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Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF)

Preparations for future data collection under the revised DCF (STECF-14-24)

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This report was reviewed by the STECF during its 47th plenary meeting
held from 10 to 14 November 2014 in Belgium, Brussels.

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SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COMMITTEE FOR FISHERIES (STECF)

Preparations for future data collection under the revised DCF (STECF-14-24)

THIS REPORT WAS REVIEWED DURING THE PLENARY MEETING HELD IN BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, 10-14 NOVEMBER 2014

Background

Data collection currently occurs under the Data Collection Framework (DCF)¹ and the multi-annual Union programme for data collection (EU MAP) established thereunder.² In line with this EU MAP, Member States are required to submit National Programmes (NP) (Article 4 of Reg. 199/2008). These NPs are set for three years (currently 2014-2016)³ and contain the Member States' obligations to collect and provide data relevant to their region/fisheries/sectors pursuant to the EU Multiannual Programme. NPs are analysed by the STECF (independent experts) and are adopted by the Commission through a Commission Decision (Article 6). NPs can be modified if requested by a Member State and after evaluation of the proposed changes by the STECF.

Under the EMFF the Operational programs must be supplemented by a work plan for data collection (Article 21). Member States have to submit these work plans to the Commission in a specified format (Article 4(4) of Regulation (EC) No 199/2008) by 31 October of the previous year, unless an existing plan still applies. The content of those plans must be consistent with Article 4(2) of that Regulation, referring to multi-annual sampling plans, and schemes for at sea monitoring, surveys and data use. The Commission has written to Member States in 2014 to inform them that they are not required to submit a national work plan for 2014 or 2015, because the previous detailed national programme still applies and therefore no additional plans are needed. In case a WP is submitted the Commission may approve it by implementing act (Article 21 EMFF).

Under Article 7 of the DCF Regulation, Member States are required to report annually on the implementation of their National Programme. The Commission shall assess the implementation of the national programmes on the basis of an evaluation by the STECF.

The current Annual Report guidelines and standard tables were prepared in March 2013, on the basis of recommendations made by the Commission based on experience with evaluation of the Annual Reports 2011 as well as recommendations made by the STECF expert group EWG12-08 (Hamburg, 25-29 June 2012) and endorsed by STECF through a written procedure in July 2012. These revised guidelines and standard tables were reviewed by the expert group EWG 13-02 (Ispra, 11 - 15 March 2013). Since then, additional recommendations have been made in STECF EWGs regarding how to further improve and simplify the guidelines and standard tables. On the basis of an ad hoc contract, the

¹Council Regulation 199/2008 concerning the establishment of a Community framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the Common Fisheries Policy and Commission Regulation 665/2008 laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation 199/2008.

² Commission Decision C(2013) 5243 of 13.8.2013 extending the multiannual Union programme for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector for the period 2011-2013 to the period 2014-2016

³ C(2013)5568 Commission Implementing Decision of 30.8.2013 extending the national programmes for the collection of primary biological, technical, environmental and socio-economic data in the fisheries sector for the period 2011-2013 to the period 2014-2016

Commission has prepared a draft update of the guidelines and standard tables, which incorporates any recommendations that were straight forward and agreed to in previous EWGs.

The Terms of Reference for EWG-14-17 were:

1. Revision of the Annual Reports guidelines and standard tables

The EWG14-17 is invited to review the draft revised Annual Report guidelines and template and improve it where necessary. In addition, a list of possible additional updates has been compiled, which the EWG14-17 will be asked to decide upon so the guidelines and standard tables can be finalized after the meeting.

The focus of the exercise should be on simplification.

2. Preparation of a template for National Work plans for data collection

The EWG14-17 should help developing a template for these national work plans in view of a future Commission Decision. These should contain complementary information to that which Member States will be including in their European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programmes⁴, including:

a) a detailed description of the procedures and methods to be used in collecting and analysing data and in estimating their accuracy and precision.

b) the international cooperation and regional collaboration arrangements; including bilateral agreements concluded to achieve the objectives;

c) how and when data will be made available to end-users.

The focus of the exercise should be on simplification.

Request to the STECF

STECF is requested to review the report of the STECF Expert Working Group meeting, evaluate the findings and make any appropriate comments and recommendations.

Observations of the STECF

STECF observes that, according to the Commission requirements, the meeting of EWG 14-17 took place in two parts: in the first part, the EWG was asked to update the template and guidelines for Annual Reports in terms of 'short-term updates'. In the second part of the meeting, the EWG was asked to reflect on a longer-term perspective, dealing with more fundamental changes to the Annual Reports and, in parallel, reflect on what information should be included in future National Work Plans.

As far as the proposals for short-term changes for Annual Report formats and in line with the simplification request by the Commission, the EWG 14-17 was required to review the work done by an expert contracted ad-hoc by the Commission prior to the meeting with the aim to compile a list of main short-term changes to the Annual Report guidelines and tables (this list was compiled based on previous STECF meetings including EWG 14-07). STECF observes that the EWG 14-17 was also requested to revise and propose a solution on the outstanding questions on changes addressed by the ad-hoc expert. Based on this, EWG 14-17 prepared revised guidelines and standard table files with traceable changes in order to provide the ad-hoc expert with clear information on where the changes

⁴ See Draft template and guidelines on the content of the EMFF operational programme 2014-2020
http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/reform/emff/doc/03-emff-op-template-and-guidance_en.pdf

have been made, as it is up to the expert to produce the final version of the standard tables and guidelines for MS.

When dealing with longer-term perspectives for National Work Plans (NWP) and Annual Reports, STECF observes that the EWG 14-17 faced the problem that a proposal for a revised DCF and corresponding Implementing Acts is not yet available. Therefore, the discussions and ideas on National Work Plan elements and on improved Annual Report compilation only provided first hints on a way forward, aiming at simplification and improved use of the information, compared to the current DCF system.

As far as the NWP, taking into account that the NWPs are designed to be supplementing documents of the Operational Programmes (to be submitted by MS under the EMFF system for the period 2014-2020), EWG 14-17 considered that it would be advisable that they would be implemented as multi-annual Plan to avoid annual evaluations. However, for sake of flexibility and especially to respond to possible changes in end-user requirements, it should remain possible for MS, when drafting the NWP, to deal with annual changes in data collection without needing to update the overall NWPs. To this aim, EWG 14-17 suggested that the NWPs would contain two different parts: a static part defining long-term elements such as data collection and data quality assurance methods, and a flexible part, reflecting short-term adaptations such as sampling intensities and responsive actions from regional recommendations.

As far as the long-term perspectives for Annual Reports, since the detailed format and contents of National Work Plans are not defined yet, STECF observes it was premature for EWG 14-17 to appropriately address this part of the ToRs. Nevertheless, EWG 14-17 addressed this item and has found that ideally, most of the information needed on fleet activities, conducted sampling etc. needed for the compilation of Annual Report can be generated from existing (or future) databases, regional or supra-regional.

Indeed, STECF observes that EWG 14-17 has done a good work on addressing the use of existing databases (and the proposal of future ones) for the storage of fisheries information and intended/conducted sampling for improving the compilation process of National Work Plans and Annual Reports by MS. EWG 14-17 has also provided a graphical representation of the advisable information flow, including details on the storage and exchange of information, for the compilation of NWP and AR.

The EWG 14-17 briefly described existing databases for the various data types (economic database, survey database, biological data bases). Furthermore, EWG 14-17 has carried out an exercise to show how some tables of the AR, e.g. the economic data standard tables (III.B.1 to III.B.3), can be easily derived and compiled by using data provided by MS within the Fleet Economics Data Call. In order to better investigate this possibility, EWG 14-17 suggests to implement some changes in the next Fleet Economics Data Call (January 2015) and ask MS to adhere on a voluntary basis to this test. If adhering, they will be asked to provide one more table including relevant information of the related tables of the NP (the suggested table is practically identical to table III.B.1 of the NP).

STECF observes that the EWG 14-17 has thoroughly discussed current data transmission requirements and timing between MS and end-users under the data collection system. EWG 14-17 has listed the main

data calls/end-users and provided detailed information on the timing (deadlines), if a database for the storage of this data exists or not, and the main data sources.

STECF observes that there is a strong need for simplification in the data transmission flow under the DCF system between MS and the main end-users (mainly RFMO). Furthermore, the legal basis for the various data requirements (Control Regulation, RFMOs etc.) is in several cases not in line with current DCF requirements. Thus, the DCF requirements need to be harmonised with these requirements. With regard to changing end-user requirements, STECF has previously advised (most recently in STECF-14-02) that these be discussed and agreed at the regional level before amending DCF requirements.

Conclusions of the STECF

STECF concludes that EWG 14-17 have adequately addressed the ToRs assigned and listed in the backgrounds section.

As far as the work on short-term changes made by EWG 14-17, STECF concludes that the proposed set of standard tables have been produced in compliance with the aim of simplification, as requested by the Commission, as they contain several suggestions for deletions of redundant information and clarification on issues that have caused confusion or uncertainty on reporting requirements in the past.

As far as the long-term perspective, STECF concludes that the preliminary work done by EWG 14-17 fully addresses the request of simplification. In particular, it fully responds to the requirements in terms of substance (simplifying the substance of the standard tables), standardisation (possibility to use standards for completion of both NWP and AR) and format (how some info for future ARs could be generated automatically).

