Egekvist (DNK) and Rita Vasconcelos (PRT)

Dates: Preliminary dates for the next RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic TM are 11–14 June 2024 for the physical meeting and 4 June 2024 for the virtual one-day meeting.

Venue: in Bremerhaven, Germany.

RCG Baltic

Chair: Maciej Adamowicz (POL)

Dates and venue: same as RCG NANSEA

RCG Med&BS

Chairs: Emmanuel Tessier (FRA) and Charis Charilaou (CYP)

Dates: Preliminary dates 26–30 of Aug 2024

Venue: France, exact location TBD

RCG activities (ToR 3)

RCG ECON

Chairs: Hans van Oostenbrugge (NLD) and Irene Tzouramani (GRC)

Dates: May 2024

Venue: in Greece to be determined (Athens)

Further, RCG ECON suggested several ISSGs;

RCG ECON ISSG: Developing Quality assessment system - current quality assurance framework, reporting and best practices

Preliminary ToRs:

- Review the quality reports from selected MS WPs in order to compare them and identify best practices
- Discuss the elements in current DCF quality reporting and compare them in relation to the ESS handbook for quality reports and the ESS Reference Metadata Reporting Standards
- Set up of a Quality Assessment System and suggest assessment criteria to properly evaluate the QRs.

Chairs: Evelina Sabatella & TBD

Dates: Autumn 2023 (3 days)

Venue: Italy, TBC

RCG ECON ISSG: WS on raising transversal data from FDI data call for the AER report purposes

Preliminary ToRs:

- Testing if the transversal data from FDI can be used as input for the AER
- Discussion on the timing of the data calls. Is the preliminary transversal data submitted in February necessary? Only capacity is mandatory to submit as preliminary data.

Chairs: Zeynep Hekim & Jordi Guillen/Jarno Virtanen?

Dates: November 2023 (TBC), 2-3 days (hybrid)

Venue: Ispra, TBC

RCG ECON ISSG: Exchanging experiences on data collection and estimation of the energy consumption

Preliminary ToRs:

- Sharing the experiences and best practices on the data collection and estimation of the energy consumption for the fleet.
- The workshop should also consult end users to understand if more detailed data is needed in order to respond to the broadening data needs of the end users.

Chair: TBD

RCG activities (ToR 3)

Dates: TBD

Venue: TBD

4.5 Future steps in RCG pan-regional and intersessional work (i.e., regional work plans): exchange of ideas and discussion (ToR 3D)

4.5.1 Regional Work Plans

The RCG Baltic, NANSEA, LP, ECON and Med&BS have developed Regional Work Plans (RWP). During the LM the need for further coordination and information between RCGs on the RWP was discussed. Presently there has been some coordination between the RCG Baltic, NANSEA and Med&BS. For some RCGs only smaller parts of the activities were considered relevant for including in the RWP.

For some RCGs the RWPs have already been followed-up and discussed in STECF (STECF-18-18, STECF-19-18, STECF-20-18). In 2021 (STECF-21-17), one of the main suggestions was to focus on official RWPs 2025-2027 to be approved by the end of 2024. The two grant projects (Fishn'Co and Streamline) in charge of developing RWPs in the NANSEA/ Baltic and MED&BS, respectively took up the challenge and, at the end of their term (March 2023), passed on the outcomes to the pan-regional ISSG on Developing RWP (ISSG/RWP) of the RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic and to the RCG Med & BS. The ISSG/RWP reviewed the proposed RWPs before initiating, with the help of RCG chairs, a large consultation to National Correspondents (NC) with the purpose of informing them on the contents of the RWPs and seeking their feedback.

From the Fishn'Co and Streamline projects and throughout the discussions in the ISSG/RWP, it was evident that there were different expectations on the content of the RWPs (format and substance). This may have been due to the different coordination types, depending on the thematic and the related needs, combined with the novelty of the RWP concept

Although there are still parts under development that may not seem at present ambitious enough, the RWPs have proven to be a very efficient means to help ISSG expressing clearly their main activities and draft the agreements reached. The existence of the first 'official' RWPs (2025-2027) together with RCG public webpages will lay the foundations for the future.

5 GOVERNANCE (TOR 4)

5.1 Follow-up on RCG Rules of Procedures developments in each of the RCGs (ToR 4A)

5.1.1 RCG Long Distance Fisheries

In 2021, common RoPs for RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic were adopted by the NC decision meeting in September. Following this decision, the RCG LDF reviewed the option to align its RoPs with the common RoPs to avoid the situation where one MS as a member of two or more RCGs would need to adhere to a different set of rules. The Group concluded that the current situation is not causing any conflicts for the MS.

