



RCG's Secretariat



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RCGs Secretariat

Functions and working protocols

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RCG's Secretariat – Functions and working protocols

1. Overview

The RCGs Secretariat was first established as a pilot in 2020, as part of the Regional Grant SecWeb “Developing mechanisms to support the planning and execution of administrative tasks and the branding and online visibility of the Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs), with the aim to establish a long-term supportive structure”. In 2023, upon finalization of SecWeb grant, Member States and the European Commission decided to continue the RCGs secretariat services in a short-term business scenario.

The Secretariat provides administrative support to the Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs), coordinating, facilitating, and liaising within the RCG network, and, in particular, among RCG Chairs, National Correspondents and the European Commission. In addition, the Secretariat is responsible for maintaining and further development the RCGs website and communication strategy.

2. Mandate

The RCGs Secretariat provides administrative support to the RCGs, in particular to the RCGs chairs. The Secretariat also enhances communication within and among the RCGs and engages with all the stakeholders and the general public, positioning the RCGs website as a central element of the communication strategy.

The main objectives of the Secretariat are to:

- Provide support services for the RCGs ensuring efficient, transparent and high-performance administration. This includes assistance in organising the meetings, preparing the reports, establishing and maintaining document management systems.
- Provide administrative and communication support to RCG chairs in their activities.
- Facilitate pan regional coordination across RCGs.
- Increase the visibility of the work and outputs of the RCGs.
- Maintain and update the RCGs website as a key information element

The secretariat has a six-fold mandate, supporting the RCGs: [Baltic](#); Economic Issues ([ECON](#)); Long Distance Fisheries ([LDF](#)); Large Pelagics ([LP](#)); Mediterranean and Black Sea ([Med&BS](#)); and North Atlantic, North Sea and Eastern Arctic ([NANSEA](#)).

3. Functions of the Secretariat – Overview

The Secretariat is responsible for the overall administrative support to whole RCGs network and for developing the RCGs communication strategy and maintaining the [RCGs website](#). Specific functions and tasks are described below.

3.1 Daily regular operations and processes

3.1.1 Daily communication and correspondence

The Secretariat email account secretariat@fisheries-rcg.eu is the main communication channel used to manage requests and consultations received from the RCG network. The requests and consultations from RCG chairs, ISSG chairs, national correspondents, national experts, European Commission, and end users are received by email and duly managed by the Secretariat team.

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3.1.2 *Maintaining basic protocols and organizational procedures*

The Secretariat publishes procedures and protocols on the RCGs website and updates them periodically in collaboration with RCG chairs, namely: Rules of Procedure (RoPs), Terms of Reference (ToRs), mandate and remit of the RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic, and a series of guidance documents.

3.1.3 *Maintaining working tools and repositories*

The Secretariat is responsible for the maintenance of the RCGs virtual working spaces on Teams: [RCG ECON](#), [RCG LDF](#), [RCG LP](#), [RCG MED BS](#), [RCGs NANSEA](#) and [Baltic](#)

Other working tools include event's registration for the meetings, online meeting platform, decision and recommendations databases and questionnaires.

3.1.4 *Supporting consultation processes*

The Secretariat can tailor questionnaires and surveys for the purpose ISSGs work and/or related projects using the EU survey platform or Microsoft forms. The Secretariat is also involved with the associated consultation process, sending the communication to the target public, following up the response rate, etc.

3.1.5 *Communication and dissemination activities*

The communication and dissemination activities are designed to promote visibility and engagement towards the Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs) and the Intersessional Groups. The Secretariat is responsible for the RCGs e-newsletter and the maintenance of social media profiles. The Secretariat reinforces the branding of the RCGs by using the corporate image in all communications, dissemination activities and RCGs documents.

3.1.6 *Manage the Secretariat's legal, finances and staff obligations*

Other regular operations and processes involve managing Secretariat's legal, finances and staff obligations, and drafting the official letters and agendas.

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3.2 Communication support structure: the RCGs website

The [RCGs website](#) has become a central element for the communication and visibility of the RCGs work and outputs.

The website and the fisheries-rcg.eu domain are hosted by the Dinahosting company, through an annual contract. The hosting is located on the server: h11181.dinahosting.com with IP 82.98.178.186

The server configuration to host the website is a LINUX operating system, with a VARNISH. The web page has been developed with WordPress for which it is necessary to have installed a PHP (specifically version 7.4.33) as a programming language and a relational database management system (RDBMS) MariaDB (in its version 10.5).