STECF concludes that the dynamic system foreseen by EWG 14-17 for data exchange and storage (scenario on NWP and AR information flow) is a sensible system to pursue simplification and avoiding duplication of data submissions by MS. Indeed, this system could be able to decrease the burden on MS in preparing the NWP and at the same time experts involved in the review process as well as end-users would receive the information in a more standardized way, which will give a general overview on sampling activities and simplify their work as well. This system will also help in harmonising the data transmission flow and in solving problems related to the different timings of data requirements by the main end-users.

STECF endorses the proposed guidelines and standard tables prepared by EWG 14-17 and recommends that the finalisation by the ad-hoc expert of the guidelines and the standard tables will happen as soon as possible (before the end of 2014) in order to provide Member States with new reporting formats and guidance to be applied for the forthcoming reporting period (Annual Report 2014 to be released for the end of May 2015).

STECF endorses the proposal of EWG 14-17 to test the feasibility of using the Fleet Economics Data Call for filling Annual Report tables and suggests that this test be implemented in the next Fleet economic Data call to be launched in January 2015. Taking into account that the participation of MS is proposed to be voluntary, STECF considers that the necessary information for MS to decide if they participate in this test or not should be given in the official letter sent to DCF national correspondents when announcing the data call.

STECF endorses the proposal for a future implementation of a dynamic and automatic system for data exchange using the same data format between MS. A common storage of data (at regional level, for a group of regions, or at European level) as well as common reporting functionalities will allow to access to the metadata required for the evaluation of the NWP. Taking into account that this system strongly relies on the regional databases, that some of these databases are already in place but in some cases they should be still developed, STECF notes that further development in these areas is necessary.

STECF considers that the reporting requirements that MS have to comply with for different data calls (STECF EWG, RFMO, ICES, EUROSTAT, etc....) and in relation to the Control Regulation should be harmonised in order to avoid duplication of work to process data to different formats.

REPORT TO THE STECF

**EXPERT WORKING GROUP ON
Preparations for future data collection under the revised DCF
(EWG-14-17)**

Hamburg, Germany, 20-24 October 2014

This report does not necessarily reflect the view of the STECF and the European Commission and in no way anticipates the Commission's future policy in this area

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The STECF EWG 14-17 met at the Thünen Institute in Hamburg, Germany, from 20-24 October 2014, addressing 1) short-term revision of the Annual Reports guidelines and standard tables (based on EWG 14-07 and work prepared by an ad-hoc expert) and 2) long-term preparations for National Work Plans and Annual Reports. The underlying aim of both Terms of Reference was simplification compared to the current DCF guidelines and templates and improved use of the information contained in MS Work Plans and Annual Reports by data end-users.

Regarding proposals for **short-term changes for Annual Report formats**, the EWG prepared revised guidelines and standard table files with changes visible, with the aim of providing Member States with new reporting formats and guidance agreed by STECF for the forthcoming reporting period (Annual Report 2014) until the end of 2014. The proposed set of standard tables contain several suggestions for deletions of redundant information and clarification on issues that caused confusion or uncertainty on reporting requirements in the past. Moreover, the EWG addressed all outstanding questions on changes by the ad-hoc expert.

When dealing with **longer-term perspectives for National Work Plans and Annual Reports**, the EWG 14-17 faced the problem that a proposal for a revised DCF and corresponding Implementing Acts was not available. Therefore, the discussions and ideas on National Work Plan elements and on improved Annual Report compilation presented here only provide first hints on a way forward, aiming at simplification and improved use of the information, compared to the current DCF system. The EWG considers that National Work Plans would contain a static part defining long-term elements such as data collection and data quality assurance methods, and a flexible part that reflects short-term adaptations such as sampling intensities and responsive actions from regional recommendations.

The use of existing (and future) **databases** for fisheries information and intended/conducted sampling is a strong new element suggested for compilation of National Work Plans and Annual Reports. The EWG briefly described existing databases for the various data types. An example for the immediate use of data from the Fleet Economics Data Call in current Annual Report tables is given to illustrate the use of databases for reporting on fisheries and sampling data.

The EWG further discussed current **data transmission** requirements and timing, suggesting the need for harmonisation of the various requirements of Regional Fisheries (Management) Organisations and International Organisations (e.g. ICES) with DCF requirements.

2 INTRODUCTION

Data collection currently occurs under the Data Collection Framework (DCF) and the multi-annual Union programme for data collection (EU MAP) established thereunder. In line with this EU MAP, Member States are required to submit National Programmes (NP) (Article 4 of Reg. 199/2008). These NPs are set for three years (currently 2014-2016) and contain the Member States' obligations to collect and provide data relevant to their region/fisheries/sectors pursuant to the EU MAP. NPs are analysed by the STECF (independent experts) and are adopted by the Commission through a Commission Decision (Article 6). NPs can be modified if requested by a Member State and after evaluation of the proposed changes by the STECF.

Under the EMFF, the Operational Programmes must be supplemented by a National Work Plan (NWP) for data collection (Article 21). Member States have to submit these work plans to the Commission in a specified format (Article 4(4) of Regulation (EC) No 199/2008) by 31 October of the previous year, unless an existing plan still applies. The content of those plans must be consistent with Article 4(2) of that Regulation, referring to multi-annual sampling plans, and schemes for at-sea monitoring, surveys and data use. The Commission has written to Member States in 2014 to inform them that they are not required to submit a national work plan for 2014 or 2015, because the previous detailed National Programme still applies and therefore no additional plans are needed. In case a NWP is submitted, the Commission may approve it by implementing act (Article 21 EMFF).

Under Article 7 of the DCF Regulation, Member States are required to report annually on the implementation of their National Programme. The Commission shall assess the implementation of the National Programmes on the basis of an evaluation by the STECF.

The current Annual Report guidelines and standard tables were prepared in March 2013, on the basis of recommendations made by the Commission based on experience with evaluation of the Annual Reports 2011 as well as recommendations made by the STECF expert group EWG 12-08 (Hamburg, 25-29 June 2012) and endorsed by STECF through a written procedure in July 2012. These revised guidelines and standard tables were reviewed by the expert group EWG 13-02 (Ispra, 11-15 March 2013). Since then, additional recommendations have been made in STECF EWGs regarding how to further improve and simplify the guidelines and standard tables (e.g. EWG 14-07, Oostende, 23-27 June 2014). On the basis of an ad-hoc contract, the Commission has prepared a draft update of the guidelines and standard tables, which incorporates any recommendations that were straightforward and agreed to in previous EWGs.

2.1 Terms of Reference for EWG-14-17

1. Revision of the Annual Reports guidelines and standard tables

The EWG14-17 is invited to review the draft revised Annual Report guidelines and template and improve it where necessary. In addition, a list of possible additional updates has been compiled, which the EWG14-17 will be asked to decide upon so the guidelines and standard tables can be finalized after the meeting.

The focus of the exercise should be on simplification.

2. Preparation of a template for National Work Plans for data collection

The EWG14-17 should help developing a template for these National Work Plans in view of a future Commission Decision. These should contain complementary information to that which Member States will be including in their European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programmes, including:

- a) a detailed description of the procedures and methods to be used in collecting and analysing data and in estimating their accuracy and precision.
- b) the international cooperation and regional collaboration arrangements; including bilateral agreements concluded to achieve the objectives;
- c) how and when data will be made available to end-users.

The focus of the exercise should be on simplification.

3 SHORT-TERM CHANGES FOR ANNUAL REPORTS

The Commission representative presented the Terms of Reference for the meeting and it was clarified that the meeting would take place in two parts: in the first part, the EWG would update the template and guidelines for Annual Reports in terms of 'short-term updates'. In the second part of the meeting, the EWG would reflect on longer-term, more fundamental changes to both the Annual Reports and in parallel, reflect on what information should be included in future National Work Plans.

Regarding the first part of the meeting, the Commission representative informed participants that the Commission contracted an expert prior to the meeting to already compile the recommended 'short-term' changes to the Annual Report template and guideline documents, stemming from previous STECF meetings including the STECF EWG 14-07 meeting (Oostende, 23-27 June 2014). The EWG was requested to first review the changes already made by the expert, and then to discuss the open questions compiled by the expert (on which the STECF EWG 14-07 did not reach an agreement). The EWG would then include the corresponding changes in the new template and guidelines for Annual Reports, adding any issues that they felt were appropriate. The line to follow for these short-term updates was to aim to simplify the Annual Reporting exercise for Member States, and remove any redundant fields in the Annual Reports, whilst bearing in mind the fact that next year the STECF would be required to compare the Annual Reports with the existing National Programmes. Therefore, no fundamental changes to the Annual Reports should be implemented in the short term if these will render comparison with the National Programmes impossible or overly complicated.

The EWG 14-17 reviewed the work prepared through an ad-hoc contract, containing proposals for short-term changes in the standard tables and guidelines for Annual Reports.

