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

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## Revision of DCF Work Plan and Annual Report templates and guidelines (STECF-20-18)

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## **Abstract**

Commission Decision of 25 February 2016 setting up a Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries, C(2016) 1084, OJ C 74, 26.2.2016, p. 4–10. The Commission may consult the group on any matter relating to marine and fisheries biology, fishing gear technology, fisheries economics, fisheries governance, ecosystem effects of fisheries, aquaculture or similar disciplines. This report deals with the finalisation of templates and guidance for DCF Work Plans and Annual Reports for 2022 onwards, as well as assessment grids and criteria for their evaluation. In addition, the comments of the European Commission on previous Member States' Work Plans were reviewed.

## **SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COMMITTEE FOR FISHERIES (STECF) - Revision of DCF Work Plan and Annual Report templates and guidelines (STECF-20-18)**

**The report of EWG 20-18 was reviewed by the STECF at its 66th plenary meeting held virtually from 22-26 March 2021.**

### **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.

### **Summary of the information provided to STECF**

STECF was provided with the EWG 20-18 report including electronic annexes, the revised Work Plan and Annual Report Guidance, a guidance document for the website and a compilation of comments from DG MARE to be addressed by PLEN 21-01.

### **STECF observations**

The EWG 20-18 met virtually 8-12 February 2021 to revise the most recent templates and guidelines for Work Plans (WP) and Annual Reports (AR) to reflect changes introduced in the multiannual Union programme (EU-MAP) for the collection and management of data. The EWG was requested to consider four ToRs: one on the finalisation of the WP and AR templates and guidelines to reflect changes introduced in the EU-MAP, and the other three as preparatory items for future AR and WP assessments.

A large amount of preparatory work was conducted prior to the meeting in the form of ad-hoc contracts etc. The outcome of this work was provided to the EWG.

#### WP/AR templates and guidelines

STECF observes that the revision of the most recent WP and AR template consisted of adding minor changes, often to clarify the guidance, or to take out redundancies with e.g. the Data Quality sections that are proposed to be part of the template and guidance document, or to improve consistency in terminology throughout the Tables. The final templates and guidelines are presented in electronic annexes to the EWG report and consist of a Word file containing guidance text for the Excel templates and templates for Text Boxes and an Excel file with table templates and a Master Code List.

STECF notes that the EWG proposes to include separate annexes for biological and economic data quality in the WP/AR templates. In order to improve the quality reporting of economic data, the EWG used PGECON's Data Collection Methodological Document for Economic data, as described in

Annex 8 of PGECON 2017. In addition to the sections suggested by PGECON, the EWG also included the confidentiality considerations currently available in Table 5B.

#### Revised assessment grids and criteria for the EWG 21-17 on WP assessment

STECF observes that the EWG reviewed the previous WP assessment grid, based on EWG 16-16, and adapted them to the requirements of the revised EU-MAP. A stand-alone document for guidance of WP evaluators was also drafted by the EWG. The proposed documents are available as electronic annexes to the report.

STECF notes that as a first step towards the realisation of an online reporting platform in connection with a database (as concluded by STECF PLEN 20-02 etc) the EWG suggested that prior to the WP evaluation meeting in November (EWG 21-17) an online Data Validation (DV) tool should be developed to help verifying the Member States' coding for the WP tables and to prevent submitting wrong values.

STECF observes that the Covid-19 pandemic affected the data collection efforts in Member States to various degrees. The impacts on 2020 data collection activities will be evident in the 2020 ARs and differences in reporting compared to previous years are expected. STECF notes that it is important to distinguish these factors from other factors that has affected the data collection activities, in the 2020 ARs.

#### Comments from DG ENV and JRC on WP 2020-2021

STECF observes that in the WP adoption process, DG MARE consults other COM services in an inter service consultation (ISC). As these remarks came after the November STECF plenary PLEN 20-03, the EWG considered that it would be best to use them in the next WP assessment (EWG 21-17).

### **STECF conclusions**

STECF concludes that the EWG addressed all the ToRs appropriately and endorses the report and related documents.

Regarding the WP/AR templates and guidelines, STECF concludes that the EWG revised them appropriately to reflect the changes introduced in the EU-MAP.

STECF concludes that the development of a Data Validation tool for the reporting of WPs would greatly improve the reporting and assessment of WPs and would serve as a first step towards the realisation of an online reporting platform in connection with a database (as supported in previous STECF plenary reports).

STECF concludes that the proposed dedicated annexes on data quality would improve the quality reporting of biological and economic data as well as allow for a more efficient and relevant assessment of the WPs. The information provided through the submission of the proposed annexes on data quality will be extensive and expertise on sampling/survey design and data quality is needed for their assessment. STECF concludes that the evaluation of these annexes should be conducted prior to the EWG on evaluating WPs (EWG 21-17) through specific ad-hoc

contracts during the pre-screening phase (cf. ToR 7.5 of this Plenary report). The methodological approach is seldom modified within a WP period, and hence STECF considers that the evaluation of the data quality annexes is most likely only needed once for the WPs 2022-2024.