5.1.2 RCG Large Pelagics

No changes were made in 2022/2023.

5.1.3 RCG NANSEA/BAL

No changes were made in 2022/2023.

5.1.4 RCG Med&BS

No changes were made in 2022/2023.

5.1.5 RCG ECON

No changes were made in 2022/2023.

5.2 Structure of RCGs and cooperation. Lessons learned from combined 2022 RCGs. Tentative changes in structure and in RCG number (ToR 4B)

5.2.1 RCGs Secretariat situation and funding

A questionnaire regarding the future funding of the RCGs Secretariat was circulated to MS. However, the questionnaire results were received shortly before the LM, and there was no time for an analysis.

Instead of presenting the questionnaire's results, the group discussed about the support received from the RCGs Secretariat during 2023 and how the existence of RCGs Secretariat has facilitated or not the RCGs work. All the RCG groups expressed their positive feedback. RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic stated that without the help of the Secretariat, an extra RCG chair would be needed. The Secretariat support has materialized in various ways, and RCG chairs all agreed that the main points were:

- Facilitating the communication as chairs and members of the working group
- Facilitating the technical meeting,
- Helping with the reporting, taking notes during the meeting
- Helping with the organization of the ISSG and workshop and taking notes during the meeting.
- Webpage serving as a platform for important documents
- Issue about pan regional should go through the Secretariat. They have the overview of the different groups
- Contact for the chairs is very important

6 AOB

6.1 RCG LDF ISSG on SPRFMO Observer Programme Accreditation

The MRAG (accreditation evaluator) informed the RCG LDF during the meeting that the accreditation has been achieved. Indicating that MRAG have accepted the EU programme for the observers' accreditation.

7 ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

The 20th Liaison Meeting was chaired by Marie Storr-Paulsen (Denmark) and the group met with the following participants:

Name	Country	Role / Affiliation	Email	Type presence
Marie Storr-Paulsen	DK	Chair	msp@aqua.dtu.dk	Physical
Federico De Rossi		End user - GFCM	federico.derossi@fao.org	Physical
Francisco Alemany		End user – ICCAT	francisco.alemany@iccat.int	Online
Carlos Mayor		End user – ICCAT	carlos.mayor@iccat.int	Online
Lotte Worsøe Clausen		End user – ICES	lotte.worsoe.clausen@ices.dk	Physical
Henrik Kjems-Nielsen		End user – ICES	henrikkn@ices.dk	Online
Cynthia Fernandez-Diaz		End user - IOTC	Cynthia.FernandezDiaz@fao.org	Online
Pierre Peries		End user - SIOFA	pierre.peries@siofa.org	Online
Christoph Stransky	DE	End user - STECF	christoph.stransky@thuenen.de	Hybrid
Arina Motova		End user - STECF	Arina.Motova@seafish.co.uk	Online
Maciej Adamowicz	PL	RCG BAL chair	madamowicz@mir.gdynia.pl	Physical
Heiddi Pokki	FI	RCG ECON co-chair	Heidi.Pokki@luke.fi	Online
Hans van Oostenbrugge	NL	RCG ECON co-chair	hans.vanoostenbrugge@wur.nl	Physical
Irene Tzouramani	GR	RCG ECON incoming chair	tzouramani@elgo.gr	Online
Irek Wójcik	PL	RCG LDF chair	iwojcik@mir.gdynia.pl	Physical
Maksims Kovsars	LV	RCG LDF incoming chair	maksims.kovsars@bior.lv	Physical
Hugo Maxwell	IE	RCG LP chair	Hugo.Maxwell@Marine.ie	Physical
Jurgen A. Mifsud	MT	RCG LP co-chair	jurgen.a.mifsud@gov.mt	Physical
Beatriz Guijarro	ES	RCG MED&BS co-chair	beatriz.guijarro@ieo.csic.es	Physical
Charis Charilaou	CY	RCG MED&BS incoming chair	ccharilaou@dfmr.moa.gov.cy	Online
Dália Reis	PT	RCG NANSEA co-chair	dalia.cc.reis@azores.gov.pt	Physical
Josefine Egekvist	DK	RCG NANSEA co-chair	jsv@aqua.dtu.dk	Physical
Arnaud Peyronnet	EU	DG MARE, Acting Head of Unit C3	arnaud.peyronnet@ec.europa.eu	Physical
Monika Sterczewska	EU	DG MARE, Unit C3	monika.sterczewska@ec.europa.eu	Physical
Leonie O´Dowd	EU	DG MARE, Unit C3	Leonie.O'DOWD@ec.europa.eu	Physical
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Rocío Suarez Jimenez	EU	CINEA	Rocio.SUAREZ-JIMENEZ@ec.europa.eu	Online