3.1 Standard tables for Annual Reports

3.1.1 General changes

1. Added column for comments: footnotes in the tables are replaced by a column where comments should be listed for the relevant section at the end of the table or explained in the AR texts. The aim of this column is to substitute the footnotes in every cell and make the tables more workable. The number of characters should be limited (150 maximum).
2. For those Member States already moving towards a “Statistically Sound Sampling Scheme” and incorporating the principles of randomised sampling, the Guidelines for the AR2014-2016,

have been revised as such that the Tables are also useful as the reporting template. Under the “roll – over” system of the current DCF, these Member States will not have planned targets linked to their new sampling frames in the National Programme, however they can report achieved number of trips per selected stratum, e.g. number of port visits etc.

3. Details of achieved stock related sampling could be uploaded to Regional Databases each year, on foot of data calls for assessment working groups, and sampling data also to be uploaded centrally in response to RCM data calls on an annual basis. It can be an option for a MS to derive the information for the AR from the RDB.
4. RFMO/RFO/IO: in all tables, the column “RFMO” (Regional Fisheries Management Organisation) has been replaced by “RFMO/RFO/IO” to also take into account Regional Fisheries Organisations (RFO) and International Organisations (IO) such as ICES.
5. Recommendations and agreements in one table: RCM/RCGs, LM and STECF recommendations and agreements (agreements are topics as agreed by a RCM) are removed from the text and are to be filled in Table II.B.2 (new table).
6. The coding and numbering of the Tables were kept accordingly to the previous guidelines. Where a Table is not relevant anymore, this is referred to in the guidelines.
7. The guidelines do not use the word “shortfalls” anymore. All has been replaced by “Deviations”. Where “Shortfalls and Deviation” was mentioned, this should be replaced by “Deviation”.

3.1.2 Detailed changes

Table	Changes
<i>II.B.1</i>	New field “No. of attendance” added.
<i>II.B.2</i>	New table. Follow-up of recommendations and agreements.
<i>III.B.1</i>	Equations have been filled in. Reference year should be the same all over. Footnote included: <i>Note: Please ensure data for active and inactive vessels are presented separately.</i>
<i>III.B.2</i>	Columns with <i>Total number of vessels in the cluster from the most recent information</i> and with <i>Number of vessels in the segment from the most recent information</i> deleted. Column with <i>Classification of segments which have been clustered</i> added.
<i>III.B.3</i>	Column with fleet segment split into fishing technique and length class. Columns with <i>CV</i> and <i>variability indicators</i> deleted.
<i>III.C.1</i>	To be filled for the AR. Table compatible with both metier-based sampling (2 previous years as reference period) and statistically sound sampling schemes (sampling year as reference period). “Selected” metiers replaced by “Identified” metiers.

	<p>“Gear LVL4” and “Target Assemblage LVL5” taken out. Metier LVL6 contains LVL4 and LVL5 information.</p> <p>Merging and disaggregation of metiers information included in this table.</p>
<i>III.C.2</i>	Deleted. Information on merging and disaggregation of metiers included in table <i>III.C.1</i>
<i>III.C.4</i>	<p>Table compatible with both metier based sampling and 4S.</p> <p>Placed before <i>III.C.3</i>. Only refers to the planned sampling strategy, achieved number of trips fields taken out. Achievements on table <i>III.C.3</i>.</p>
<i>III.C.3</i>	<p>Table compatible with both, metier-based sampling and statistically sound sampling schemes.</p> <p>Expected number of trips to be sampled taken out. Sampling intensities comparable with planned number of trips to be sampled by sampling strata, which are to be reported in table <i>III.C.4</i> .</p> <p>“Gear LVL4” and “Target Assemblage LVL5” taken out. Metier LVL6 contains LVL4 and LVL5 information.</p>
<i>III.C.5</i>	Deleted. Achieved number of fish measured to be reported in table <i>III.C.6</i> .
<i>III.C.6</i>	Previous template kept according to the previous guidelines.
<i>III.D.1</i>	New table. Recreational fisheries information.
<i>III.E.1</i>	Field “Share in EU TAC” deleted.
<i>III.E.2</i>	Previous template kept according to the previous guidelines.
<i>III.E.3</i>	Fields “Fishing Ground”, “Planned minimum No of individuals to be measured at a national level” and “Achieved precision target (CV)” deleted.
<i>III.F.1</i>	Column with <i>CV</i> deleted.
<i>III.G.1</i>	New field “Planned target according to NP” added.
<i>IV.A.1</i>	Previous template kept according to the previous guidelines.
<i>IV.A.2</i>	Equations have been filled in. Reference year should be the same all over.
<i>IV.A.3</i>	Columns with <i>CV</i> and <i>variability indicators</i> deleted.
<i>IV.B.1</i>	Equations have been filled in.
<i>IV.B.2</i>	Columns with <i>CV</i> and <i>variability indicators</i> deleted.

Regarding the Data Quality sections in the AR, the EWG 14-17 has looked into the quality aspect of the collected data and agreed that the use of CV as a precision tool is not an appropriate tool for the data collection quality assessment. However, a proper quality assurance/quality indicator system should be developed for the future, and the EWG 14-17 supports the work done by the RCM Baltic 2014, RCM NS&EA 2014 and RCM NA 2014. The EWG 14-17 suggest that similar work is done in the other RCMs as well, during 2015.

EWG14-17 suggests that the evaluation guidelines and the forms are checked to be in accordance with the changes on the AR Guidelines, Text and Tables.

3.2 Guidelines for Annual Reports

The EWG 14-17 has proposed amendments to the guidelines for submission of Annual Reports, taking into account the work of the ad-hoc expert and proposed changes in the standard tables (section 3.1).

3.3 Outstanding questions

There were still many questions which remain unanswered or “open” at the start of the meeting and for which the EWG 14-17 made a decision thereby providing further clarity to MS and in doing so, improve the compilation of the DCF Annual Reports and the quality of the subsequent evaluations.

3.3.1 Biological Modules

1. *STECF EWG 14-17 is requested to consider how to report on Pilot studies (Portugal might serve as a good example for a suggestion: the pilot study reporting format is along the same lines as the AR reporting format.)*

Pilot studies are part of the NP of some MS. The Portuguese AR presents their pilot studies as an annex to the main report. It is comprised of three main parts, a motivation and description of the pilot project as per the National Programme outlining the details of the study, why the study is necessary, including listed objectives and the planned work, the presentation of the results in a tabular form answering the questions outlined in the objectives of the project and finally a description on how the country will address the shortfalls.

It is proposed that future pilot studies should follow this structure:

1. Introduction
2. Achievements, Results and Deviations from the proposal

Scope	Results

3. Actions to avoid shortfalls

Follow up actions by MS that should be identified in the next NWP

2. *A decision is required on how to evaluate and follow-up on Module IX: Comments, Suggestions and Reflections.*

In general, the comments, suggestions and reflections vary in nature and do not always require a response. It is proposed that the EWG collate the items in a table and address them. A column on

whether the comment needs any further action either by the country or by the Commission should be included.

Comment /Suggestion/Reflection	Country	Follow up action required
		None required/ Follow up by Commission

3. *Module III.D (recreational fisheries): Data quality targets: it is not clear how relevant the current quality targets are. It is recommended that either the evaluation questions are modified, or that sensible data quality targets are being developed. Who will develop these targets? Is this a more long term goal?*

The questions in the evaluation are: “Were the data quality targets provided?” and “Were the data quality targets met?”.

Recreational fisheries are different in all countries and different regulations apply. Sampling strategies and methodologies for sampling recreational fisheries are therefore also different. No single standard sampling approach is possible across all MS. Quality targets should be provided by the MS and the MS should also indicate how these have been met. There may be a need to develop targets (measurable goals) to a more international standard. Such targets could be developed and proposed by for instance ICES WGRFS, using several possible sampling strategies as examples. The proposals could be evaluated and adopted by STECF. Another approach could be to task an STECF EWG with developing target proposals.

4. *In the AR guidelines, ‘reference year’ is being used as the reporting year. In the AR tables, ‘reference year(s)’ sometimes seems to relate to the sampling/reporting year (e.g. III.B.3), and sometimes to the NP reference years (e.g. Table III.C.3). Define the term “reference year”*

This is a matter of terminology. Define the ‘reference year’ and ‘reporting year’ properly.

- The **reference year** is the year for which the data are collected. If a reference period is being referred to, e.g. landings/effort/value data for ranking metiers (Table III.C.1), it should be termed as such.
- The **sampling year** is the year during which sampling is conducted and data collected.
- The **reporting year** is the year in which the data are reported.

5. *Guidance on how to report on **minor** issues that do not need immediate follow-up but might be taken into account by the MS in next year’s AR (e.g. make a comment with suggestion and write ‘No action needed’, or recommend action for next year’s report).*

In the situation where minor issues are identified, there is no need to take immediate action. In such cases, a choice should be made between ‘no action needed’ or ‘recommend action for next year’s report’.

6. *For the comments of the pre-screeners', language standards should be introduced. The experts felt that at times the language used to describe data failure issues was too strong or unjustified. Some experts felt that diplomatic language should be used at all times. (Recommended by STECF EWG 13-07). Should we introduce standardised response phrases for pre – screening in the form of drop down boxes?*

In the process of evaluation of Annual Reports, pre-screening is applied to identify possible problems of non-compliance or failures and also to speed up the evaluation process. The language use in pre-screening is not important as long as it is consistent. Drop-down lists could be used to alert the evaluators of items that might require particular attention during evaluation. For the evaluation itself (at the EWG), standard phrases should be used for similar situations, preferably in diplomatic language. These should, however, not be restricted by the use of drop-down lists to allow evaluators to comment on all possible situations.