Based on the conclusions of EWG 20-18 and PLEN 20-02, STECF concludes that the evaluation of ARs would be improved by the following modifications of the evaluation procedure:

1. The Commission should notify the Member States that they might be contacted prior to the EWG and requested to resubmit parts of the AR or provide clarifications on major issues with respect to the AR based on the output of pre-screeners. Member States should also be made aware that the experts might request additional information or resubmission during the EWG.
2. The pre-screening should start no later than 3 June 2021 so that the comments can be sent to the Member States no later than 16 June, as the EWG 21-09 will start on 21 June.
3. One pre-screener should be tasked to take the coordinating role to collate and review comments raised during the pre-screening exercise together with the Commission. Following this filtering exercise, the Commission should raise serious issues with AR submissions with Member States at the end of the pre-screening exercise and before the EWG.
4. Serious issues should be defined by the pre-screeners as based on the following criteria; *gross inconsistencies, serious formatting issues, missing tables, misplaced information etc.*
5. All issues identified should be reviewed by at least two experts before being sent to the Member States.

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the data collection efforts in Member States. STECF concludes that the Commission should advise Member States to clearly distinguish between effects caused by the Covid-19 situation and for other reasons in the submitted ARs. STECF also suggests that any reported effects due to Covid-19 should be differentiated from other factors in the AR assessment grid and in the overall presentation of the evaluation results in the EWG report. The Commission should ask MS to report Covid-19-related issues in the comment fields in the AR tables and in the AR text boxes, as appropriate for the corresponding section.

STECF concludes that the prepared standalone document for AR evaluation listing assessment criteria will facilitate for a more consistent and less subjective evaluation of ARs in 2021.

Regarding the comments from DG ENV and JRC under the inter service consultation within the Commission, STECF concludes, considering that the WPs for 2020-2021 have been approved, that the evaluation of these comments should take place in connection with the WP assessment. Therefore, the best use of the ISC documents would be as background documents for the STECF EWG 21-17 on WP assessment.

## **STECF comments to questions raised by DG MARE**



After the finalisation of the EWG DG MARE reviewed the output from the EWG and directed a compilation of questions to be addressed by PLEN 21-01.

<b>Table column/ text box</b>	<b>COM question/comment</b>	<b>STECF comment</b>
Table 1.1: Time when data was available	What if data was not requested by an end user?  COM suggest to delete 'to end users'.	Agree with deletion.
Table 1.2: Meeting acronym	Better to indicate in WP comments if the national meeting is not necessary or if MS does not attend an RCG meeting.	The national coordination meeting is requested by art. 25.4 of the CFP Basic Regulation and cannot be skipped. For the few cases, however, where only one institute within a MS is involved in the DCF work and the MS decided not to have national coordination meetings, the MS should comment on this fact in the 'WP comments' column.
Table 1.2: Number of MS participants	If the MS has not attended the meeting, will it enter '0' participants?	Entering zero ('0') participants in case of (justified) non-attendance is OK.
Table 1.3: Contact persons	COM has to check with data protection officer how to obtain consent for personal data in WP/AR.  COM proposes to include NC here, as they give consent to publish their data on the DCF website.	OK
Text Box 1a: Test studies	COM proposes this new text box for WP/AR flexibility on new methods testing.  Please give us your comments on the idea. Number 1 used not to confuse with table	STECF welcomes the addition of a new text box to provide details on studies for testing new methods of data collection.
Text Box 1b: Other data collection activities	COM proposes this optional text box for WP/AR flexibility on other areas than fish processing and new methods testing.  Please gives us your comments on the idea.	STECF welcomes the addition of a new optional text box to provide details on studies in other areas of data collection.
Table 2.1: EU TAC (if any) (%)	How to indicate TACs for combined species? Full TAC per each species plus WP comment?  What about quota swaps? If a MS gives away its share, the sampling obligation should be given away too. How should this be indicated here?	Combined-species TACs should be reported for each species and a corresponding WP comment should be added.  In the case of (known) significant quota swaps (>50% of the quota?), MS should comment on the volume of quota swaps in