Annexes

Name	Country	Role / Affiliation	Email	Type presence
Zeynep Hekim	EU	JRC	hekim.zeynep@ec.europa.eu	Online
Stefanos Kavadas	GR	RDBFIS II grant leader	stefanos@hcmr.gr	Online
Els Torrele	BE	WGRDBESGOV chair	els.torrele@ilvo.vlaanderen.be	Online
Rosa Maria Fernandez	ES	RCG´s Secretariat	rfernandez@cetmar.org	Physical
Susana Rivero	ES	RCG´s Secretariat	secretariat@fisheries-rcg.eu	Online
Marko Freese	DE	ISSG Diadromous	marko.freese@thuenen.de	Online
Myrto Ioannou	CY	NC Cyprus	mioannou@dfmr.moa.gov.cy	Online
Dominik Škoda	SK	NC Slovakia	dominik.skoda@land.gov.sk	Online
Anja Gadgård Boye	DK	NC Denmark	angabo@aqua.dtu.dk	Physical

ANNEX 2: LIAISON MEETING 2023 AGENDA

Venue:

Borschette Conference Centre, Rue Froissart, 36, 1040 Brussels

Timetable:

Time	Duration	Topic	TOR	Presenter
Tuesday, September 26				
9:00	15 min	Meeting room open		
9:15	15 min	Walk-in & getting ready		
9:30	15 min	Welcome by the Commission	ToR 1A	COM opening speech: Arnaud Peyronnet
9:45	15 min	Welcome and introduction Welcome, house rules, tour de table, adoption of the agenda, format of the report, notification of AOB	ToR 1A	Chair
10:00	20 min	End user needs and interaction: presentations from end users	ToR 1B	IOTC (Cynthia Fernandez-Diaz)
	5 min	Discussion and feed back from plenary		
10:25	20 min	Highlights in RCG activities (relevant to end users and other RCGs)	ToR 3	RCG Large Pelagics RCG chair (Hugo)
	5 min	Questions and discussion in plenary		
10:50	15 min	End user needs and interaction: presentations from end users	ToR 1B	SIOFA (Pierre Peries)
	5 min	Questions and discussion in plenary		
11:10	15 min	<i>Health break</i>		
11:25	20 min	End user needs and interaction: presentations from end users	ToR 1B	NAFO (Tom Blasdale, NAFO Secretariat)
	5 min	Discussion and feed back from plenary		

Fisheries Data Collection – 20th Liaison Meeting – Report

Annexes

11:50	20 min	Highlights in RCG activities (relevant to end users and other RCGs)	ToR 3	RCG Long distance RCG chair (Irek Wojcik)
	5 min	Discussion and feed back from plenary		
12:15	15 min	End user needs and interaction: presentations from end users & and update on RDBES	ToR 1B/ToR2	ICES (Lotte Worsøe Clausen)
	5 min	Discussion and feed back from plenary		
12:35	20 min	Highlights in RCG activities (relevant to end users and other RCGs). Discuss the procedures for third countries and end-users (metier group).	ToR 3	RCG NANSEA/BAL RCG chairs (Dalia Reis, Josefine Egekvist, Maciej Adamowicz)
	5 min	Discussion and feed back from plenary		
13:00	90 min	<i>LUNCH</i>		
14:30	20 min	End user needs and interaction: presentations from end users	ToR 1B	GFCM (Federico DeRossi)
	5 min	Discussion and feed back from plenary		<i>for ICES</i>
14:55	20 min	Update on RDBFIS	ToR 3	Stefanos Kavadas, HCMR
	5 min	Questions and discussion in plenary		
15:20	20 min	Highlights in RCG activities (relevant to end users and other RCGs)	ToR 3	RCG MED&BS Chairs (Beatriz Guijaro)
	5 min	Questions and discussion in plenary		
15:45	15 min	<i>Coffee break</i>		
16:00	15 min	End user needs and interaction: presentations from end users	ToR 1B	STECF / JRC (Christoph Stransky / Arina Motova) with JRC contribution
	5 min	Questions and discussion in plenary		
16:20	15 min	Feedback on FDI data call (metier issues, ad-hoc Med&BS, AER)		<i>Zeynep Hekim will be present to participate in discussions</i>
	5 min	Questions and discussion in plenary		