3.3.2 Economic Modules

1. *Table IV.B.1: The guidelines are not clear and can be misleading regarding the segmentation of the companies by the number of employees. The segmentation mentioned in the guidelines is not mentioned in the regulation. This needs to be clarified.*
2. *Module VI.1: modify Table VI.1 in a way that data sampled under foreign flag also can be taken into account. No specific changes proposed, to be considered by STECF EWG 14-17.*
3. *III.B: Separate reporting by each supra-region should only be mandatory when the MS does not apply the same methodology for all supra-regions. In all other cases, there should be one common text for all supra-regions under a heading that states all the supra-regions. Is this clear to all economists? Should amend the Guidelines accordingly.*
4. *It should be clear that in Tables III.B.1., III.B.2. and III.B.3., the reference year should be the same, Is this clear to all economists? Should amend the Guidelines accordingly.*
5. *Data in Table III.B.1 has to be presented separately for active and inactive vessels. Does the EWG agree with this? Should amend the Guidelines accordingly.*
6. *It is not clear whether the data presented in Table III.B.3. must refer on unclustered as well as clustered segments. Specifically, guidelines are misleading in the following sentence: "Table III.B.2 should contain information on clustered segments, while information on clustering and on unclustered segments is to be provided in Tables III.B.1 and III.B.3.". It should rather read: "Table III.B.1 should contain information on segments which are not clustered or, in case of clustering, for clusters. Table III.B.2 should contain information on the clustering scheme. Table III.B.3 should contain information on all segments without having them clustered". EWG14-17 to consider and advise on whether the DCF AR guidelines need to be updated on this point?*

These questions have been dealt with by EWG 14-17 by revising standard tables and guidelines for Annual Reports accordingly (sections 3.1 and 3.2).

4 LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVES FOR NATIONAL WORKPLANS AND ANNUAL REPORTS

Regarding the second part of the meeting concerning longer-term changes, the Commission representative noted that experts should bear in mind two main aims for National Work Plans and future Annual Reports: they should serve on the one hand to identify which of the EU or regional obligations apply to individual MS (NWP), and how they have complied with these (ARs) and on the other hand, they should provide readily-understandable information to end-users about which MS is collecting which data and how. She informed the EWG that the Commission had consulted some end-users on whether they use NPs or AR. The response was that although potentially end-users would benefit from the information contained in those files, they currently do not use them as the files are not at all user-friendly, and the information is currently presented by MS whereas it would be more relevant by stock in the case of ICES and GFCM.

The Commission representative also noted that once the EWG has identified which type of information would be relevant in future for these two purposes, they should also reflect on where this information would be most appropriate: in the NWP, and/or the AR and/or provided to end-users via some other channel (e.g. alongside data calls).

The Commission representative suggested that the reflection on longer-term changes take place along three themes:

- 1) Substance: simplifying substantially the current standard tables in the National Programmes, aiming to have a single table per data set (aquaculture, biological data etc.) presenting what a MS would be collecting (which stocks/parameters) and using which data source, method, etc. The issue of quality assurance framework and quality checking should be discussed in detail to determine how best to report on this in the NWP and the ARs.
- 2) Standardization: Reflecting on which of the fields of the future standard tables could be completed using drop-down menus/standard reference lists and whether such reference lists already exist.
- 3) Format: Reflecting on how some of the input information for future ARs could be generated automatically, e.g. from existing databases or through information already provided via data calls, and how online reporting could facilitate completion of ARs for MS.

4.1 National Workplans

Under the EMFF, Member States must submit an Operational Programme for 2014-2020. The OPs must be supplemented by a National Work Plan (NWP, Article 21 of EMFF) that has to be submitted every year unless MS informs COM that previous year still applies. No template for National Workplans exists yet as the Commission's proposal for a revised DCF not yet has been put forward.

STECF EWG 14-17 addressed the point on preparation of a template for NWP. According to the Terms of Reference the focus of the exercise should be on simplification.

The EWG discussed possible solutions and has provided some ideas for the future preparation of the NWP and the Annual Reports. A dynamic system for data exchange using the same data format between MS should be implemented. A common storage of data (at regional level, for a group of regions, or at European level) as well as common reporting functionalities will allow to access to the metadata required for the evaluation of the NWP.

This system will decrease the burden on MS in preparing the NWP and at the same time experts involved in the review process as well as end-users would receive the information in a more

standardized way, which will give a general overview on sampling activities and simplify their work as well.

The system for data exchange should include results and achievements of data collection activities (useful for the aim of annual reporting) as well as metadata on sampling plans (biological and economic ones), as currently expressed in the National Programmes.

The NWP will most likely be implemented as a multi-annual Plan to avoid annual evaluations. However, in order to be flexible and to anticipate on changes in end-user requirements, it should remain possible to deal with annual changes in data collection without needing to update the NWP.

It is envisaged that the NWP will be divided into two parts, a static and a flexible part. NWP should be housed in a dedicated database with detailed views for evaluation purposes and highly aggregated views for regional coordination.

4.1.1 Static part

In the NWP, there are elements that can clearly be defined as static. These elements would apply to all years and may be modified occasionally. Some examples of these elements are:

- Description of methods: A description of the various sampling methods the MS will apply in its data collection. These methods would need to comply with statistically sound sampling criteria that have been developed by various working groups.
- Description of data bases: including the measures in place to back up and protect data
- Quality assurance: Description of actions taken at the MS level to ensure the quality of the data. Some RCMs in 2014 (NS&EA, NA and Baltic) have come with suggestions how to deal with quality aspects.
- Procedures: description of the procedures the MS will apply e.g. with regard to the transmission of data through data calls
- Surveys: most surveys are carried out in fixed frequencies by MS which have made long-term commitments to participate in these surveys.
- Derogations: a list of agreed permanent derogations from obligations
- Agreements: which apply between MS and have a multi-annual character

In principle, the static part would need to be evaluated once. Further evaluation of this part would only be required when there is a significant revision and only for the revised sections. The static part of the NWP should be subject to a version control system in order to track those changes that have been made over time and also to keep copies of the historic versions.

4.1.2 Flexible part

This flexible part would house other elements in the NWP, which are subject to frequent revisions or annual changes. These revisions would need to be evaluated annually only if revisions are made. Some examples of these elements are:

- Sampling intensities: What is meant here is the content of the present Excel tables which define the variables and quantities to be sampled. Quantities may change over years pending the need

to improve the quality of the variable. It is anticipated that this information would be provided annually as an upload to a meta-database (to be developed).

- Description of deviations: These are deviations from the procedures and methods described in the static part of the NWP which can be foreseen. There may be situations that sampling according the agreed methods (described in the static part) is not possible. For instance foreseen uncertainties how to deal with sampling under the landing obligation or temporally refusal from vessel to accept observers on board.
- The flexible part would also draw attention to which recent changes have been made in the static part of the NWP.
- Derogations: Requests for new derogations would be made in the flexible part of the NWP. Once they have been approved and when they are permanent, they would move to the static part.
- Recommendations: the MS would report response to recommendations which are implemented in this part of the report.

4.1.3 Database with NWP information

Future submission of the NWP should be facilitated by uploading intended sampling information to a database (to be developed). Similar, achieved sampling information, presently presented in Excel files in the Annual Report (AR) should be submitted to this database either through a regional database or directly from a national database. Having this information available for all MS in one database would allow extractions to be made to:

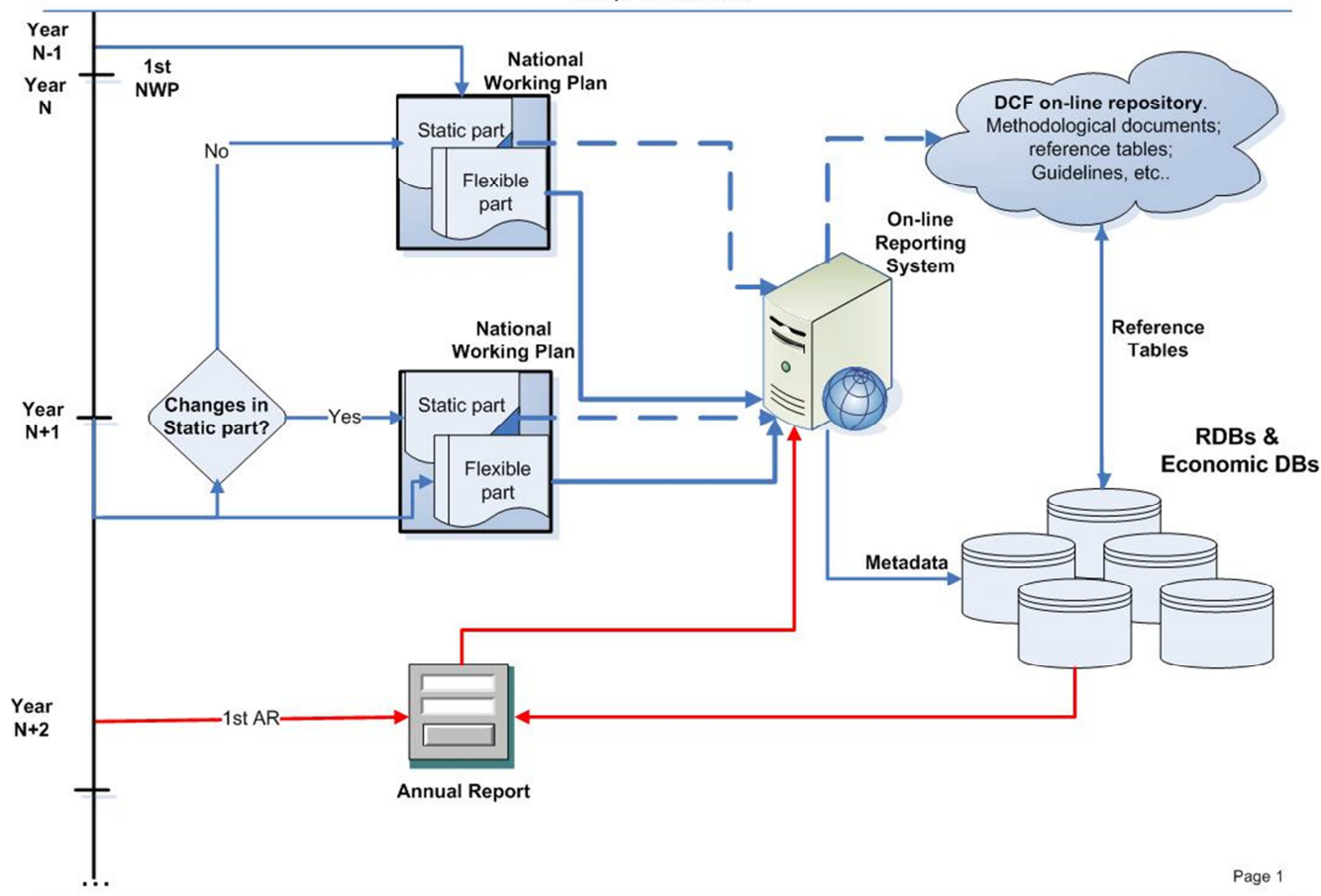
- view/compare intended and actual sampling (compliance to the regulation);
- view/compare intended and realised sampling at the regional level (RCG);
- identify potentially available information which will or has been sampled (end-users).

Future developments of this database would be to identify and tabulate actual sampling from actual data submitted to a regional database.

Figure 4.1 depicts the scenario developed by EWG 14-17 regarding the long-term national work plan and annual report for the information flow. It represents one possible scenario considering the existence of: an on-line reporting system; centralized databases for biological transversal and economic data (regional or European databases); an on-line repository system and a NWP that will be composed of two parts, a static and a flexible part. In this view, the on-line reporting system can be either an interface for on-line reporting and data exchange between MS and data storage systems in place (databases, repository, etc.), or a reporting tool itself where the information uploaded can be stored.

Scenario on National Working Plan and Annual Report Information Flow

Friday, October 24, 2014



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Figure 4.1. Scenario on NWP and AR information flow

4.1.4 Regional coordination of NWP development and data quality evaluation

Summarizing the contributions of the RCM Baltic and RCM NS&EA in 2014 as well as previous STECF discussions, the EWG 14-17 considers that future tasks of RCGs include preparing general guidelines on sampling procedures, allocating tasks and harmonising quality standards at regional level.

In general, the procedure of NWP creation should follow a series of steps, beginning from specifying objectives of the data collection in terms of end-user needs, identifying the most appropriate statistical design of data collection schemes, evaluating the sampling effort and its distribution across strata needed to deliver the required estimates and precision. After that, MS would implement this scheme in their NWP.

Implementation of NWP will require quality checks and evaluation, following points below:

- Firstly, Member States check the quality of their data, with a contribution from the validated automatic data checks developed by e.g. MS, ICES, GFCM, JRC or others and by using agreed tools such as RDBs, COST or others;

- Tools in the RDBs should be developed to provide checks of data compliance and the reports can be made available to the RCGs;
- JRC or an ad-hoc experts group conducts an in-depth check of data compliance and then reports on the data quality to the concerned RCG;
- Then Member States' representatives meet at RCGs to harmonise their quality standards at regional level;
- Finally, the quality of the data is checked by end-users. An example of this is that STECF would check both the compliance of the data with the legal requirements and the quality level of the data to produce the required evaluations (e.g. Annual Economic Report). Another example would be Quality Considerations in the ICES Advice.

The EWG 14-17 also supports the creation of sub-groups working on data quality intersessionally in all areas to ensure coverage of all data quality aspects.

In a recently published Call for Proposals (MARE/2014/19: Strengthening regional cooperation in the area of fisheries data collection), several of the abovementioned aspects are being addressed. One of the elements of the projects to be funded is a set of “*Procedures to assess the quality of biological data at regional level*”.

4.2 Annual Reports

Since the format and contents of National Work Plans are not defined yet, it is premature to conclude on future Annual Report structures. Ideally, most of the information needed on fleet activities, conducted sampling etc. can be generated from existing (or future) databases, regional or supra-regional.

4.2.1 Database requirements

In the longer term, there is a clear need for regional databases. The requirements for such databases are determined by the types of data collected, but also by specific needs within each management area (e.g., different fisheries and stock characteristics). It will be more efficient and cost effective to have databases designed by data type/regional requirement, rather than a more complicated all encompassing “hold all” database⁵. Databases do not necessarily have to develop independently for similar types of data, but to realistically have these in place by 2017, the Commission will have to soon make decisions on regional database support. Some of these databases are already in place or in an advanced stage of development and are discussed below.

The management of the DCF could be greatly facilitated through these databases. For example, an universal template for recording MS sampling plans could be developed and uploaded in the databases

⁵ e.g. SYSTEM DESIGN DOCUMENT, DATA COLLECTION PROJECT (FISH-15/SDD DCP). DG FISH Information System Development. FRAMEWORK CONTRACT (FC) FISH-2001-ISD. SPECIFIC AGREEMENT SA15. VERSION 0.60 EN, 12/09/2003. INTRASOFT. 71 pp.

for to facilitate review/planning of sampling at regional level by RCGs. Reporting for Annual Reports could also be automated through setting up standard reports.

4.2.1.1 Economic data

JRC is already hosting a database containing economic data at European level. Only slight modification might be required to this database to fully cover the data storage and reporting needs set through the DCF. There would also be an advantage if this database can be further developed to accommodate the uploading of sampling plans by MS and the facilitate generating AR.

There is data common with biological databases through transversal data, but this link has not yet been established. Transversal data will be contained within the economic databases at the mandated vessel level of resolution (fleet segment, metier, region), but also within the biological databases grouped by activity. Duplicate data will thus exist between the different databases. There are already efforts looking at the possibility of linking the two datasets, whilst maintaining confidentiality, with the ultimate aim to use it e.g. for management plan evaluation and impact assessment.

4.2.1.2 Survey data

Trawl surveys

International databases are already in existence for some areas. The DATRAS database, hosted by ICES, accommodate all biological data collected during trawl surveys (<http://www.ices.dk/marine-data/data-portals/Pages/DATRAS.aspx>).

In the Mediterranean, the MEDITS database is under testing. Following the recommendations of the RCM of the Mediterranean and Black Sea, progress was made towards the implementation and finalisation of a common database. The key concepts of the DB system under testing are: Open source software, spatial database, reliable R-routines, web-based system.

The main characteristics of the MEDITS database are:

- a simple database structure that can accommodate a wide range of data types, related to scientific surveys, easily linkable with GIS applications;
- capability to store, retrieve, update, manipulate and analyse trawl survey data, including spatially referenced information;

Survey databases are also in existence for the Black Sea, hosted by JRC, and ICCAT has a database for large pelagics. The only area that is not covered by these databases is the NAFO area. These surveys, however, are reported to NAFO.

Acoustics:

No international database currently exists for acoustic data collected within the ICES area. An old version of the FishFrame database was used to store aggregated data at ICES rectangle level, but this is not in use anymore due to lack of funding to develop the database. The development of another database is currently in progress.

In the Mediterranean, acoustic data storage will be achieved through the MEDIAS database. The steering committee group had been working in the framework of the ACOUSMED project (Contract MARE/2009/09 SI2.557652) in the “Standardization of a common format for an acoustic data database”. The aim of this task was the proposal of fields and algorithms for a common database that will serve the needs of acoustic surveys in order to fulfil DCF requirements and standardise the output of survey estimations. For that reason, the MEDIAS group revised the format of existing databases related to acoustic surveys per study area and MEDIAS partners.

Egg/larval surveys:

A database for egg/larval surveys already exists for the ICES areas and is hosted by ICES (<http://www.ices.dk/marine-data/data-portals/Pages/Eggs-and-larvae.aspx>).