		<p>the WP comments.</p> <p>Both clarifications should be added to the WP guidelines.</p>
Table 2.1: Achieved number of individuals measured for length at the national level from commercial sampling	<p>Is it necessary to have 'for length' here? Why no separate column 'for weight' then? Or simply 'measured' like in table 2.2?</p>	<p>The distinction of the parameter 'length' is important here.</p> <p>Table 2.2 is a different case, as the biological variable is defined in column G.</p>
Table 2.2: Species: 'for all areas'	<p>In table 2.1 'region' here 'area'. Harmonise? COM proposes: all regions and areas' please confirm if OK.</p>	<p>Yes, adding 'regions' here follows the EU-MAP structure and thus would be more consistent.</p>
<p>Table 2.2: sampling scheme</p> <p>Table 4.1: sampling scheme</p>	<p>MasterCodeList does not contain mandatory surveys acronyms. Acronyms are unique, whereas 'sampling scheme' codes are rather a type of sampling. All mandatory surveys have 'S4', 'metier' or 'stock based'. Are you sure we do not need a separate column for survey ID from table 1 EU MAP implementing?</p> <p>Proposal: add list 'Research survey acronym' in guidance after the list 'Sampling scheme'. Adapt the MasterCodeList.</p>	<p>It is sufficient to refer to the survey acronym in Table 2.6.</p>
Table 2.2: AR comments: 'discrepancy range'	<p>discrepancy range is not the same: &lt;80% and &gt; 150% (Table 2.2, 4.1) &lt;90% and &gt; 150% (Table 2.6) No range in table 2.5 Why this difference?</p> <p>Why in 2.6 and 4.1 we have yellow column with 'x' indication of out of range, and in 2.2 and 2.5 no? Should this be harmonised?</p>	<p>The discrepancy range should be &lt;90% and &gt;150% throughout, as previously applied (templates 2017-2021).</p> <p>In Table 2.2, a column should be added to mark out-of-range cases, which helps STECF identifying those cases quickly during AR evaluation.</p>
Table 2.2: AR comments: 'to be decided'	<p>is the 'to be decided' to be deleted? If not, who should decide on the range?</p>	<p>Yes, 'to be decided' should be deleted. The range should be &lt;90% - &gt;150%.</p>
Table 2.3: Agreed at RCG: 'defined'	<p>why not like in table 2.4: 'agreed' at regional level.</p> <p>COM proposes 'agreed'</p>	<p>Yes, 'defined' should be replaced with 'agreed'.</p>
Table 2.4: % of achievement: automatically filled'	<p>In other tables no automatic calculation indicated, except in economic part. Please confirm how to harmonise (colour in guidance, formula in Excel document, or just description of needed action and no yellow highlight, no formula).</p>	<p>If there are formulae in the table templates, they should also be explained in the guidance, as proposed by the COM.</p>

	<p>The formula should be explained, even if provided in the excel file as a formula as in the table 2.5 for 'Achieved % of PSUs'</p> <p>COM proposed modified column name and formula description.</p>	
Table 2.4: Reasons for non-conformity	<p>Maybe the discrepancy can be explained in AR comment column, like in other tables?</p> <p>discrepancy range is not the same: here &lt;100%&gt; &lt;80% and &gt; 150% (Table 2.2, 4.1) &lt;90% and &gt; 150% (Table 2.6) No range in table 2.5 Why this difference?</p> <p>Why in 2.6 and 4.1 we have yellow column with 'x' indication of out of range, and in 2.2 and 2.5 no? No discrepancy column at all in table 2.4. Should this be harmonised?</p>	<p>The discrepancy range should be &lt;90% and &gt;150% throughout, as previously applied (templates 2017-2021).</p> <p>In Table 2.4, a column should be added to mark out-of-range cases, which helps STECF identifying those cases quickly during AR evaluation.</p>
Table 2.4: AR Comments	COM proposes add 'any deviation' to AR comments, and delete 'discrepancy reasons column'	Yes, 'any deviation' should be explained in the 'AR Comments'.
Table 2.5: Achieved % of PSUs	Should this row and following be formulated like yellow columns in table 2.6 and 4.1? With an 'x' if comment x' necessary?	Yes, it should follow the same approach.
Table 2.5: Divergence (%) of implementation year vs. reference period	<p>discrepancy range is not the same: &lt;80% and &gt; 150% (Table 2.2, 4.1) &lt;90% and &gt; 150% (Table 2.6) No range in table 2.5 Why this difference?</p> <p>Why in 2.6 and 4.1 we have yellow column with 'x' indication of out of range, and in 2.2 and 2.5 no? Should this be harmonised?</p>	<p>The discrepancy range should be &lt;90% and &gt;150% throughout, as previously applied (templates 2017-2021).</p> <p>In Table 2.5, a column should be added to mark out-of-range cases, which helps STECF identifying those cases quickly during AR evaluation.</p>
Table 2.5: Has the observer dedicated time to record the bycatch of PETS?	COM proposes a dedicated PET text box 2.5a. (or text box 4.2)	STECF notes that this text box contains the questions on PETS sampling that were included in the former Text Box 1F and agrees with this approach.
Table 2.5: AR Comments: 'deviation'	<p>discrepancy range is not the same: &lt;80% and &gt; 150% (Table 2.2, 4.1) &lt;90% and &gt; 150% (Table 2.6) No range in table 2.5 Why this difference?</p> <p>Why in 2.6 and 4.1 we have yellow column</p>	<p>The discrepancy range should be &lt;90% and &gt;150% throughout, as previously applied (templates 2017-2021).</p>

