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Evaluation of DCF National Work Plan amendments for 2018/19 (STECF-17-19)

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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 evaluation of DCF National Work Plan amendments for 2018/19. The report was reviewed by the STECF by written procedure in December 2017.

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EWG-17-13 report:

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SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COMMITTEE FOR FISHERIES (STECF)

Evaluation of DCF National Work Plan amendments for 2018/19 (STECF-17-19)

The report of EWG-17-13 was reviewed by written procedure in December 2017

Request to the STECF

STECF is requested to review the report of the STECF Expert Working Group meeting 17-13 by written procedure, evaluate the findings and make any appropriate comments and recommendations.

STECF observations

The EWG-17-13 met in Hamburg from 13 to 17 of November 2017 to evaluate the amendments submitted by Member States of their national Work Plans (WPs) and/or regional Work Plans for 2018-2019 addressing conformity, scientific relevance of the data, quality of the methods and the procedures. In addition, the EWG was asked to elaborate on the outcome from the STECF EWG 17-04 meeting in Copenhagen on quality aspects of evaluation of MS reporting, including the WPs as well as the new Annual Report template as proposed by the STECF EWG 17-17 part 1 and 2.

Evaluation of Member States' amendments of Work Plans for 2018-2019

STECF notes that the EWG-17-13 was provided with the WP tables and WP text (boxes) of all MS, documents explaining the amendments to the WPs and access to supporting information, such as relevant EWG reports (from EWG 16-16, 17-04, 17-07 and 17-17), ad-hoc expert reports on WP evaluation criteria, relevant ICES reports and the latest Liaison Meeting report.

STECF observes that in order to be consistent with the evaluation carried out during the STECF EWG 16-16, the same evaluation criteria and procedure were used for evaluation by the EWG-17-13. The evaluation sheets of the EWG 16-16, however, have been expanded by the 'DG MARE Assessment Grid' that has been communicated to the MS at the end of 2016 within the WP adoption procedure.

STECF observes that 19 MS had submitted amended WPs. For 6 MS the amendments were found satisfactory by the EWG. The remaining 13 MS were contacted by the Commission during the EWG with the aim to solve the issues before the end of the EWG. For 8 of these, the issues could be solved. For the remaining 5 there were still outstanding issues at the end of the EWG.

STECF notes that a second review of revised versions, sent during the meeting, was made for as many issues as possible in the given timeframe. A note stating whether the issues have been fully, partially, or not addressed has been added to the first review. It is to be noted that revisions sent to the EWG on the last day of the meeting could not be fully reviewed due to time constraints.

In general, most shortcomings identified in the evaluation process was more of formal nature, i.e. incomplete descriptions, inconsistencies between tables etc. and could be solved during the EWG by correspondence between DG MARE and the MS.

STECF notes that the results of the evaluation by MS are not part of the report but are given in an electronic annex.

Templates and guidelines for the Annual Reports

STECF recognises that the EWG 17-13 revised the new proposed Excel tables, report text templates and guidelines from EWG 17-17 and made a number of comments/proposals in order to make the AR templates and guidelines more user-friendly and more appropriate to assess the compliance of MS with the WP and the EU-MAP.

STECF notes that the more relevant changes were proposed for Table 1D (Recreational fisheries), Tables 1F/1Fa (Incidental by-catch of birds, mammals, reptiles and fish) and tables 3A–3C (Economics - fleet, aquaculture, processing). STECF notes that, for the “economic” tables, the EWG suggested including a column containing the coefficient of variation (CV).

Improvements in the evaluation of Work Plans, Annual Reports and Data Transmission

STECF notes that the Commission asked the EWG 17-13 to review the proposed evaluation procedures for DT and AR, and develop an evaluation procedure for WPs. The EWG was also asked to list the difficulties and strengths of the current process (mapping the situation), from the EWG, pre-screeners' as well as MS perspective. STECF recognises that despite the tight schedule, the EWG 17-13 fully addressed these requests and made a number of additions into the respective proposals of the EWG 17-07.

STECF notes that the EWG 17-13 decided to distinguish two periods: the ‘transition period 2017-2019’ and a time after the transition (2020 onwards). This distinction is based on the evidence that several important steps are under development in the DCF machinery, such as: development of regional sampling plans, development of IT facilities (platform, R scripts, Excel sheets) for storing, validating and cross-checking of Work Plans and Annual Reports. In the transition period, all developments should be implemented when ready, but it cannot be expected that everything is ready in 2018.