4.2.1.3 Biological data

A regional database, RDB FishFrame, is currently at an advanced stage of development to hold detailed biological data and transversal data in aggregated form for the Baltic, North Sea & Eastern Arctic and North Atlantic regions (<http://www.ices.dk/marine-data/data-portals/Pages/RDB-FishFrame.aspx>). ICES is responsible for hosting and the further development of the database. The database will hold some primary data, but data will only be made available to end-users at aggregated level. Responsibility to raise data should be at MS level, being linked to the quality assurance requirement of data being at MS level.

All regions or a group of regions should have a regional database for biological data comparable to FishFrame. FishFrame is an adequate solution for the NE Atlantic area, but a regional database solution still needs to be found that is tailored to the Mediterranean and Black Sea issues.

Some databases already exist for long-distance fisheries and the RCM LDF concluded in 2013: “*With regard to data collection on fishery in CECAF and SPRMFO areas, the RCM LDF does not see the immediate need for the establishment of the Regional Data Base (RDB) dedicated to long distance fishery. The existing RDB (FishFrame) could serve the needs of coordination of long distance fishery sampling once it accommodates for the upload of data specific to that fishery (main issues so far seem to be coding of fishing grounds outside EU waters and ICES domain).*”

4.2.2 Approach for deriving tables III.B.1-III.B.3 (fleet economics) of the Annual Report from a database

Considering the proposed scenario in the long-term and given the stabilised situation of the economic database, the EWG 14-17 suggests that an exercise on the usage of the database to produce outputs to the Annual Report should already be carried out for the next reporting period, i.e. the AR 2014. For that purpose, the EWG has prepared a table comparing information contained in the JRC fleet economic database with that required in the Annual Report – standard table III.B.1 - and suggest the way forward to put the exercise in place.

The fleet economics data call contains almost all data that are required for the related sheets of the Annual Report (see Table 4.2.1).

Table 4.2.1: Comparison of variables contained in AR Table III.B.1 and in data call and NP

2014 data call	AR Table III.B.1	National Program
MS (in table name)	MS	
SUPRA_REGION	Supra region	
FISHING_TECH	Fishing technique	
VESSEL_LENGTH	Length class	
YEAR	Reference year	
Segment population (from CAPACITY table)	Target population no.	
<i>missing</i>	Frame population no.	
-	Planned sample no.	Planned sample no.
-	Planned sample rate	Planned sample rate
SAMPLING_STRATEGY	Type of data collection scheme	
Indirectly contained as “segment population” * “Achieved sample rate”	Achieved Sample no.	
ACHIEVED_SAMPLE_RATE (item)	Achieved Sample rate	
	Achieved Sample no./Planned sample no.	Achieved Sample no./Planned sample no.
<i>missing</i>	National name of the survey	

Figures on planned data were to be taken over from the National Programme (planned sample no. or planned sample rate). This implies that in case of changes in NP tables regarding sampling intensities, these should be reported in the DCF informative system, while at the moment only in case of major changes the NP is updated in the DCF informative system.

The “Achieved sample no.” is indirectly contained as “frame population”*“achieved sample rate”. The only variables which were not contained in the 2014 data call (reflecting data collection activities in 2013) were “frame population” and “survey name”. These could be added in future fleet economics data calls. The “achieved sample no” should also be included in the data call.

The word “achieved” has led to some confusion. It has to be born in mind that “achieved sample no.” refers to the size of the executed sample. This is to be distinguished from the “response no.”.

EWG 14-17 further considered the issue of reference to planned figures. It appeared that the “planned sample number” is of little use if it refers to planning prior to the reference year. The figure might have changed in the meantime. However, the “planned sample rate” is very informative as it is expected to be kept rather constant. This information is available through the NP tables.

All information contained in AR table III.B.2 can be directly derived from the table “capacity” as requested in the fleet economics data call.

All information contained in AR table III.B.3 can be derived from the fleet economics data call, except for “response rate”. This variable could be included in future fleet economics data calls.

EWG 14-17 recommends that the concept of replacing AR tables by extraction of relevant information from a database is implemented as test for AR tables III.B.1 – III.B.3. Participation in this test could be offered as option to MS. For that purpose the fleet economics data call which is to be expected in early 2015 should contain the suggested changes. Moreover, the data call should request also a table which contains relevant parts of the corresponding NP using the header as indicated in Table 4.2.2. The header is part of the NP template III.B.1 and completes the information required for the generation of the fleet economics AR tables from the JRC database. Only MS that want to participate in the test are expected to provide that table. To ease MS work EWG 14-17 suggests the table design to be kept identical to the NP so that MS can generate it basically via “copy & paste” from what they already have on their own NP.

To ensure a smooth implementation of such exercise, MS must provide their data by strictly adhering to the rules in place on data formats and classifications, namely for the classification and provision of data on a cluster level.

EWG 14-17 suggests that MS that provide the aforementioned extra table on the NP do not have to submit AR tables III.B.1 – III.B.3.

Table 4.2.2. Header for the additional table that contains information from the NP which is required for the generation of AR tables from the database (nomenclature can be simplified)

Supra region	Fleet segment	Reference year	Target population no.	Frame population no.	Planned sample no.	Planned sample rate
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4.3 Data transmission to end-users

The timing of data requirements are mostly determined by the demands set by end-users, primarily in support of the formulation of regulations under the Common Fisheries Policy. Some of timings are set within regulation, but it mostly determined through memoranda of understanding agreed between the EU/RFMOs and scientific advisory bodies. Pressures to make data available as early as possible to meet these demands and deadlines set by RFMOs or the Commission carry risks, especially in the context of the importance put on data quality and the requirement of MS to provide quality assurance for data transmitted. There is a clear need to align different data calls to service these processes and data calls external to these should be limited or controlled through guidelines.

The transmission of data collected under the DCF is affected by a number of factors that limits the flexibility in the timing of data transmission. Some of these factors are inherent in the collection and processing time of data, but there are also external factors such as dates included in other EU regulations (e.g. Control Regulation). In some cases, the only option to improve the timing of some types of data will be to change regulations. However, there is a short-term need to improve data

availability that could be achieved through improved synchrony of requirements under different regulation (and different regulations within different areas).

The collection and transmission of transversal data is a good example. Transversal data are mostly collected through the control regulation and some parts under the DCF. Some transversal variables required under the DCF are not mandatory under the control regulation, e.g. the number of fishing hours. Specific sampling programmes need to be established to collect this data or changes have to be made to data collected under the control regulation over which DCF administrators have very little or no control over. This creates significant problems, for example the STECF effort data call, where data are supplied under DCF (by scientists) and is not official data under control regulation. The data are then used for another purpose than what intended by data call.

4.3.1 Timing of data transmission and availability to end-users

The proposal is to have agreed deadlines when different types of data will be available for transmission. Data will also need to be uploaded to databases by these set deadlines with the necessary quality assurance by each MS. Data can then be made available to end-users through these databases, rather than individual data calls.

The proposal is that data transmission requirements should be prioritised by end-users prior to these publication dates of quality assured data. Priority for data transmission should only be given to RFMOs before these agreed dates. Such data will, however, be provisional with an associated quality disclaimer. There is also the need to limit these data calls to priority needs such as stock assessments and negotiate with end-users that any other data calls should be postponed to after the agreed published date of quality assured data.

To better align all data calls, e.g., the requirements for Eurostat with DCF, a time line of all data calls is provided below:

Table 4.3.1. Current timetable for data provisions by Member States.

Data Call / Data Submission	Deadline for data submission	Database in place	Data Sources ¹
STECF - Fleet Economics	Mar (Year n+2)	X	DCF survey & Control data/National surveys
STECF - Aquaculture Economics	Jun (Year n+2)	X	DCF survey
STECF - Processing Industry	Sep (Year n+2)	X	DCF survey & SBS
STECF - Fishing Effort Regimes	April (Year n+1)	X	DCF biologic data & Control data
STECF - Black Sea	Sep (Year n+1)	X	DCF biologic data & Control data
STECF - Mediterranean (Sea Surveys data)	Jan (Year n+1)	X	DCF biologic data & Control data
STECF - Mediterranean (Biological data)	Jun (Year n+1)	X	DCF biologic data & Control data/ National surveys
EUROSTAT - Aquaculture (Regulation (EC) 762/2008)	Dec (Year n+1)	X	DCF survey
EUROSTAT - Catch in certain areas other than those of the North Atlantic (Regulation (EC) No 216/2009)	Jul (Year n+1)	X	Control data/National surveys
EUROSTAT - Catch NE Atlantic (Regulation (EC) No 218/2009)	May (Year n+1)	X	Control data/National surveys
EUROSTAT - Catch NW Atlantic (Regulation (EC) No 217/2009)	Aug (Year n+1)	X	Control data/National surveys
EUROSTAT - Landings (Council Regulation (EC) 1921/2006)	Jun (Year n+1)	X	Control data/National surveys
Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT)	May (Year n+1)	X	DCF surveys & Control data
General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) (Task 1)	May (Year n+2)	X	DCF surveys & Control data /National surveys
Indian Ocean tuna Commission (IOTC)	Jun (Year n+1)	X	DCF surveys & Control data
Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)	May (Year n+2)	X	DCF surveys & Control data

International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)	Jul (Year n+1)	X	DCF surveys & Control data
Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO)	Jun (Year n+1)	X	DCF surveys & Control data
South Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)	May (Year n+1)	X	DCF surveys & Control data
South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO)	Sep (Year n+1)	X	DCF surveys & Control data
ICES Data Calls (Stock assessment)	1st half of the year (Year n+1)	X	DCF surveys & Control data

