STECF: Guidelines for STECF Expert Working Group (EWG) Chairs

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Table of content

1. Commission Decision establishing the STECF and STECF Rules of procedure 2
2. Terms of reference/requests from the Commission: 2
3. Agenda and foreseen tasks: 2
4. Roles of the JRC in relation to STECF and EWGs 2
5. Executive Summary – stand alone document 2
6. Report of EWGs 5
7. Background documents and referencing 6
8. Report language requirements 7
9. Referencing reports 7
10. Deadlines for reports 7
11. Editing, formatting, dissemination and publication of reports: 7
12. Observers at EWGs 8
13. Presentation of EWG reports to STECF 8
14. Ad hoc contracts for chairs for finalizing contracts 8
15. EWGs associated with DCF data calls – data-handling procedures 9
16. EWGS associated with DCF data calls – reporting data transmission issues 12

1. **COMMISSION DECISION ESTABLISHING THE STECF AND STECF RULES OF PROCEDURE**

Chairs should familiarise themselves with the provisions of 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

(http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016D0226%2801%29&rid=1).

Chairs should familiarise themselves with the STECF Rules of procedure (https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/about-stecf).

2. **TERMS OF REFERENCE/REQUESTS FROM THE COMMISSION:**

Chairs should review the ToRs for the EWG in advance especially whether they are clear, unambiguous and whether the work requested is feasible. If necessary, clarification should be sought from the DG MARE focal point/ DG MARE coordinator.

3. **AGENDA AND FORESEEN TASKS:**

Chairs should draft and circulate the agenda and anticipated tasks to EWG participants at least 5 working days ahead of meeting.

4. **ROLES OF THE JRC IN RELATION TO STECF AND EWGS**

STECF secretariat: planning; coordination; front office; web site; collecting, checking, and publishing declarations (if authorized by expert), final editing and publishing of reports – Commission role

JRC Data Collection team: servicing data calls through DCF – Commission role

JRC experts/chairs: attending STECF Working Groups and plenary meetings as independent experts equal to invited experts (provide declarations of interest and commitment as any other expert) – non Commission role

5. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – STAND ALONE DOCUMENT**

The EWG shall compile an executive summary in a **separate** WORD document entitled Executive summary of the EWG xx-xx.

This executive summary should provide a short description of the policy context, a concise overview of work undertaken by the EWG, and a summary of the main findings in relation to each of the terms of reference, draft conclusions/ recommendations/advice ***preferably as bullets***. The Executive Summary should also indicate whether the EWG was able to adequately address each Term of Reference. If any of the Terms of reference are considered not to have been adequately addressed, the reasons why should be explicitly stated. The executive summary should also include conclusions and advice/recommendations (if appropriate).

The Executive Summary should be "stand alone" so that as far as possible, the reader is able to gain an understanding what has been achieved by the EWG and its main findings.

The executive summary shall be considered draft basis for the STECF comments, observations and advice.

Maximum length of the executive summary should be 3 pages.

Use the guidance given below to help you in your drafting of the Executive summary:

- *The main target audience for an Executive Summary are (senior) policy colleagues across the Commission i.e. DG MARE.*
- *Picture a Commissioner or Director-General having 10mins to read the brief only before discussing the topic at a meeting. They will want very concisely the main policy-relevant outcomes and do not want the details of how you came to your results/conclusions (they will trust that the STECF experts do this correctly).*
- *The Executive Summary should "tell a story," i.e. have a clear and relevant narrative.*
- *Do not be overly technical. Use language that a non-specialist reader would understand and would want to read, e.g. do not overly use technical terms or acronyms and, if used, define these in the Overview section.*
- *Write it with a view that if a (non-expert) reader wishes to learn more, they can go to the (relevant section of the) report.*
- *When drafting, follow the Keep It Short and Simple and "Less is More" approaches and put yourself in the shoes of the reader.*

- *Use (question) sub-headings to break up the text.*

Policy context

- *What broader and then specific EU (ongoing) policy/political/legislative issue does the report address?*

- *What does the report add (added value) to previous advice provided by the STECF?*

Conclusions

Conclusions of the EWG should be taken to be a judgment or decision reached after deliberation over the observations made. All **conclusions of the EWG** should be "stand alone" and copied from the relevant section of the EWG report.

Advice and recommendations

Advice

Take care when using the words advice and advise. It is perhaps easiest to distinguish between them as follows:

- **Advice** is an opinion about what could or should be done about a situation or problem. **Advice** is a noun
- To **Advise** is to communicate information. **Advise** is a verb.

Recommend

Also be careful with recommend and recommendations. Because STECF is requested to advise or give advice to the Commission, recommendations in STECF reports are intended to advise as to the best course of action or choice.

The EWG report to the STECF shall not contain any advice or recommendations. All recommendations of the EWG shall be compiled in the executive summary and shall be considered draft advice/recommendations of the STECF.

The EWG may make proposals or suggestions in response to requests from the Commission but any such proposals or suggestions should be worded so that they are

directed to the STECF for consideration; e.g. *In its response to the Commission the EWG xx-xx requests that the STECF take into account the following proposals/suggestions*.