STECF notes that the EWG 17-13 discussed the AR annual cycle for reporting and evaluation and suggested some changes compared to the schedule presented in STECF PLEN 17-02 report (Figure 4.5.2., page 48). In particular, EWG 17-03 considered that: a) the legal deadline for submission of AR should be the 31st of May (and not the 15th of May as suggested by STECF PLEN-17-02); b) in order to allow for sufficient time between AR submission, EWG evaluation and endorsement by STECF (avoiding written procedure), no resubmission of AR (text or table) should be allowed to respond to pre-screeners' comments. Therefore, the 2nd final operational deadline (suggested by STECF 17-02) for AR submission is not needed anymore. STECF notes that EWG 17-13 considered that feedback from DG MARE to MS on the evaluation by pre-screeners should

serve only as a pre-announcement for the MS on the updates that will be asked for in the formal feedback.

STECF notes that the EWG 17-13 also discussed on the eventual post-screening to evaluate MS response, but the EWG rejected this option because it is the Commission's responsibility to decide on the final MS response and adoption of the WP and AR.

STECF conclusions

STECF concludes that the STECF EWG 17-13 report adequately addresses all Terms of Reference and endorses the outcome of the EWG. In addition, the STECF concludes the following:

Evaluation of Member States' amendments of Work Plans for 2018-2019

STECF endorses the evaluation of Member States' amendments of Work Plans for 2018-2019, as reported in the electronic annex.

Templates and guidelines for the Annual Reports

STECF endorses the amendments and adjustments of the proposed Excel tables, report text templates and guidelines from EWG 17-17, but STECF considers that the inclusion of an additional column in tables 3A-3C (Economics - fleet, aquaculture, processing) containing the coefficient of variation (CV) is not duly justified and not in line with the conclusions of STECF-17-11 (EWG 17-04 on Quality assurance for DCF data). In the review conducted by EWG 17-04 on quality indicators for inclusion in ARs and WPs it was concluded that the CV is not appropriate for evaluation of quality of sampling programs of economic data since the fleet segments are often small and heterogeneous potentially resulting in high CVs even though the coverage is high as well. STECF therefore reiterates its endorsement of the STECF 17-11 (EWG 17-04) report and concludes that the CV should not be included in the AR.

Improvements in the evaluation of Work Plans, Annual Reports and Data Transmission

STECF endorses the findings presented in the report. The amendments on the AR annual cycle for reporting and evaluation previously addressed by STECF PLEN 17-02 are well argued and can be endorsed by the STECF if the deadline for submission is set at 31 of May by the Commission. STECF does however reiterates its conclusion for the Commission to move the deadline forward to 15th of May (PLEN 17-02) so that a second operational deadline can be included (STECF PLEN 17-02 report (Figure 4.5.2., page 48).

Contact details of STECF members

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REPORT TO THE STECF

EXPERT WORKING GROUP ON Evaluation of DCF National Work Plan amendments for 2018/19 (EWG-17-13)

Hamburg, Germany, 13-17 November 2017

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

The STECF Expert Working Group (EWG) 17-13 met in Hamburg, Germany, from 13 to 17 November 2017, to evaluate amendments in Member States' (MS) national Work Plans (WPs) under the Data Collection Framework (DCF) for the years 2018-2019.

The work was conducted by 26 independent experts (see the list of participants in section 5). The Terms of Reference are presented below and the agenda is included in Annex 1.

1.1 Terms of Reference for EWG-17-13

The aim of this EWG was to evaluate the national Work Plans submitted by Member States and the regional Work Plans submitted by RCMs/RCGs respectively, by 31st October 2017, in terms of conformity, scientific relevance of the data and quality of the methods and procedures. In addition, building on the outcomes of STECF EWG 17-04, this EWG should further work on the future quality evaluation of MS reporting.

Background

Under the EMFF, the MS Operational Programmes must be supplemented by a Work Plan for data collection (Reg. 508/2014, Article 21) , which has replaced the National Programme. The Work Plan describes the planning of data collection on a national or regional level. The deadline for submission of Work Plans to COM is 31st October in a specified format. The evaluation criteria for the Work Plans were discussed for the first time in 2016 in relevant DCF groups (Regional Coordination Meetings, Liaison Meeting) and compiled by a number of ad hoc contracts. In addition, the COM compiled the general principles to be followed during the evaluation. Both documents were discussed in the autumn STECF Plenary 2016 (PLEN16-03, Brussels, 24-28 October 2016), and refined in STECF EWG 16-16, where the national Work Plans were evaluated for the first time. The outcomes of EWG 16-16 were reviewed by written procedure (STECF-16-25).