The current main features of the website system are: 50GB space, of which only 3GB is in use (6%); 309MG monthly data transfer; and two email accounts configured, which can be expanded up to 21.

The Secretariat dedicates effort, time and resources not only to maintain and update the contents of the website, in collaboration with the RCG chairs and ISSG chairs, but also to develop and integrate on the website new features/tools of interest for the RCGs network.

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The key elements of the website that require regular updates and feeds, along with the actions needed and the associated communication flow are described below for clarity.

3.2.1 RCGs sections

The RCGs sections ([Baltic](#); [ECON](#); [LDF](#); [LP](#); [Med&BS](#); [NANSEA](#)) share a common structure: **Scope; Participants; Terms of Reference; Intersessional subgroups; Achievements; Toolbox; Useful links; Latest Reports; Rules of Procedure; Materials; Contact with RCG.**

The Secretariat liaises with respective RCG chairs to update any information on the RCGs sections.

Essential updates	
Dates	(Oct-Nov) – the start of a new RCG cycle
Elements	The RCG contact point(s) might change due to the nomination of a new chair. The status and number of Intersessional Subgroups and the Terms of Reference are dynamic elements that might need updates after the annual meeting. Other elements are more static: Scope, Participants, Rules of Procedures, and Materials.
Actions	Establish communications to define which updates are needed; update the information on the web; inform
Responsible for actions	RCGs Secretariat, RCG chairs

3.2.2 ISSGs section

The RCGs Intersessional subgroups have a dedicated section [ISSGs](#).

This section has a general description explaining **What is the role of the ISSGs** and a dropdown menu with a summary for each ISSG.

Essential updates	
Dates	(Nov-Jan) – ISSGs activate/initiate their work
Elements	ISSG summary: elements like the description and tasks of the ISSG might change; ISSG chair(s) information might need updates
Actions	Refer to ISSG list for any updates after the annual meeting; update the information on the web; inform
Responsible for actions	RCGs Secretariat, ISSG chairs, RCG chairs

3.2.3 RCGs chairs section

This section contains a short bio of the RCG [chairs](#) and [previous chairs](#). With information on their current position, background, their role in the context of RCGs and contact email.

Essential updates	
Dates	Beginning/end of a chair's mandate
Elements	Chair's bio
Actions	Ask the new chair for a bio and a photo, include the bio and the photo on the web, inform. Move the former chair's bio to previous chairs section

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Responsible for actions	RCG Secretariat, RCG chairs
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3.2.4 Info Hub

The Info Hub has several submenus: Library, Stakeholder's database, Agreements, News and Newsletter.

3.2.4.1 Library

Work in progress.

3.2.4.2 Stakeholder's database

The stakeholder's database is a tool designed to streamline communications and enhance transparency in regional coordination. The database includes stakeholders in the Regional Coordination Groups, such as the national correspondents, national experts, RCG and ISSG chairs, end users, and the European Commission.

The stakeholder's database has a front office and a back office, both with secure login.

The stakeholders must first register to access the front office. Once the registration is completed, the stakeholders can input their data into the system. The Secretariat is responsible for validating new registrations.

More information: Tutorial video and User manual.

3.2.4.3 Agreements

The RCGs Multilateral and Bilateral Agreements' Repository serves as a centralised reference source where agreements between Member States on the shared data collection activities are stored.

The RCGs Secretariat liaises with national correspondents to have access to the agreements, and make them available online through the repository.

Essential updates	
Dates	On demand
Elements	Bilateral and multilateral agreements
Actions	Request/Include new agreements on the repository
Responsible for actions	RCG Secretariat, National correspondents

3.2.4.4 News

The News section is a communication channel used to highlight the work and outputs of the RCGs and ISSGs, and related projects.

The RCGs Secretariat communicates with the person in charge of the meeting, workshop, project, or any other event or initiative that is of interest for the news section. The Secretariat provides a template with the highlights of the event that the person in charge is requested to fill in. The Secretariat writes the news item based on these highlights. The content of the news item and accompanying photo are approved by the person in charge prior to the publication.

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Essential updates	
Dates	Meetings, Workshops, any other relevant event
Elements	News feed, photo
Actions	Communication, filling in template with highlights of the event, write the news, get ok to news content and photo, publish news, inform.
Responsible for actions	RCG Secretariat, RCG chairs, ISSG chairs, project coordinators.

3.2.4.5 Newsletter

The newsletter provides an updated insight in the work of the Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs) of the fisheries Data Collection Framework.