	with 'x' indication of out of range, and in 2.2 and 2.5 no? Should this be harmonised?	In Table 2.5, a column should be added to mark out-of-range cases, which helps STECF identifying those cases quickly during AR evaluation.
Text box 2.5: 'and 4.1' in general reference	If we add text box 2.5a(4.2), this reference disappears here	OK
Text box 2.5a (or 4.2): Incidental catches of sensitive species	COM proposes a dedicated PET text box 2.5a. (or text box 4.2)	OK
Table 2.6: Threshold rules used	Code options in bullets below should be added to MasterCodeList; there's only one code for table 2.6 there (regional thresholds for multispecies surveys).	Yes, these codes should be added.
Table 2.6: Indication if AR comments by MS are required concerning number of sampling activities achieved  Table 4.1: Indication if AR comments by MS are required concerning number of sampling activities achieved	The formula should be explained, even if provided in the excel file as a formula as in the table 2.5 for 'Achieved % of PSUs'	If there are formulae in the table templates, they should also be explained in the guidance, as proposed by the COM.
Table 2.6: AR Comments: 'discrepancy'  Table 4.1: AR comments	discrepancy range is not the same: <80% and > 150% (Table 2.2, 4.1) <90% and > 150% (Table 2.6) No range in table 2.5 Why this difference?  Why in 2.6 and 4.1 we have yellow column with 'x' indication of out of range, and in 2.2 and 2.5 no? Should this be harmonised?	The discrepancy range should be <90% and >150% throughout, as previously applied (templates 2017-2021).
Table 3.1, 5.2, 6.1, 7.1: Data collection scheme	Are the definitions of the schemes available somewhere?	Yes, definitions are available in: <a href="https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/dcf/wordef/sampling-strategy">https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/dcf/wordef/sampling-strategy</a>
Table 3.1, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 7.1: Years(s) of WP implementation	We cannot have a limited number of years to enter. COM harmonises the column name and description with biological part, codes will be deleted.	Yes, it should be harmonized.

Table 3.1: Planned sample number	<p>Why yellow colour? Is it an automatic formula? If it is 'Planned', shouldn't this column be white and in WP section? Please clarify.</p>	<p>Yes, it is an automatic formula but it is calculated on AR figures, so it cannot be "white".</p> <p>The formula to be added in the template and in the guidance is: "Number of vessels" * "Planned sample rate"</p>
Table 3.1: Response rate	<p>Why not 'updated' sample number? Why there is no such column here, like in table 5.2?</p>	<p>The "updated sample number" in table 3.1 is not requested because in this table MS should indicate the number of vessels (that is only part from the total population) not covered by Control Regulation or covered by CR but with low quality. Table 5.2 is a different case; in this table, MS are requested to indicate the population (total from the fleet register) and the updated sample number</p>
Table 5.1: Total population (AR)	<p>Better to include explicit instruction in cell description, harmonised with 'Number of vessels' in table 3.1.</p> <p>Please confirm that here should be 'population comprises all vessels' and not 'is based on', as all vessels are included in this population.</p>	<p>'population comprises all vessels' is correct</p>
Text box 5.1: general remarks: fleet segment size	<p>Is this linked in any way to the fleet report?</p>	<p>Yes, it is. Indicators in the "balance" report are calculated on the basis of DCF segments (Commission guidelines COM(2014)545)</p>
Table 5.2: Total population	<p>COM proposes 'Copy the number from 'Total population (AR)' column in Table 5.1</p> <p>Please confirm if OK with the reformulated description. Is this what has to be done?</p>	<p>No, it cannot be just copied from Table 5.1. Table 5.2 reports the number of vessels for each (clustered) segment and each economic variable, while Table 5.1 reports number of vessels for each (unclustered) segment.</p>
Table 5.2, 6.1, 7.1: Updated planned sample number	<p>Why yellow colour? Is it an automatic formula?</p>	<p>Yes, it is an automatic formula.</p> <p>The formula to be added in the template and in the guidance is:</p>

		"Total population" * "Updated planned sample rate"
Table 7.1: Economic and social variables	COM proposes: 'Use codes from the MasterCodeList 'Economic and Social Variable'  You may want to add the explanation that the codes come from PGECON..., like you mention in the report.	Even if the complementary socio-economic data collection on the fish processing sector may be implemented on a voluntary basis, STECF considers that information on complementary data collection, if present, should be given according to the list of variables as reported in Annex V of the 2020 PGECON report.
Annex 1.1: Compliance to international recommendations	Double entry. COM suggests to delete and check if some other entry is missing.	Yes, the double entry should be deleted.

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## **REPORT TO THE STECF**

### **EXPERT WORKING GROUP ON Revision of DCF Work Plan and Annual Report templates and guidelines (EWG-20-18)**

**Virtual meeting, 8-12 February 2021**

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 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Terms of Reference for EWG-20-18**

#### **Background**

The templates and guidelines for Work Plans (WP) and Annual Reports (AR) need to be revised to reflect changes introduced in the multiannual Union programme (EU MAP) for the collection and management of data. They need to be updated after being used during several yearly assessment cycles. This update should address new developments and the identified shortcomings. Given that the EU MAP revision has reached its final stage, the EU MAP Delegated and Implementing Decision drafts will serve as background to the EWG 20-18 work.

In October 2020, a group of ad-hoc contractors drafted WP and AR templates and guidelines based in particular on the work done by EWG 17-17 (previous AR template) and EWG 19-12 (WP template). The contractors also considered the STECF recommendations, put forward by DCF experts assessing AR and WP during regular evaluation cycles. These drafts, revised by EWG 20-16 and commented on by STECF (PLEN 20-03), were sent for consultation with DG MARE services in January 2021. The commented drafts served as the basis of the EWG 20-18 work.