STECF EWG 17-04 (3-7 July 2017, Copenhagen) discussed the quality assurance for DCF data and concluded that the evaluation guidelines of Work Plans should be revised to facilitate the assessment of quality.

Tasks for the EWG

Experts are invited to evaluate the amendments submitted by Member States on their Work Plans and/or the regional Work Plans for 2018-2019, in accordance with Article 10 of Regulation (EU) No 2017/1004 , taking into account:

- the conformity of the Work Plans and any amendments thereto with the contents of Articles 6 and 9
- the scientific relevance of the data covered by the Work Plans for the purposes laid down in Article 1(1) and the quality of the proposed methods and procedures.

Taking into consideration that not all MS will re-submit their national Work Plans and in order to be consistent with the evaluation carried out last year during the STECF EWG 16-16, the same evaluation criteria and procedure will be used for this year's evaluation (see below). The EWG should produce the following:

- Overview of the assessment and overall evaluation of the amendments of Work Plans
- Per Member State: (i) an evaluation of the amendments of the Work Plan and any links to related Section(s) of the Work Plans in the template provided by the Commission (ii) Member State-specific issues relating to data collection as described in the Work Plan.
- In case of submission of a regional Work Plan, per region: (i) an evaluation of the coverage for the whole region for the specific section submitted (ii) an evaluation of the added value of a regional work plan vs a national one

In their feedback, the EWG should identify the comments that require a reaction by the MS(s) (resubmission of the Work Plan or clarification to the Commission) and those that are 'for information' only.

The evaluation will be based on the evaluation criteria used by the STECF EWG 16-16. The EWG should pay particular attention that the submitted Work Plans address the issues raised by STECF EWG 16-16 and COM assessment grids during last year's evaluation.

Based on the outcomes of STECF EWG 17-04, this EWG is invited to work on the quality aspects of evaluation of MS reporting, including both the Work Plans and the new Annual Report template (to be produced at STECF EWG 17-17 part 1 & 2). Regarding the Work Plans, the EWG should review, streamline and further work on the original (extended) evaluation guidelines for Work Plans, as submitted to the STECF EWG 16-16. As a second step, the EWG is invited to link this quality assessment to the Annual Report evaluation, based on the outcomes of STECF EWG 17-17 (part 1 & 2). The outcome can help, on one hand, MS to better plan and carry out data collection activities and STECF, on the other, to evaluate quality. The EWG is invited to demonstrate with examples from past reporting, the quality evaluation proposed. In addition, the EWG is invited to highlight any gaps remaining.

1.2 Structure of the report

Sections 2 and 3 present the results produced by the STECF-EWG 17-13. Section 2 contains a description of the evaluation process of the EWG. In section 3, the templates and guidance for Annual Reports (AR), based on the work of the EWG 17-17, are commented, while in section 4, future improvements for the evaluation process are proposed, based on the EWG observations. The detailed evaluation results by MS are given in Annex 2.

2 EVALUATION OF MEMBER STATES' AMENDMENTS OF WORK PLANS FOR 2018-2019

2.1 Background information

To carry out the evaluation, the EWG was provided with the WP tables and WP text (boxes) of all MS, documents explaining the amendments to the WPs and access to supporting information, such as relevant EWG reports (from EWG 16-16, 17-04, 17-07 and 17-17), ad-hoc expert reports on WP evaluation criteria, relevant ICES reports and the latest Liaison Meeting report.

For a full list of background documents, see Section 8.

2.2 Evaluation criteria, sheets and procedures

The EWG used the same evaluation criteria for the Work Plan (WP) amendments as applied to the WPs submitted last year and evaluated by the EWG 16-16. The evaluation sheets of the EWG 16-16, however, have been expanded by the 'DG MARE Assessment Grid' that has been communicated to the MS at the end of 2016 within the WP adoption procedure.