We encourage all the stakeholders in the fisheries community to [subscribe to RCGs newsletter](#). The newsletter is distributed using Mailchimp.

The newsletter is issued at least twice a year, capturing two important moments of the RCGs cycle: in May-June (highlighting the intersessional work) and in November (after the Liaison meeting, closing the RCGs cycle).

Essential updates	
Dates	May-June and November
Elements	Newsletter issue
Actions	Issue newsletter twice a year
Responsible for actions	RCGs Secretariat

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3.2.5 Projects

This section [projects](#) is dedicated to initiatives (active and finished) in the scope of strengthening regional cooperation in the area of fisheries data collection.

The RCGs Secretariat is responsible for updating the information related to projects on the website.

3.2.6 Calendar

The [calendar](#) includes meetings of the various RCGs and relevant associated events.

Essential updates	
Dates	All year round
Elements	Information on meetings, workshops and any other related event
Actions	Contact chairs to get the information and update calendar
Responsible for actions	RCGs Secretariat

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3.3 Support to meetings and reporting

3.3.1 RCGs Annual Technical Meetings

The Secretariat holds specific functions and responsibilities in the planning and preparation of meetings, their accomplishment, and the preparation of the official report.

- *Planning & preparation*

The Secretariat participates actively in the planning phase by attending preparatory meetings with RCG chairs. The frequency and timing of the preparation meetings varies across RCGs. At least one preparatory meeting between RCG chairs and the Secretariat is held before the RCG annual technical meeting. The extent of the RCGs Secretariat support to the meeting is decided in coordination with RCG chairs at this stage.

Once the preliminary agenda has been developed by the RCG chairs, the Secretariat is responsible for circulating the save-the-date, setting up a registration system and sending the corresponding invitation and reminders. According to RCGs RoPs, the draft agenda shall be circulated at least one month before the meeting.

The Secretariat normally assists with the confirmation of speakers and rapporteurs. There is a close follow up communication with presenters and rapporteurs to provide instructions and the templates for presentations and reporting. The Secretariat is responsible for elaborating the templates and make them available both on the RCGs working space on Teams and on the dedicated ICES SharePoint.

The Secretariat is the focal point with the ICES Secretariat to manage the expert's access to the ICES SharePoint used for some RCG meetings. Normally, in the meeting registration form participants are asked if they already have access to the SharePoint. If necessary, the Secretariat liaises with ICES Secretariat to ask for access rights.

The Secretariat then supervises the SharePoint uploads and sends reminders to presenters in case any documents are missing.

The Secretariat might assist with the logistics set up, in particular in case of hybrid or virtual meetings, providing virtual meeting facilities.

- *Accomplishment*

The Secretariat staff attends annual technical meetings to assist RCG chairs with organizational and technical aspects.

The Secretariat is responsible for the signature sheets, in addition provides orientation and support to attendees. Keeps an eye on the house keeping rules and timekeeping.

During the annual meeting the Secretariat takes detailed notes of the discussions during the plenary sessions, pictures and other graphic evidence to be used in the report.

- *Reporting*

The Secretariat is responsible for following up the submission of contributions to the report, in this role the Secretariat sends the instructions and agreed deadlines to rapporteurs and the appropriate

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reminders when needed to facilitate a smooth and timely delivery of the RCG report by the RCG chairs.

The RCG chairs are responsible for drawing up the report. The report shall be made available to the meeting participants and published, as appropriate, within two months after the RCG annual meeting.

The Secretariat provides co-edition support to the report, compiling elements like rapporteurs' contributions, the acronym list, meeting agenda, list of participants, and other annexes.

Once the first draft is approved by the RCG chairs, the Secretariat shares the draft report with participants for revision and feedback. The RCG chairs follow on the comments and feedback providing the final report to the Secretariat. The Secretariat is responsible for the final edits and publication of the report, followed by a public communication. The Secretariat liaises with JRC focal point to provide the final version of the report for publication on the DCF website hosted by the JRC.

3.4 Other Meetings & Events

The Liaison Meeting (LM) and Decision Meeting (DM) usually take place towards the end of September and are followed by a National Correspondents (NC) meeting.

3.4.1 Liaison Meeting

The Liaison Meeting is formally a subgroup of the Commission expert group on the data collection issues (E02750). It is a forum for the RCGs to exchange on regionally coordinated data collection activities. The Liaison Meeting brings together the incoming and outgoing chairs of the RCGs, the major end users (ICES, GFCM, STECF, other RFMOs), and the Commission. The main end users are invited to present their data needs and planning of forthcoming activities.