¹DCF surveys: Data collected by the Member States by the application of DCF (Council Regulation (CE) 199/2008 and COM Decision 2010/93/EU

Control data: Data collected by the application of the Control Regulation (Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009) and with specific rules for appropriation for the purpose of application of DCF

National surveys: Data collected by ad-hoc surveys not covered under any specific European framework

4.3.2 Short-term changes in data transmission

Data transmission issues dealt with here are based largely on the assumption of regional databases being in place. In the short-term (2015/2016), Member States will have to continue to transmit data under the current setups. The aim is to move away from MS generating their own summary reports towards this being done automatically through database reports. Effort should be made to work towards the longer-term suggestions in that reporting from regional databases should be developed and used wherever possible rather than done individually by MS. For example, economic data summaries for the AR could already be automated from the JRC database for all MS (PGECON, together with JRC, should investigate this further), see section 4.2.2. Similarly, it might also be possible to produce summary reports of biological sampling directly from RDB FishFrame from 2016 onwards (this should be investigated by the RCMs or a specific EWG). EWG 14-17 also notes that under EU MAP, the timing of the AR is no longer linked to the Financial Report. Given the existing time pressures and the longer-term aim of finalising data at the end of June, the AR submissions and evaluations could thus be postponed to after this date. Furthermore, as most of the regular data transmission deadlines are in the first half of the year, any additional ad-hoc data request from end-users that are external to this regular process will have to deal with in lower priority and most likely not before the end of June.

4.3.3 Harmonisation of data reporting requirements

The EWG 14-17 discussed the partly conflicting reporting requirements for RFMOs with those defined in the DCF and identified a clear need to harmonise these.

The EWG 14-17 requests that the STECF take into account the following suggestion: The reporting requirements for Regional Fisheries (Management) Organisations, EUROSTAT and other catch reporting systems should be harmonised with DCF requirements.

5 CONTACT DETAILS OF STECF MEMBERS AND EWG-14-17 LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1 - Information on STECF members and invited experts' affiliations is displayed for information only. In some instances the details given below for STECF members may differ from that provided in Commission COMMISSION DECISION of 27 October 2010 on the appointment of members of the STECF (2010/C 292/04) as some members' employment details may have changed or have been subject to organisational changes in their main place of employment. In any case, as outlined in Article 13 of the Commission Decision (2005/629/EU and 2010/74/EU) on STECF, Members of the STECF, invited experts, and JRC experts shall act independently of Member States or stakeholders. In the context of the STECF work, the committee members and other experts do not represent the institutions/bodies they are affiliated to in their daily jobs. STECF members and invited experts make declarations of commitment (yearly for STECF members) to act independently in the public interest of the European Union. STECF members and experts also declare at each meeting of the STECF and of its Expert Working Groups any specific interest which might be considered prejudicial to their independence in relation to specific items on the agenda. These declarations are displayed on the public meeting's website if experts explicitly authorized the JRC to do so in accordance with EU legislation on the protection of personnel data. For more information: <http://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/adm-declarations>

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6 LIST OF ANNEXES

- Annex 1: Implementation of Proposed Changes to DCF Annual Report Standard Tables as outlined in STECF EWG 14-07
- Annex 2: Note to the EWG 14-17 from the Steering Committee for the Regional database

Electronic annexes are published on the meeting's web site on:

<http://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/stecf/ewg1417>

6.1 LIST OF ELECTRONIC ANNEXES:

1. EWG-14-17 – Annex 3 – Excel file with revised standard tables for Annual Reports
2. EWG-14-17 – Annex 4 – Word document with revised guidelines for Annual Reports (track-changes mode)

7 LIST OF BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background documents are published on the meeting's web site on:

<http://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/stecf/ewg1417>

List of background documents:

1. EWG-14-17 – Doc 1 - Declarations of invited and JRC experts (see also section 5 of this report – List of participants)
2. EWG-14-17 – Doc 2 – Draft template and guidelines on the content of the EMFF operational programme 2014-2020. European Commission, 7.03.2014.
3. EWG-14-17 – Doc 3 - ANALYSIS OF CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES BASED ON FIELD WORK CARRIED OUT IN 2011-2014, SEPTEMBER 2014. REPORT. Devstat, COFAD and GOPA.
4. EWG-14-17 – Doc 4 - RECOMMENDATIONS IN RELATION TO THE EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL PROGRAMMES. Annex 2 of Report (EWG-14-17 Doc 3). Devstat, COFAD and GOPA.
5. EWG-14-17 – Doc 5 - Functionalities of the Online Reporting. System Peter Herkenrath. UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre. (Presentation) CMS Family Online Reporting System, Ramsar COP 11. 9th July 2012. (Presentation)
6. EWG-14-17 – Doc 6 - The Online Reporting System (ORS) developed by UNEP-WCMC and a case study from the CMS Family. Species Programme. Presentation for Online Reporting System event. 23 October 2012. (Presentation)
7. EWG-14-17 – Doc 7 – Simplifying DCF Annual Reports. (Presentation)
8. EWG-14-17 – Doc 8 – [Report of STECF EWG 14-07, July 2014](#).
9. WG-14-17 – Doc 9 - DCF AR 2012: summary of main issues in different MS from evaluation exercise
10. EWG-14-17 – Doc 10 - Implementation of Proposed Changes to DCF Annual Report Standard Tables as outlined in STECF EWG 14-07 (incl. Excel file <DCF_Standard-Tables_AR_version2014Rev.xlsx>)
11. EWG-14-17 – Doc 11 – Materials for Member States prior to DCF AR Preparation, Materials for Pre-Screeners (incl. Excel file < Evaluation Template 2014.xlsx>)
12. EWG-14-17 – Doc 12 – Note to the EWG 14-17 from the Steering Committee for the Regional database
13. EWG-14-17 – Doc 13 - Developing a format for national work plans. (Presentation)

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: IMPLEMENTATION OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO DCF ANNUAL REPORT STANDARD TABLES AS OUTLINED IN STECF EWG 14-07

1) Introduction

EWG 14-07 included in its agenda the following Term of Reference: **“Evaluate how the exercise of Annual Report preparation and evaluation by STECF could be simplified in future, including through electronic filling in, and pre-screening of the Annual Reports, simplification of the Annual Report formats taking into account the achievements and conclusions from the STECF EWG 13-07 (report STECF-13-25).”**

The ToR was mainly addressed by a small subgroup of experts during the meeting and then further in plenary. The experts taking part of this subgroup were requested to further elaborate this ToR around two main scenarios:

Short-term scenario: Addressing what useful changes can immediately and easily be made, to simplify the DCF Annual Report, within the context of the current Data Collection Framework. The objective is to allow for more streamlined and efficient reporting, in the short term. The issues addressed below, for the most part, fall under this “Short – Term Scenario” category.

There also remain several “Open Questions” to which no final answers were agreed at STECF EWG 14-07. These questions are highlighted under Section 3, and should be addressed at STECF EWG 14-17, as the answers will provide valuable guidance to Member States in the compilation of the 2014 DCF Annual Reports.

Long-term scenario: This scenario will address changes to the reporting structures necessary to align the current DCF Annual Reports with the requirements of the new DCF. These questions should be discussed once the terms and requirements of the new DCF are finalised and adopted.

Short Term Proposals

Module III.B: Economic variables

EWG-14-07: Synchronise column headers. E.g. in Tables III.B.1 and III.B.3, the Fleet segment length classes should be filled in. In Table III.B.1 the column header is ‘Length classes’ and in Table III.B.3 the column header is ‘Fleet segments vessels length classes’.

- Change incorporated in Tables III.B.1 and III.B.3

Module III.C: Métier – related variables

The original recommendation by EWG-14-07 was to investigate the possibility of revising or merging table III.C.3 with III.C.4 and also Table III.C.5 with III.C.6.

EWG-14-07: “Revise/merge tables III.C.3/III.C.4 and III.C.5/III.C.6 and remove redundancy, as it creates unnecessary work for MS and evaluation”

“Revise table III.C.5 as there are internal inconsistencies and the table is inconsistent with the requirements from the Decision”

- Table III.C.3 is the most detailed and useful table in Module C. Table III.C.4 only adds the breakdown of the numbers of trips achieved by sampling frame. It is very difficult to interrelate tables III.C.3 and III.C.4, as a single métier can cross multiple regions, so trips within a métier can be included across several sampling frames.
- If the EWG requires details, not only on the numbers of trips achieved per métier, but also the division of these trips across the various sampling frames, this can potentially all be reported in Table III.C.3 making III.C.4 redundant. **Recommendation: include Sampling Frame details (if required) in Table III.C.III and Delete Table III.C.4**
- For those Member States already moving towards a “Statistically Sound Sampling Design” incorporating the principles of randomised sampling, a modified Table III.C.3 could also be a useful reporting template. Under the “roll – over” system of the current DCF, these Member States will not have planned targets linked to their new sampling frames in the National Programme, however they can report achieved number of trips per selected stratum, e.g number of port visits etc..
- Module III.C focuses on reporting sampling data as numbers of trips i.e. planned versus achieved trips per métier. Logically it follows then, that the no’s of individual fish or shellfish measured per species, and the species diversity encountered are a by-product of the métier based sampling strategy.
- A comprehensive species breakdown is reported in Module III.E “Stock related variables”, and as such, species really do not need to be reported in Module III.C. Details of achieved stock related sampling are also uploaded to FISHFRAME each year, on foot of data calls for assessment working groups, and sampling data is also uploaded centrally in response to RCM data calls on an annual basis.