Overall, 19 MS have submitted amended WPs. For 6 MS, the EWG found the amendments satisfactory in terms of addressing the issues pointed out by STECF and DG MARE. These were: Austria, Cyprus, Italy, Malta, Slovenia and the United Kingdom. The remaining 13 MS were contacted by the Commission during the EWG with the aim to solve the issues bilaterally ('ping-pong') before the end of the EWG. For 8 of these, all issues could be clarified during the EWG. For the remaining 5 MS, however, some of the raised issues were still outstanding at the end of the EWG: France, Ireland, Lithuania, Romania and Sweden. The EWG commented on these procedures in section 4.

As the EWG 17-13 evaluated the resubmitted WPs for the period 2018-2019, the STECF evaluation applies to the period 2018-2019 only. This is because MS have forgotten to change the years in the resubmitted versions of the WPs (i.e. 2017-2019 instead of 2018-2019).

2.3 Formation of sub-groups and task allocation

The WP evaluation was split by sub-groups and experts were allocated to each sub-group according to their expertise. Each sub-group was tasked with the assessment of particular sections of the WP according with the table below.

Table 1 – Allocation of sections by sub-group and expertise

Sections	Sub-group	Expertise
Biological sampling of stocks and fisheries (sections 1A, 1B, 1C; sections 4, 5A and 7B&7C); Data availability (section 6A)	1	Biologists
Recreational fisheries, anadromous & catadromous species (sections 1D and 1E; Pilot study 1); Data availability (section 6A)	2	Biologists

By-catch and environmental impacts of fisheries (section 1F; Pilot study 2); Data availability (section 6A)	3	Biologists
Research surveys at sea (sections 1G and 1H), Data availability (section 6A) and meetings (section 7A)	4	Biologists
Transversal data (section 2); economic & social data (sections 3A, 3B, 3C and 5B; Pilot studies 3 and 4); Data availability (section 6A)	5	Economists

2.4 Evaluation process

Biological sampling

The biological sampling of stocks and fisheries (sections 1A, 1B, 1C; sections 4, 5A and 7B&7C) of 19 resubmitted WPs for 2018 and 2019 were reviewed by a subgroup of 10 experts. The work was distributed between five couples of experts, each reviewing three to five MS depending on the complexity of the WP. Questions needing coordination were discussed within the subgroup and issues brought in plenary for full approval.

It was found that the resubmitted WPs were mostly a follow-up of the bilateral between the European Commission and the MS after the EWG 16-16 review of the WPs 2017-2019. In order to better understand the amendments proposed since the adoption of the WPs and avoiding triggering of issues already discussed, the European Commission further provided an explanation on MS issues raised by EWG 16-16. The rationale taken for the evaluation was to highlight the issues which would prevent or confuse the further use of the WP as a support for the Annual Report 2017. For example, the consistencies between Tables 1A, 1B and 1C, and between Table 4A and 4B were deemed crucial, whereas the issues related to Tables 5A, 7B and 7C could be considered for a future resubmission.

Some issues linked to unresolved problems in the guidelines, i.e. region naming linked to the Table 5C of the EU-MAP Decision meant for economists, authorization to report two sampling schemes (e.g. at-sea and on-shore) in the same line of Table 4A, were accepted without change in the WP. Nevertheless, the EWG appreciated those MS proposing correction on the dual sampling schemes in Table 4A, especially in view of reporting the AR in 2017.

In addition, one MS had changed the standard formatting as presented in the tables which increased the difficulty in assessing the resubmission. Fortunately, this was identified by the experts involved but added confusion and difficulty in assessing the MS programme.

The issue of the consistency between Table 1A and Tables 1B-1C was heavily discussed. Indeed, a number of stocks are selected for sampling in Table 1A, based on the volume of catches and the relative contribution of the MS to the European catches. To this list, some MS added in Table 1B and 1C several stocks given to be incidentally sampled as part of the at-sea or scientific survey protocols, thus breaking the consistency between the three tables. The alternatives are, should MS report all stocks part of the sampling protocols as selected for sampling in Table 1A, which theoretically corresponds to all stocks listed, or should the MS not report in Tables 1B and 1C those incidental samples? The EWG opted for the latter solution, while suggesting MS to report the incidental catches in Table 1C when presenting their AR.

The resubmission of the WP for France was missing, although sent early to the EC. It was ultimately found that the resubmission was addressed to the EC but to the wrong e-mail address. Due to the short time frame, five experts with expertise in the individual sections, late in the

meeting, were allocated to the review of the French resubmission, following the same procedure as for the other MS.