- *Planning & preparation*

The RCGs Secretariat team supports Commission and the LM chair in the planning and preparation phase. The extent of the RCGs Secretariat support to the meeting is decided in coordination with the LM chair and the Commission.

The Secretariat responsibilities may include updating the participant list with contact information, sending out invitations and reminders, agenda updates, providing templates and instructions for presenters, connectivity tests for remote participants, checking uploads to the ICES SharePoint, focal point for SharePoint access, elaborating the report template.

- *Accomplishment*

Normally one member of the Secretariat attends the meeting physically and another member follows the meeting online, when the meeting is held in a hybrid format. This way the Secretariat guarantees support to physical and online participants. Besides, the Secretariat takes detailed notes during the meeting that are shared with the LM chair afterwards.

- *Reporting*

The Secretariat is responsible for following up the submission of contributions to the report, in this role the Secretariat sends the instructions and agreed deadlines to presenters and the appropriate reminders when needed to facilitate a smooth and timely delivery of the LM report by the chair.

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The LM chair is responsible for drawing up the report. The Secretariat provides co-edition support, compiling elements like rapporteurs' contributions, the acronym list, meeting agenda, list of participants, and further annexes.

Once the first draft is approved by the LM chair, the Secretariat shares the draft report for revision and feedback. The LM chair follows on the comments and feedback providing the final version of the report to the Secretariat.

The Secretariat is responsible for the final edits and publication of the report, followed by a public communication. The Secretariat liaises with JRC focal point to provide the final version of the report for publication on the DCF website hosted by the JRC. The LM report is also published in the EC Register website.

3.4.2 RCGs Pre-decision & Decision Meeting

The RCGs Pre-decision and Decision Meetings are RCG meetings and as such the RCGs Secretariat, together with the RCG chairs, have an important role in their organization.

The Pre-decision Meeting is a preparation for the official Decision Meeting (DM) therefore it is not compulsory for all RCG, however it is strongly recommended. Normally the pre-decision meeting takes place at least two or three weeks before the DM in a virtual format. At the pre-decision meeting the decisions and recommendations are presented in depth to NCs to clarify any doubts or issues that might arise. This is to prepare NCs for the DM where NCs vote against or in favour of the recommendations and decisions without getting into further debates.

- *Planning & preparation*

The RCGs Secretariat is responsible for sending the save-the-date, the preliminary agenda, link to the meeting and any background information. The agenda is defined in collaboration with RCG chairs.

The RCGs Secretariat is responsible for compiling all RCGs recommendations and decisions into a dossier and circulate this dossier to NCs at least two weeks in advance of the meeting.

- *Accomplishment*

The RCGs Secretariat has a moderator role in both pre-decision and DM, being in charge of opening and closing the meeting and giving the floor to the RCG chairs for their presentations. Detailed notes of the points raised during the voting procedure are taken.

- *Reporting*

The Secretariat elaborates the DM report based on the dossier and the issues raised during the meeting. The draft report is shared with participants for feedback and revision.

The Secretariat is responsible for the final edition and publication of the report, followed by a public communication. The Secretariat liaises with JRC focal point to provide the final version of the report for their publication.

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3.4.3 National correspondents meeting

The National Correspondents meeting is formally a subgroup of the Commission expert group on the data collection issues (E02750). It is organised and chaired by the Commission as a forum of exchange and consultation on data collection matters with the national correspondents. It is usually organised back-to-back with the Liaison Meeting and Decision Meeting for logistical reasons. The RCG Secretariat is not involved in the organisation of this meeting, but it collaborates on meeting logistics (attendance lists, technical hosting) when suitable.

NC meeting documents are distributed through the Commission AGM system and the EC register website.

3.5 Support intersessional activity

The Secretariat support to RCGs intersessional activity is divided into two main types of activities.

3.5.1 ISSGs general organizational aspects

RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic have developed an ISSGs database where all ISSGs related information can be found (e.g., tasks, related ToR, chairs and participants). After their annual technical meeting, the Secretariat in collaboration with National Correspondents (NCs) is in charge of updating the information regarding the participation/assignment of national experts in the different ISSGs for the next RCG cycle.

Other RCGs organise their intersessional work otherwise: either through thematic meetings (RCG Med & BS), workshops (RCG ECON) or working subgroups (RCG LP). The development of a standard ISSG database that comprises all ISSGs/Subgroups/workshops/Steering committees etc. from all RCGs might streamline the Secretariat support to the intersessional work and improve the monitoring of milestones and achievements.