6. REPORT OF EWGS

A Report template will be provided by the secretariat.

Please stick as closely as possible to the report template provided by the Secretariat. Note that reports of EWGs are REPORTS TO THE STECF and have no official status until they have been reviewed by the STECF and published on the STECF web site as a Report of the STECF. Until the report is published on the STECF website, its distribution should be restricted to the chair, experts (STECF members, invited experts, JRC experts), and STECF secretariat and should not be circulated more widely (e.g. to observers or other interested parties). When finalizing the report, chairs should only accept substantive editorial comments from expert members of the EWG. Responsibility for the content of EWG reports lies exclusively with the EWG chair and expert participants.

Note particularly that as far as possible, the report content should be structured as follows:

Format and Contents of EWG Reports:

The main body of the EWG Report shall consist of the following sections

1. Introduction

This may be drawn from the background information given in the ToRs and elaborated as appropriate. Chairs should strive to ensure the introduction is informative but as concise as possible.

1.1. Terms of Reference for EWG-XX-XX

These should be the agreed ToRs as displayed on the meeting web pages on the STECF website.

3. Section 3 to Section N

These are at the discretion of the EWG although wherever possible sections should correspond to the specific requests listed in the ToRs. Each section should include any conclusions that the EWG has in relation to the findings reported in that section. For example if the section provides a response to a specific question, then the EWG should aim to conclude with the answer to that question. As far as possible any conclusions should be stand alone. Chairs should strive to ensure that the text is clear, concise and unambiguous.

N+1. EWG-XX-XX List of Participants- include list of participants and contact details.

N+2. List of Background Documents - include list of all background documents with unique numbering.

7. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCING

All background documents should be given a unique reference number according to the following convention:

EWG-XX-XX Doc. z where XX-XX is the EWG number and z is the unique number of the document.

e.g

1. STECF EWG 11-01 Doc. 1Choice of Stock-Recruit model and equilibrium evaluations for Bay of Biscay sole. E J Simmonds

2. STECF EWG-11-01 –Doc. 5 Bio-economic Impact Assessment sole Bay of Biscay management plan Claire Macher, Mathieu Merzereaud, Michel Bertignac, Christelle Le Grand, Gérard Biais, and Olivier Guyader

In the text of the report, example 1 above would be referred to as STECF EWG 11-01 Doc. 1.

Documents are not to be appended to the report but are to be accessed via a link to the STECF website. The STECF Secretariat will provide the link. Documents provided to STECF as hard copy only should be scanned by the Secretariat and uploaded to the STECF website.

8. REPORT LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

The working language of the STECF and its EWGs is English and all EWG reports are written in English. Chairs and expert participants should strive to ensure that the language in the report is clear and unambiguous. All reports are published and available to the public on the STECF web site, and are read not only by the Commission (i.e. DG MARE), but also by the EU Council, European Parliament, Member States' authorities, industry, ACs, NGOs, etc. Several reports may also be used as reference reports.

9. REFERENCING REPORTS

Reports published by the STECF should be referenced according to the appropriate citation for those reports. Information on how to reference the reports of the STECF and its predecessor the STCF are to be found at the bottom of the dedicated report section on the STECF web site on https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports.

10. DEADLINES FOR REPORTS

All EWG reports should be finalised and delivered to the Secretariat within 10 working days following the end of the meeting. Further time may be allocated to the EWG to finalise their report by agreement with the STECF Bureau but this is expected to occur only in exceptional circumstances.

The STECF Bureau is composed of the STECF chair and vice-chairs, the DG MARE focal for STECF, and STECF secretariat – JRC (functional email address is: stecf-bureau@jrc.ec.europe.eu).

11. EDITING, FORMATTING, DISSEMINATION AND PUBLICATION OF REPORTS:

Reports edited by the chair will then be formatted and final-edited by the secretariat (note: principal responsibility for report quality is with EWG/STECF) and published on the STECF web site as final pending publication number (ISBN, EUR, doi) number.

Since 2016 the final reports are published as series "Reports of the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries" (with own ISSN) under the JRC Science for Policy Reports umbrella.

Reports are announced in the news section of the STECF web site. Once a report received the publication number the version on the STECF website will be replaced and the final reports will also be available via the JRC online publication repository

(http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/) and the EU book shop (https://bookshop.europa.eu/en/home/).

Note: The numbers on cover and back pages of the final published reports before 2018 do not necessarily correspond with the EWG numbering (e.g. STECF-12-06 means sixth report published by STECF in 2012 containing a report to the STECF originating from EWG-12-02). This is because some EWGs produce multiple reports.

Nowadays, the numbers on cover and back pages of the final published reports do correspond with the EWG numbering.

The STECF secretariat notifies the STECF and DG MARE when a report of the STECF is finalised and released on the STECF website.

12. OBSERVERS AT EWGS

Chairs should point out the protocol for observers at the start of the meeting (https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/news).