Therefore it is recommended to delete Tables III.C.5 and III.C.6 from the Annual Report, as the sampling strategy is highlighted in Tables III.C.3 and III.C.4, and the achieved sampling levels, per species, are reported in Module III.E.

Module III.D: Recreational Fisheries

STECF EWG 14-07: “Add table to Module III.D”

- Table III.D.1 is a new inclusion in the DCF AR. There are still questions regarding how to evaluate the quality of the recreational fisheries data, perhaps this is an issue for the future DCF.

Module III.E: Stock – related variables

No explicit recommendations were made by STECF EWG’s in relation to Module E, however some changes are proposed below.

Module III.E focuses on providing detailed achieved sampling levels for stocks. It includes a list of required stocks to be sampled from Appendix VII: Table III.E.1, The long term planning in relation to sampling these stocks: Table III.E.2 and finally the planned and achieved sampling levels for stock based variables: Table III.E.3. All these tables are necessary and should be kept, however there are minor edits which could be made to improve the tables as follows:

III.E.1 Remove the column “Share in the EU TAC”. The share in EU TAC is often not compatible with the stock area, e.g. the TAC may cover a larger or smaller area than the stock area. For this reason it makes more sense to base the sampling levels on the landings and the share in EU Landings, which are already included in the table.

III.E.2 No suggested edits.

III.E.3 Three points:

- The column ‘fishing ground’ should not be in this table, it is incompatible with the stock area (one stock can cover more than one fishing ground). The targets are set for species/stock area, not for species/stock area/fishing grounds so they should not be evaluated by fishing ground
- Some stocks can cover more than one region; e.g. mackerel, horse mackerel and blue whiting, need explicit guidelines on whether to report samples taken in each region separately or to repeat the rows for each region (with the total across all regions) or whether to report to the main region.
- Include “Measured Only” variable in Table III.E.3. There is a list of variables in the guidelines (length-at-age, maturity-at-length etc.) but this does not include a ‘measured only’ category. Therefore you cannot report length measurements taken for species that are not aged.

Module III.G: Surveys

STECF EWG 14-07: “Module III.G: Change the header of column L (“Planned target”) into “Planned target according to NP” in order to be more specific and avoid misunderstandings”

Change incorporated in Table III.G.1

Short Term: Outstanding Questions.

There are still many questions which remain unanswered or “Open”. Decisions by the EWG-14-17 on the following questions will help to provide further clarity to MS and in doing so; improve the compilation of the DCF Annual Reports and the quality of the subsequent evaluations.

Biological Modules

- ❖ STECF EWG 14-17 is requested to consider how to report on Pilot studies (Portugal might serve as a good example for a suggestion: the pilot study reporting format is along the same lines as the AR reporting format.)
- ❖ A decision is required on how to evaluate and follow-up on Module IX : Comments, Suggestions and Reflections.
- ❖ Module III.D (recreational fisheries): Data quality targets: it is not clear how relevant the current quality targets are. It is recommended that either the evaluation questions are modified, or that sensible data quality targets are being developed. Who will develop these targets? Is this a more long term goal?
- ❖ In the AR guidelines, ‘reference year’ is being used as the reporting year. In the AR tables, ‘reference year(s)’ sometimes seems to relate to the sampling/reporting year (e.g. III.B.3), and sometimes to the NP reference years (e.g. Table III.C.3). Define the term “reference year”
- ❖ Guidance on how to report on minor issues that do not need immediate follow-up but might be taken into account by the MS in next year’s AR (e.g. make a comment with suggestion and write ‘No action needed’, or recommend action for next year’s report).
- ❖ For the comments of the pre-screeners’, language standards should be introduced. The experts felt that at times the language used to describe data failure issues was too strong or unjustified. Some experts felt that diplomatic language should be used at all times. (Recommended by STECF EWG 13-07). Should we introduce standardised response phrases for pre – screening in the form of drop down boxes?

Economic Modules

- ❖ Table IV.B.1: The guidelines are not clear and can be misleading regarding the segmentation of the companies by the number of employees. The segmentation mentioned in the guidelines is not mentioned in the regulation. This needs to be clarified.
- ❖ Module VI.1: modify Table VI.1 in a way that data sampled under foreign flag also can be taken into account. No specific changes proposed, to be considered by STECF EWG 14-17.
- ❖ III.B: Separate reporting by each supra-region should only be mandatory when the MS does not apply the same methodology for all supra-regions. In all other cases, there should be one common text for all supra-regions under a heading that states all the supra-regions. Is this clear to all economists? Should amend the Guidelines accordingly.
- ❖ It should be clear that in Tables III.B.1., III.B.2. and III.B.3., the reference year should be the same, Is this clear to all economists? Should amend the Guidelines accordingly.
- ❖ Data in Table III.B.1 has to be presented separately for active and inactive vessels. Does the EWG agree with this? Should amend the Guidelines accordingly.
- ❖ It is not clear whether the data presented in Table III.B.3. must refer on unclustered as well as clustered segments. Specifically, guidelines are misleading in the following sentence: “Table III.B.2 should contain information on clustered segments, while information on clustering and on unclustered segments is to be provided in Tables III.B.1 and III.B.3.”. It should rather read: “Table III.B.1 should contain information on segments which are not clustered or, in case of clustering, for clusters. Table III.B.2 should contain information on the clustering scheme. Table III.B.3 should contain information on all segments without having them clustered”. EWG14-17 to consider and advise on whether the DCF AR guidelines need to be updated on this point?

ANNEX 2: NOTE TO THE EWG 14-17 FROM THE STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE REGIONAL DATABASE

The RDB-SC is aware of the STECF EWG 14-17, which has the objective to revise the Annual Report guidelines and tables as well as preparation of a template for National Work plans for data collection. According to the Terms of Reference should the focus of the exercise be on simplification.

The RDB-SC would thereby like to draw the attention to the potential of the regional database in this exercise. We are aware that the Commission not yet has decided on an IT solution for all DCF data but realize that common storage of data as well as common estimation tools and reporting functionalities will be a prerequisite for future regional sampling programmes anyhow.

Almost all MS which have fisheries interest and perform data collection in the Baltic, North Sea and North Atlantic regions have uploaded biological and métier related data collected 2009 and onwards to the regional database FishFrame in response to data calls from the chairs of the regional coordination meetings. MS have further from the same period of time uploaded some transversal data (landings and effort). This means that a lot of the information presently reported by the MS in the III_C (No of sampled trips by métier, No of measured individuals by stock and métier etc) and III_E tables (No of age readings, maturity samples etc) are available in FishFrame and can be accessed through reports, if such reports are developed. Furthermore, a similar dynamic of data exchange using the same data format is ongoing between MS having Large Pelagic Fisheries interests.

This would mean that the burden on MS decreases and that experts involved in the review process as well as end-users would receive the information in a more standardized way which simplify their work as well. What presently not are available in the RDB FishFrame are the sampling plans, currently expressed in the National Programmes, but this could be a part of the development. It might however be necessary to include them in a future “regional fisheries database and estimation system” (it is actually too simple to refer to FishFrame as only a database) anyhow when we move towards a more thoroughly regional cooperation.

The RDB-SC would further like to draw the attention to that we during our last meeting decided to aim for a public available inventory on data available in FishFrame. The main reason for this is to increase the awareness of the data collected through the DCF and thereby potentially the use of this data. The inventory should only include meta data such as available number of sampled trips by MS and metier, number of length measurements by stock, MS and métier, number of age and maturity readings by MS and stock etc. This would not compromise the MS ownership of the actual data but (end-users would have to ask MS for the actual data in accordance with the data policy) but hopefully increase the awareness among new and old users. The RDB-SC suspects that the content of this inventory will be similar to what MS will report on biological and métier related variables in future Annual Reports, there might be some synergy effects to achieve.

The RDB-SC will have it is next meeting 25-26 November this year. If the EWG, or the Commission, is interested in how FishFrame can benefit the simplification process for Annual Reports the RDB-SC can put it on their agenda.

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Abstract

The STECF EWG-14-17 met at the Thünen Institute in Hamburg, Germany, from 20-24 October 2014, addressing 1) short-term revision of the Annual Reports guidelines and standard tables (based on EWG 14-07 and work prepared by an ad-hoc expert) and 2) long-term preparations for National Work Plans and Annual Reports. The underlying aim of both Terms of Reference was simplification compared to the current DCF guidelines and templates and improved use of the information contained in MS Work Plans and Annual Reports by data end-users. The report of EWG-14-17 was reviewed by the STECF during its November 2014 plenary meeting.

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The Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) has been established by the European Commission. The STECF is being consulted at regular intervals on matters pertaining to the conservation and management of living aquatic resources, including biological, economic, environmental, social and technical considerations.