With the aim of speeding up the validation process, the European Commission sent the subgroup comments requiring a resubmission of the WP to those MS concerned. In return, those MS responded to the request and sent a revised version, during the two last days of the meeting. The question on how to cope with the revised versions was discussed in plenary, acknowledging the benefits for both the EC and the MS to interact in real time on one hand, and on the other hand, the impossibility for the EWG to address all revisions and extend this procedure to the full set of NWP. EWG highlighted also the danger to send a message implying the need for all MS to 'stand-by' during EWG meetings in case some questions would need an immediate response. After discussion by the EWG, it was agreed to give a second review for as many issues as possible, following the subgroup procedure, and write a note below the first review, stating if the issue had been partly or totally addressed, or not addressed at all. It is to be noted that revisions sent during the last day of the EWG meeting could not be fully reviewed.

Recreational fisheries and diadromous species

The sections for recreational fisheries (1D), diadromous species (1E) and pilot study 1 of the resubmitted work plans were reviewed by a subgroup of four experts. Amendments of the respective sections of all 19 resubmitted work plans were discussed within the entire group. Consensus within the subgroup has been reached on all questions and major issues were brought to plenary for final agreement.

It was examined whether the amendments in the resubmitted WP fulfil the comments raised during the bilateral between the European Commission and the MS after the EWG 16-16 review of the WPs 2017-2019. Pilot studies and sampling plans were checked for consistency. The subgroup found that the amendments of most MS fully address the raised comments; from eight MS, however, additional action was requested.

Most shortcomings were related to incomplete descriptions of sampling strategies. Some sampling plans and one pilot study did not include all required water bodies, species and/or life stages. The respective MS were requested to provide additional information and include the missing water body/species/life stage in their WP. In a single case, it was assessed that the method to sample eel densities was not suitable to provide the proposed information. In the same WP, sampling numbers were reduced without explanation.

The subgroup notes that the Austrian pilot study on commercial whitefish fishery in alpine lakes does not seem to be included in the DCF. However, since the study was already adopted, no further action was requested.

Most of the open questions were solved during the EWG by correspondence between the Commission and the respective MS.

By-catch and environmental impacts of fisheries

The section on by-catch and environmental impacts of fisheries (section 1F and Pilot Study 2) of 19 resubmitted WPs for 2018 and 2019 were reviewed by a subgroup of two experts. Questions needing coordination were discussed within the subgroup and issues brought in plenary for approval.

It was found that the amendments made in the resubmitted WPs were mostly a follow-up of the bilateral between the European Commission and the MS after the EWG 16-16 review of the WPs 2017-2019. However, in some cases, MS had not fully addressed the STECF comments or new issues arose due to for example, inconsistencies between table 1F and Table 4A.

Some issues highlighted by the EWG 16-16 arose because the EWG 16-16 misinterpreted the meaning of "X" in column "Expected occurrence of recordings" in Table 1F. The guidelines for

Table 1F specifies for this column that the MS shall indicate the expected occurrence of recordings for individuals caught as incidental by-catch, including releases, in accordance with Table 1(D) of the multiannual Union programme. Fill in with (+/-) number or 'X'. The EWG 16-16 commented for the WP of two MS that only a few schemes had been selected for sampling for bycatch. However, the EWG believes that the MS involved had in fact the intention to sample all sampling strata they had reported in Table 1F, and by the "X", they were stating in which strata they expected occurrence of bycatches.

In relation to Pilot Studies, some clarification was requested from a MS on the aim of the proposed Pilot Study 2 and two new proposed pilot studies were also reviewed. Particularly noteworthy has been the coordinated role of the Regional Coordination Group on the Mediterranean and Black Sea and the effort of MS to follow its recommendations when submitting revised Pilot Study 2 on by-catch.

The EWG 17-13 acknowledges the effort taken by the MS to incorporate comments by the EWG 16-16 and to resolve the request for resubmission and clarification from the EWG (sent by the European Commission during the second half of the meeting). The EWG revised the clarification and material sent by those MS that responded during the two last days of the meeting.

Research surveys at sea

The subgroup evaluating the modules related to surveys at sea (1G, 1H), the related data transmission (6A) and meetings, follow-up of recommendations and bi- and multilateral agreements (7ABC) worked on 15 resubmitted Work Plans. The majority of the resubmissions were a result of the feedback by EWG 16-16, and in most cases, the amendments were editorial. A few MS added new surveys to 1G, and subsequently to 1H. For one MS, a mandatory survey from Table 10 of the EU-MAP was not listed despite the obligation to contribute. This was due to a shift for the threshold from 5% to 3% MS share of a Union TAC of the survey target species in the EU-MAP.