The templates will be published in a single Commission Decision together with guidelines, but in parallel will be distributed to the Member States (MS) as Excel and Word documents, containing the necessary formats and formulas.

#### **Request to the EWG 20-18**

EWG 20-18 was requested to consider four ToRs: one on the finalisation of the WP/AR templates and guidelines, and the other three as preparatory items for future AR/WP assessments.

Specifically, EWG 20-18 was requested to:

#### **ToR 1: Finalise WP/AR templates and guidelines**

The output of ToR 1 should comprise:

1. An Excel workbook with complete WP and AR templates, including a list of check formulas, code lists etc.
2. A Word document with complete WP and AR templates, to accompany the Excel workbook.
3. A Word document with complete, structured and clear draft guidelines for MS on submission of WP and AR, together with general remarks on format etc.

The revised WP/AR templates and guidelines should fulfil compliance and quality criteria, among others:

- allow the demonstration of compliance with legal requirements on data collection (thresholds and coverage requirements under the EU MAP and other EU legislation, such as but not only RFMO requirements, SFPAs, private licences<sup>[1]</sup>);
- allow the demonstration of the quality of data collection design, respecting sound statistical principles (clear indication of data sources, on-shore/on-board sampling, clear stratification);
- accommodate end-user needs;
- aim for user-friendliness: clear guidance for submission, standardisation of information where possible (provide the lists of values that should be used to fill in the templates);
- provide flexibility (space for extra tables and text, explanation in guidelines) to include data collection activities not covered by the EU MAP that MS wish to submit for Commission approval in the WP and report on in the AR or to reflect changes in the data collection design;
- provide flexibility in the guidelines for country-specific situations (outermost regions, land-locked countries, different proportion between fisheries/aquaculture/processing).

The documents should also address future **regional WP** and their integration with national WP's, as well as the reporting on regional WP's and their integration with national AR. WP/AR templates should not create unnecessary administrative burden (i.e. no empty tables to fill with N/A, avoid duplication of information).

**ToR 2: Revise assessment grids and criteria for the EWG 21-17 on WP assessment;** prepare stand-alone document for evaluators

In view of the October 2021 submission of WP 2022-20xx (to be confirmed), the EWG was requested to revise assessment grids and evaluation criteria. Previous WP evaluation groups asked for a stand-alone document with clear instructions to facilitate evaluators' work (evaluation grid with a set of questions).

EWG 20-18 was also requested to recommend the most efficient assessment procedure for the October 2021 exercise, bearing in mind that the WPs will need to be very thoroughly checked and evaluated (the WP will be based on the revised EU MAP and templates; COM services outside DG MARE will need to be involved early in the assessment to enable timely resubmissions, if necessary, so that final assessment is based on a complete STECF advice; same time constraints for WP decision adoption as every year, but with higher expected workload).

**ToR 3: Check the procedure for the EWG 21-09 on AR assessment;** prepare stand-alone document for evaluators

EWG 20-08 assessed the 2019 ARs based on a revised assessment grid and criteria. The group asked for a stand-alone document with clear instructions, to facilitate evaluators' work. Therefore, EWG 20-18 is requested to prepare this document and recommend the most efficient assessment procedure for June 2021, especially the exchange between pre-screeners, experts and MS, bearing in mind the Covid-19 impacts on 2020 activities (expected differences in reporting, compared to previous years).

**ToR 4: Discuss ISC comments on WP 2020-2021 (DG ENV and JRC);** recommend relevant ISC remarks to communicate to RCG/MS in view of WP 2022-2024 submission

In the WP adoption process, DG MARE consults other COM services in an interservice consultation (ISC). As these remarks come after the November STECF plenary, they are not assessed by STECF. For the new programming cycle under the revised EU MAP, DG MARE requested EWG 20-18 to assess previous ISC comments and recommend the relevant ones to be communicated to concerned MS and/or RCGs, in view of the October 2021 submission of the new WPs.

## Background documentation

- Current WP/AR decisions<sup>[2]</sup>
- Current EU MAP decisions<sup>[3]</sup> / DCF regulation<sup>[4]</sup>
- Recent EU MAP draft (version of 27 November 2020, submitted to ISC, to be updated before the EWG 20-18)
- COM commented draft AR/WP templates and guidelines, outputs from the EWG 20-16
- STECF 19-02: EWG 19-05<sup>[5]</sup> on evaluation of surveys
- STECF 20-03: EWG 20-16 report<sup>[6]</sup>
- STECF 20-02: EWG 20-08 report<sup>[7]</sup>
- Ad-hoc March 2020 compilation<sup>[8]</sup>
- STECF 19-03: EWG 19-12 (WP)<sup>[9]</sup>; annexes<sup>[10]</sup>
- STECF EWG 17-17 (AR work)<sup>[11]</sup>; annexes<sup>[12]</sup>
- Other relevant COM/RCG/PGECON/STECF documents (comments on the revision of EU MAP/templates)
- WP 2020-2021 ISC results from 2019 and 2020 consultation
- Current AR/WP evaluation grids and criteria

<sup>[1]</sup> E.g. with Angola.