3.5.2 ISSGs meetings and workshops

The number, nature and variety of ISSGs/Subgroups/workshops in which the different RCGs are organized is large and varied. Thus, the Secretariat provides support to intersessional meetings and workshops on demand rather than on a regular basis.

The ISSG chairs send requests for support to the Secretariat email account. Then the Secretariat acknowledges the reception of the request and follows up until further details are clarified. The Secretariat support role in this regard is very diverse depending on the demand, needs and staff availability. It may include sending the save-the-date to meetings, setting up meeting registration system, communication of the agenda, providing meeting platform, attendance lists, correspondence, support the dissemination of activities on the RCGs newsletter, among others.

3.6 New Initiatives and Projects by the RCGs involving the Secretariat

The RCGs Secretariat can support the preparation of new initiatives and projects of interest for the RCGs network. The Secretariat team has a wide experience in project management and reporting, communication and dissemination, knowledge transfer and stakeholders' outreach and coordination. Another important asset of the Secretariat is their knowledge about the RCGs network and their functioning, together with the pan-regional overview of the Data Collection Framework coordination by the RCGs.

4. Development and implementation of the Secretariat's Work Plan

The RCGs Secretariat is responsible for drafting a work plan that covers the RCGs annual cycle (Figure 4.1). The work plan should include yearly priorities, key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets for implementation and monitoring.

The RCGs Secretariat work plan is to be drafted in consultation with RCGs, NCs and the European Commission. The work plan is presented and subject to approval during the Liaison Meeting.

The timing of the annual cycle might differ slightly from one RCG to another, for example the RCG Med&BS data call occurs later in the year and consequently, the RCG Med&BS annual meeting is held later, end of August beginning of September. Despite these differences, in general terms the RCGs cycle starts in October and it goes until September next year. Thus, the Secretariat work plan is developed to fit around the RCGs annual work cycle.

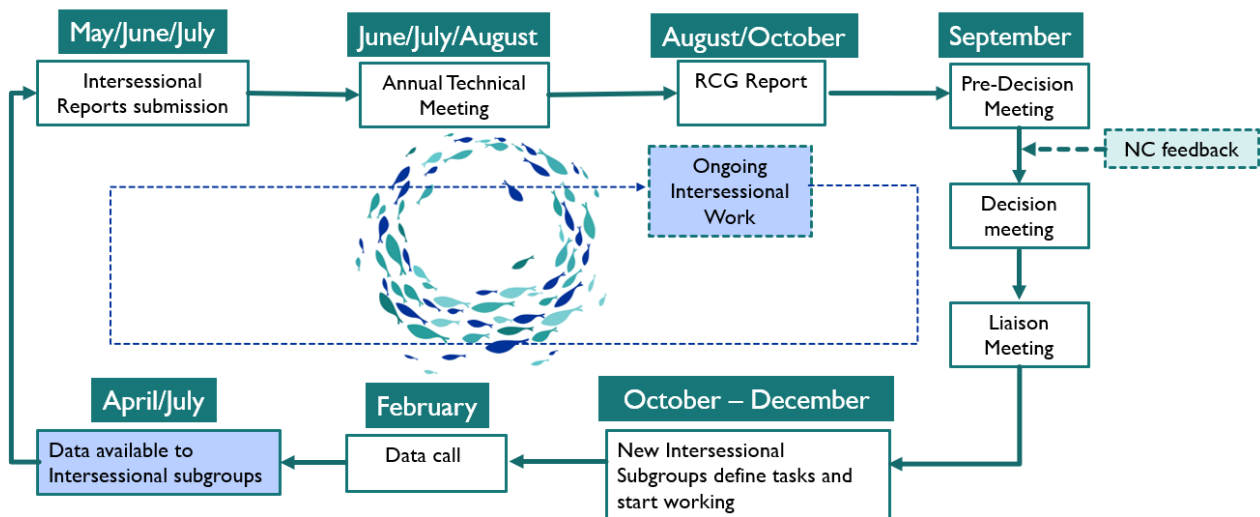


Figure 4.1. RCGs annual cycle and workflow (based on graph by RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic).

The closing of the RCGs cycle occurs in September during the Liaison Meeting. Beside liaising with the end users, the meeting is a forum to ensure convergence of RCGs work and governance, to identify pan-regional issues and propose actions, and to share the RCGs recommendations.