Fisheries Data Collection – 20th Liaison Meeting – Report

Annexes

16:35	15 min	Highlights in RCG activities (relevant to end users and other RCGs)	ToR 3	RCG ECON RCG chairs (Heidi Pokki, Hans van Oostenbrugge, Irene Tzouramani)
	5 min	Questions and discussion in plenary		
16:55	5 min	Summary of the day		<i>Venetia Kostopoulou / plenary</i>
17:00		Closure of the meeting		Chair
Time	Duration	Topic	TOR	Presenter
Wednesday, September 27				
8:30	30 min	Meeting room open		
9:00	10 min	Start of the day		Chair
9:10	15 min	The 2023 RCGs - specific recommendations to be discussed at the Liaison Meeting and proposal for future intersessional work. Follow-up of Decision Making meeting (if any) and streamlining work between RCGs, RCG Data calls overview how MS responded	ToR 3A	RCG Large Pelagics RCG chair (Hugo Maxwell, Jurgen Mifsud)
	5 min	Questions and discussion in plenary		
9:30	15 min	The 2023 RCGs - specific recommendations to be discussed at the Liaison Meeting and proposal for future intersessional work. Follow-up of Decision Making meeting (if any) and streamlining work between RCGs; RCG Data calls overview how MS responded	ToR 3A	RCG Long distance RCG chair (Irek Wojcik)
	5 min	Questions and discussion in plenary		
9:50	15 min	The 2023 RCGs - specific recommendations to be discussed at the Liaison Meeting and proposal for future intersessional work. Follow-up of Decision Making meeting (if any) and streamlining work between RCGs; RCG Data calls overview how MS responded	ToR 3A	RCG MED&BS Chairs (Beatriz Guijaro)
	5 min	Questions and discussion in plenary		

Fisheries Data Collection – 20th Liaison Meeting – Report

Annexes

10:10	15 min	The 2023 RCGs - specific recommendations to be discussed at the Liaison Meeting and proposal for future intersessional work. Follow-up of Decision Making meeting (if any) and streamlining work between RCGs; RCG Data calls overview how MS responded.	ToR 3A	RCG NANSEA/BAL RCG chairs (Dalia Reis, Josefine Egekvist, Maciej Adamowicz)
	5 min	Questions and discussion in plenary		
10:30	15 min	The 2023 RCGs - specific recommendations to be discussed at the Liaison Meeting and proposal for future intersessional work. Follow-up of Decision Making meeting (if any) and streamlining work between RCGs; RCG Data calls overview how MS responded	ToR 3A	RCG ECON RCG chairs (Heidi Pokki, Hans van Oostenbrugge, Irene Tzouramani)
	5 min	Questions and discussion in plenary		
10:50	15 min	<i>Health break</i>		
11:15	15 min	Main outcomes ISSG Diadromous and its position as ISSG	ToR 4B	ISSG diadromous (Marko Freese)
	5 min	Discussion/General conclusions from this session		
11:35	15 min	Furture of the RCG sec. input on Structure of RCGs and cooperation. Lessons learned from combined RCGs. Update 2023 and plan for 2024	ToR 4B	SECWEB, RCG chairs
	5 min	Discussion/General conclusions from this session		
11:55	20 min	Future steps in RCG regional work plans & timelines	ToR 3D	RCG chairs
12:15	15 min	Structure of RCGs, cooperation and new panregional ISSGs. Lessons learned from combined RCGs and Decision Meeting. Conclude on set-up for 2024.	ToR 4B	LP, LDF, MED&BS, NANSEABAL, ECON
12:30	15 min	Announcement of new chairs (where relevant), next meeting(s) and venues. Discussion on availability of chairs and possible solutions.	ToR 3C	LP, LDF, MED&BS, NANSEABAL, ECON
	5 min	Discussion/General conclusions from this session		
		Additional time for discusssion (if needed)	ToR 5	?
12:50	5 min	Summary of the day		<i>Venetia Kostopoulou / plenary</i>
12:55	15 min	<i>Closure of the meeting by COM and chair.</i>		Chair, COM

ANNEX 3: OVERVIEW OF ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

An overview of all recommendations from the different RCGs can be found on the 2023 Decision Meeting report available on the RCGs website:

https://www.fisheries-rcg.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Report_RCGs-Decision-Meeting_2023_final.pdf



**Fisheries Data Collection
20th Liaison Meeting**

**Meeting between the Chairs of RCGs, key end users, European
Commission DG Mare and JRC**