<sup>[2]</sup> [http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec\\_impl/2016/1701/oj](http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2016/1701/oj); [http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec\\_impl/2018/1283/oj](http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2018/1283/oj).

<sup>[3]</sup> [http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec\\_impl/2019/909/oj](http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2019/909/oj); [http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec\\_del/2019/910/oj](http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec_del/2019/910/oj).

<sup>[4]</sup> <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2017/1004/oj>.

<sup>[5]</sup> <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC117485>

<sup>[6]</sup> <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC122990>

<sup>[7]</sup> <http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC121415>

<sup>[8]</sup> [https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/dcf-dcr/-/asset\\_publisher/6Xw3/document/id/2703908](https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/dcf-dcr/-/asset_publisher/6Xw3/document/id/2703908)

<sup>[9]</sup> <http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC119002>

<sup>[10]</sup> [https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/dcf-dcr/-/asset\\_publisher/6Xw3/document/id/2635596](https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/dcf-dcr/-/asset_publisher/6Xw3/document/id/2635596)

<sup>[11]</sup> <http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC109375>

<sup>[12]</sup> [https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/dcf-dcr/-/asset\\_publisher/6Xw3/document/id/1967560](https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/dcf-dcr/-/asset_publisher/6Xw3/document/id/1967560)

## 2 TEMPLATES AND GUIDELINES FOR WORK PLANS AND ANNUAL REPORTS

### 2.1 General approach

At the start of the EWG, experts worked in 3 subgroups: 1. Biological sampling, incl. diadromous & recreational; 2. Economic, social & fishing activity data; 3. Data quality. Later, experts from sub-group 3 joined the other groups, which further split into smaller groups of few experts, based on their subject expertise. In regular intervals, sub-group plenaries and EWG plenaries were held to update experts on the work progress and to introduce background documents and clarify details of the Terms of Reference. In addition, the EWG was attended by 6 observers and European Commission staff from DG MARE, DG ENV and JRC.

The subgroups revised the most recent version of the WP and AR template and guidance, including the Commission's questions and comments on the documents. In most cases, minor changes were made, often to clarify the guidance, or to take out redundancies with e.g. the Data Quality sections that are proposed to be part of the template and guidance document, or to improve consistency in terminology throughout the Tables. Detailed technical comments of the EWG are available to the Commission as separate working files.

On a suggestion by the Commission, the EWG started an exercise on combining the guidance for common fields (WP/AR table column headings used in several tables) in a general section, instead of repeating text for field descriptions in the particular guidance for the various tables where these column headings occur. The outcome of this exercise is at the end of Annex 1, but should not be included in the legal act of the WP/AR template, as it would be too complex for Member States to scroll from a particular table to a general section and back. The outcome, however, shows that some of the common headers can be combined using a universal description, while other headers require descriptions that are specific for that table/section.

In order to harmonise terminology for the data collection years, it is proposed to refer to the 'Implementation year' as opposed to 'Sampling year'. The background is that not all data collection can be considered as sampling, and furthermore that not all activities in the WP year (implementation year) relate to data collected in the same year, but to year(s) before.

For most variables where coding should be standardised, a code has been created in a Master Code List that is part of the WP/AR template. It is proposed that the tables from the EU-MAP Delegated and Implementing Decisions are linked to the Master Code List containing the codes, in a format that supports 'copy & paste' from a list by the Member States, to prevent typographic errors.

The final templates and guidelines are reported in the following electronic annexes:

Annex 1 – WP/AR guidance document

Annex 2 – WP/AR tables template

#### 2.1.1 Biological sections

##### *Addition to tables*

Table 2.5 (Sampling plan description for biological data): 'Observation types' has been added, to reflect the current development of image recordings, e.g., by CCTV.

##### *Other proposals*

Table 1.4 (Follow-up of recommendations and agreements): As this table only applies to the Annual Report, it is proposed to put this as the last table of Section 1, and switch Tables 1.4 and 1.5 (Bi- and multi-lateral agreements).

#### *Newly proposed tables*

Referring to the EU-MAP section on “Data on the impact of Union fisheries on marine biological resources and marine ecosystems”, WP/AR requirements for the sampling/observation of incidental catches of protected and sensitive species and the assessment of the impact of fisheries on the seabed were discussed by the EWG. In addition, a table on fishing activities for eel was discussed with external experts.

#### *Occurrence of incidental catches of protected and sensitive species (PETS)*

The group has discussed the addition of a separate PETS table. It is proposed not to add a separate table, as the information should be made available by the Member States in Table 2.5. Recording of incidental bycatch of PETS requires a sampling design that should be tailored to the aim of the sampling or observation, which is either sampling of the commercial fishery or dedicated scientific studies on PETS observation. As a consequence, there is no option to plan a sampling design for PETS recording when carrying out sampling designed for commercial fisheries. It is not possible to plan the PETS recording, as collecting information on incidental bycatch is never an objective by itself (see STECF 20-16, Annex 3). PETS bycatch can be recorded, however, when occurring in the sampling schemes on commercial fisheries, so Table 2.5 is the most convenient location to report on PETS recording.