13. PRESENTATION OF EWG REPORTS TO STECF

The EWG chair (or nominated alternative) will normally be requested to present the EWG report to the STECF plenum. The EWG report presentation normally takes place on the 1st plenary day (afternoon). The EWG chair should plan for sufficient attendance at the plenary (2-3 days) in order to support the STECF in drafting its opinion.

14. AD HOC CONTRACTS FOR CHAIRS FOR FINALIZING CONTRACTS

DG MARE offers standard ad hoc contracts (5 days) to support to chairs to finalize the meeting reports. Deadlines specified in such ad hoc contracts are normally 10 working days following the end of the meeting to which the report relates. In exceptional circumstances a later deadline may be specified. As any contract, an ad hoc contract set up under the Commission Decision on STECF has to specify a deadline. The deliverables under such an ad hoc contract are the EWG report and an executive summary as separate stand-alone document. Responsibility for the content of EWG reports lies exclusively with the EWG chair and expert participants.

15. EWGS ASSOCIATED WITH DCF DATA CALLS – DATA-HANDLING PROCEDURES

Data calls to Member States associated with STECF EWGs are issued by the Commission. JRC serves those data calls feeding into the work of the STECF EWGs. Each data call has an official deadline for data submission by MS and according to DCF legislation, prime responsibility for quality of data rests with the MS. After the deadline for submission of data under data calls and before the start of the relevant EWGs, JRC carries out further quality checks of submitted data and if necessary raises any issues with the relevant MS thereby providing an option for correction and resubmission. During an EWG meeting or between 2 EWGs dealing with the same topic (e.g. AER Fleet 2013) further corrections and/or re-uploads may be necessary.

Chairs and EWGs are therefore requested to take note and of and have to implement the data-handling procedures for STECF Expert Working Groups as agreed between STECF, DG MARE and JRC (STECF secretariat) in February 2015:

Data-handling procedures for STECF Expert Working Groups (EWGs)

Working procedures

1. Official Data Call and Legal Deadline: The official data call shall be transmitted to Member States at least one calendar month before the legal deadline for submission of data specified in the data call, but as far in advance of the legal deadline as possible.
2. STECF EWG meeting: The STECF EWG meeting associated with the data call should preferably be convened no earlier than one calendar month following the legal deadline. This is to ensure that sufficient time is available to allow data checks to be undertaken before the EWG takes place.
3. Operational Deadline: In recognition of the fact that, based on past experience, data submitted by Member States in response to an official data call may sometimes contain errors and gaps, an operational deadline of two calendar weeks (two periods of seven consecutive calendar days) before the commencement of the STECF EWG meeting associated to the data call shall be established. Subsequent to the legal deadline and pending the outcome of data checks undertaken by the JRC or the Member States themselves, if necessary, Member States may upload amended or additional data up to the operational deadline.
4. Subsequent to the operational deadline and during the associated STECF EWG meeting, Member States may only provide modifications to data previously uploaded upon request from the JRC or the STECF EWG.
5. Following the closure of the STECF EWG meeting*, the JRC databases shall be considered final and no further uploads will be permitted. At that time, any missing or erroneous data will be noted in the STECF EWG and plenary reports.

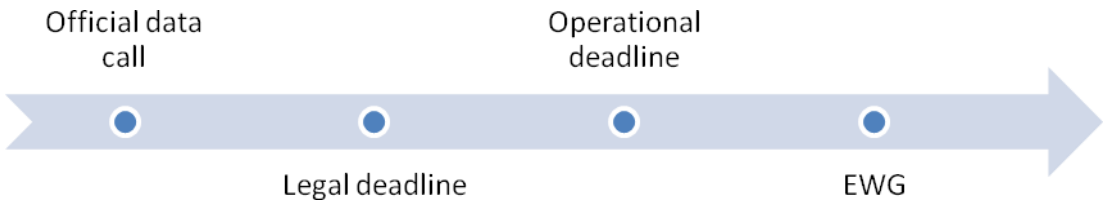
6. An official data call may contain requests for data that are mandatory under the provisions of Member States' approved National Programs. In addition, a data call may also request data over and above the provisions specified in the approved National Programs. It is desirable that Member States voluntarily provide such data in order that the ability of the STECF EWG to undertake its work is not compromised.

- *In cases where two or more STECF EWGs are associated to the data call (e.g. Annual fleet economic report)* Member States may be requested to provide updates for up to two calendar weeks (two periods of seven consecutive calendar days) following the first EWG meeting.

See also next page for graph of procedures.

Data-handling procedures for STECF Expert Working Groups – graph

In case of 1 EWG



Date 0	No sooner than Date 0 + 1 calendar month	Date N - 2 calendar weeks	Date N

In case of 2 EWGs

Date 0	No sooner than Date 0 + 1 calendar month	Date N - 2 calendar weeks	Date N	Date N + 2 calendar weeks	Date X

16. EWGS ASSOCIATED WITH DCF DATA CALLS – REPORTING DATA TRANSMISSION ISSUES

Chairs of EWGs linked to a data call should ensure that data transmission issues are reported through the Data Transmission Monitoring Tool (DTMT) (https://dcallnet.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/dcf/dtmt). The Secretariat will provide the EWG chairs with the login credentials and the DTMT guidelines.