#### *Assessment of impact of fisheries on the marine habitat*

The data collection for the impact on the marine habitat falls mainly under the Control Regulation (e.g. VMS). The information is therefore not publicly available, and data transmission to end users takes place via data calls.

#### *Impact of fishing activities on food webs (stomach sampling)*

Although stomach sampling may most often take place as an additional task within an existing sampling scheme (commercial fisheries, recreational fisheries and/or research surveys at sea), the collection of stomach information cannot be considered ‘incidental’ (as opposed to recording of incidental bycatch). The processing and data transfer follow a different process than the primary data derived from the sampling scheme. Therefore, it is proposed to report the planning and the achievements of stomach sampling in a separate table. The EWG proposes to take out the columns referring to the number of days needed for the analyses of the stomach, as the Work Plan and Annual Reports should consider the planning/achievement of the sampling and not the costs of stomach analysis. This general logic is also followed in other parts of the templates, where e.g. the number of person days needed for reading otoliths is also not planned or reported. It should however be clear that stomach analysis is a tedious and time-consuming activity that needs specific expertise, whereof the costs may well exceed the costs of the physical collection of the stomachs.

#### *Eel information*

Table 3.2 (Fishing activity variables data collection strategy for eel commercial fisheries) had been proposed as a new table for the Annual Report only, to reflect the end-user requirements regarding the data collection on inland commercial fisheries for eel. After discussion with the Commission, however, it was decided not to include a new table, but a new Text Box requesting information on how Member States collect fishing activity data for commercial inland fisheries on eel (mainly expected to be based on the eel management regulation 1100/2007), referring to the EU-MAP Delegated Decision section 3.2.



### 2.1.2 Fishing activity and economic sections

The EWG 20-18 considered the background documents provided for the meeting. The sub-group of economists worked in parallel on the WP templates, Guidelines and code list to ensure consistency and links between different elements of the WP/AR.

Activity indicator for fishing vessels has been codified and related description has been reported in the MasterCodeList.

It has been clearly indicated that Text Box 3.1 Fishing Activity variables should include any data collection in addition to the requirements of the Control Regulation.

Regarding the fish processing sector, EWG proposed to include the information for data collection to the structure of WP and AR templates (Table 7.1 and Text Box 7.1). Even if the complementary socio-economic data collection on the fish processing sector may be implemented on a voluntary basis, EWG considered that information on complementary data collection, if present, should be given according to the template for the checking whether the data collection was planned and carried out and for data quality control.

All quality information was moved from Text Boxes to Annex 1.2 (quality reports). In order to improve the quality reporting of economic data, the EWG used PGECON's Data Collection Methodological Document for Economic data, as described in Annex 8 of PGECON 2017. In addition to the sections suggested by PGECON, the EWG also included the confidentiality considerations currently available in Table 5B. The inclusion of Annex 1.2 will considerably improve submitted information on data quality and should allow for a more efficient and relevant assessment of the WPs.

Finally, the content of each text box has been described. Text Box 3.1 is optional and applies when the complementary data collection is implemented. Text Box 5.1 should provide detailed descriptions on clustering, how activity indicators were applied and deviations from the definitions listed in the EU-MAP Guidance Document suggested by PGECON. Text Box 6.1 should provide the application of thresholds in the aquaculture.

## **3 ASSESSMENT GRIDS AND CRITERIA FOR THE EWG 21-17 ON WORK PLAN ASSESSMENT**

The EWG reviewed the previous WP assessment grid, based on EWG 16-16, and adapted them to the requirements of the revised EU-MAP. In addition, a stand-alone document for guidance of WP evaluators was drafted by the EWG.

The final evaluation templates for WP evaluation are reported in the following annexes:

Annex 3 – Evaluation grid for WP evaluation

Annex 4 – Guidance for evaluators (WP)

The EWG considered that the development of a Data Validation (DV) tool is necessary before the WP evaluation meeting in November 2021. The DV tool could help to verify the MS coding for the WP tables and to prevent submitting a wrong value. The WP DV procedure can simplify the WP evaluation process and resolve all questions related to the structural issues.

The EWG observed that the WPs 2022-2024 submitted for evaluation in 2021 will be the first WPs to contain detailed information on survey and estimation design through the submission of the new Annexes 1.1 and 1.2 (quality reports). The information provided through the submission of these annexes would be extensive. In order to ensure that annexes are evaluated sufficiently, the EWG concluded that an additional STECF EWG or ad-hoc contracts should be organised for the evaluation of these annexes. Since the methodological approach is seldom changed within a WP period, the EWG considers that this evaluation is most likely only needed once for the WPs 2022-2024.

#### 4 PROCEDURE FOR THE EWG 21-09 ON THE ASSESSMENT OF ANNUAL REPORTS

During previous EWGs for evaluation of ARs, Member States were often contacted during the EWG to explain or resubmit parts of the AR. Since the need for contacting the Member States is not apparent until after the evaluation process has started, resubmissions and clarifications from the Member States often arrive at the end of the EWG, allowing limited time for evaluation of the resubmitted ARs.

The EWG 20-08 concluded that for the forthcoming years, major issues identified by the pre-screeners should be sent to the Member States the week before the EWG. This would allow for major issues to have been dealt with before the start of the meeting and free more time within the EWG for the assessment process. PLEN 20-02 agreed with EWG 20-08 that it would be more efficient in future for any major issues to be resolved prior to the beginning of the EWG based on the outcome of the pre-screening exercise.

Based on the conclusions of EWG 20-18 and PLEN 20-02, the following is suggested for an improved procedure for the AR evaluation in 2021:

6. The Commission should notify the Member States that they might be contacted prior to the EWG and requested to resubmit parts of the AR or provide clarifications on major issues with respect to the AR based on the output of pre-screeners. Member States should also be made aware that the experts might request additional information or resubmission during the EWG.
7. The pre-screening should start no later than 3 June 2021 so that the comments can be sent to the Member States no later than 16 June, as the EWG 21-09 will start on 21 June.
8. One pre-screener should be tasked to take the coordinating role to collate and review comments raised during the pre-screening exercise together with the Commission. Following this filtering exercise, the Commission should raise serious issues with AR submissions with Member States at the end of the pre-screening exercise and before the EWG.
9. Serious issues should be defined by the pre-screeners as based on the following criteria; *gross inconsistencies, serious formatting issues, missing tables, misplaced information etc.*
10. All issues identified should be reviewed by at least two experts before being sent to the Member States.

The Covid-19 pandemic affected the data collection efforts in Member States to various degrees. The impacts on 2020 data collection activities will be evident in the 2020 ARs and differences in reporting compared to previous years are expected. The EWG concludes that the Commission should advise Member States to clearly distinguish between effects caused by the Covid-19 situation and for other reasons in the submitted ARs. The EWG also suggests that any reported effects due to Covid-19 should be differentiated from other factors in the AR assessment grid and in the overall presentation of the evaluation results in the EWG report. MS have been providing quarterly reports on the

implementation of the data collection to the Commission and Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs). These reports should be used by the EWG 21-09 as reference for these cases.

As requested, the EWG drafted a standalone document for evaluators of the AR assessment (Annex 5). A first attempt on AR evaluation guidance for the period 2022 and beyond has been prepared in Annex 6.

## **5 ISC COMMENTS ON WP 2020-2021**

The EWG was provided with documents from the Commission's Inter-Service Consultations (ISC) on the MS Work Plans 2020-2021. These documents, however, only address particular sections of the WPs, such as by-catch data collection and socio-economic data, for a sub-set of Member States. Considering that the WPs 2020-2021 have been approved at the end of 2019 and 2020, that the evaluation of these ISC comments should take place in connection with the WP assessment and that the WPs 2022-2024 are now being prepared, the best use of the ISC documents would be as background documents for the STECF EWG 21-17 on WP assessment.

## 6 CONTACT DETAILS OF EWG-20-18 PARTICIPANTS

Information on EWG participant's affiliations is displayed for information only. In any case, Members of the STECF, invited experts, and JRC experts shall act independently. 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 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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## **7 LIST OF ANNEXES**

Electronic annexes are published on the meeting's web site on:  
<http://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/stecf/ewg2018>

List of electronic annexes:

- EWG-20-18 – Annex 1 – WP/AR guidance document
- EWG-20-18 – Annex 2 – WP/AR tables template
- EWG-20-18 – Annex 3 – Evaluation grid for WP evaluation
- EWG-20-18 – Annex 4 – Guidance for evaluators (WP)
- EWG-20-18 – Annex 5 – Guidance for evaluators (AR 2020-2021)
- EWG-20-18 – Annex 6 – Draft guidance for evaluators (AR 2022 and beyond)

## **8 LIST OF BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Background documents are published on the meeting's web site on:  
<http://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/stecf/ewg2018>

List of background documents:

EWG-20-18 – Doc 1 - Declarations of invited and JRC experts (see also section 6 of this report – List of participants)

- Current WP/AR decisions
- Current EU MAP decisions / DCF regulation
- Recent EU MAP draft (version of 27 November 2020, submitted to ISC, to be updated before the EWG 20-18)
- COM commented draft AR/WP templates and guidelines, outputs from the EWG 20-16
- STECF 19-02: EWG 19-05 on evaluation of surveys
- STECF 20-03: EWG 20-16 report
- STECF 20-02: EWG 20-08 report
- Ad-hoc March 2020 compilation
- STECF 19-03: EWG 19-12 (WP); annexes
- STECF EWG 17-17 (AR work); annexes
- Other relevant COM/RCG/PGECON/STECF documents (comments on the revision of EU MAP/templates)
- WP 2020-2021 ISC results from 2019 and 2020 consultation
- Current AR/WP evaluation grids and criteria



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