In a few cases, it was concluded that a MS had not followed comments by EWG 16-16. This may partly have been due to a lack of clarity in the final comment on modules, as the subgroup at least in one case needed to go back to the EWG 16-16 evaluation sheet including the subgroup comments. The subgroup put an effort in providing unambiguous comments to MS.

Apart from the missing survey, no major issues were found in those modules.

EWG 16-16 commented on unclarities with respect to the WP template, and the EWG 17-13 partly encountered those issues again. A full overview of 1G/1H issues is in the EWG 16-16 report page 23-24. Especially for clarification purposes, an update on the guidelines for WP would be welcomed.

Transversal, economic and social data

For the economic modules, no major issues were flagged concerning the compliance with data collection requirements. Practically all issues were about formal aspects, i.e. the presentation of activities rather than the activities themselves. Therefore, a potential resubmission of WP tables would mainly serve the purpose of providing a suitable standard to compare against future Annual Reports. However, the benefit from this compliance would be highest if the comparison would be performed through IT.

The EWG 17-13 notes, though, that some of the issues raised during the EWG 16-16 were not followed-up by some MS.

2.5 Evaluation results

The detailed evaluation results by MS are given in Annex 2.

3 TEMPLATES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE ANNUAL REPORTS

3.1 Background

The **EWG 17-17 part 1** (Brussels, 16-19 Oct 2017) was requested to: (i) develop the new AR template which will follow the WP template format, where appropriate, and include any additional new parts, where needed; (ii) compile guidelines for MS submission of the AR; (iii) compile evaluation guidelines for STECF evaluation of the AR and (iv) highlight information that may be missing and how these gaps can be addressed through future reporting. Additionally, the new template developed should allow the assessment of both conformity with Member States approved Work Plans and DCF requirements and data quality.

The ToRs were addressed with draft templates, guidelines and further commentary being made available for EWG 17-17 part 2 as set out below. Some table templates needed further work in the second part of the meeting and two of those for "sampling strategy for biological data from commercial fisheries" would merit further STECF input.

The existing WP templates were augmented by additional elements to allow provision of evidence and commentary on what was achieved; any deviations from what was proposed in the NWP; any data gaps and descriptions and indicators of quality. The EWG also highlighted that any evaluation of fitness for purpose of data collection should also entail collective evaluation of MS WPs to ensure that overall EU programme objectives are met. This would involve integration of regionally coordinated elements (evaluation of regional work plans etc.), some of which had yet to be developed.

In developing the AR templates, the EWG was cognisant of the need adhere to the existing NWP structure and not modify it even where it was not optimal for evaluation purposes. However, it was noted that the WP could evolve and suggestions for change were recorded. To this end both WP and AR development could be seen as process of continuous improvement with each review cycle building on the last. The most significant sections to be suggested for addition to the AR related to "Data to assess impacts of Union fisheries on marine ecosystems" which had been perhaps the least well described under the previous DCF.

On quality, the EWG considered what would be necessary to carry out an effective evaluation. In looking at quality criteria, specific reference was made to the report of **EWG 17-04 – Quality assurance for DCF data** (STECF-17-11). Data transmission failures were considered to be out of scope the meeting whilst being an integral part of evaluation. Improvements in quality were seen as an incremental process with both WPs and ARs providing snapshots of progress described. It was highlighted that the Planning Group for Economists (PGECON) had established a Data Quality sub-group. For biological information, it was envisaged that this role could be performed by Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs).

The EWG also considered the extent to which conformity and quality information could be provided by regional (for biological data) or transnational databases (for economic data). The existing ICES Regional Database and Annual Economic data call were referenced for this purpose.

The **EWG 17-17 part 2** took place in Brussels from 23-26 Oct 2017 and reviewed the draft AR templates and guidance from Part 1 in detail. The EWG in consultation with Part 1 experts, added to the guidance and structure of the tables where necessary and considered what automation would help with the screening and evaluation of the submitted reports.

The EWG summarised the current use of automatic checking in data exchanges by ICES, GFCM and JRC. The different stages of the evaluation process were considered with reference to where automated checks might apply and who would benefit. The EWG presented working examples of a number of scenarios as follows:

- Automating the pre-evaluation to benefit both Evaluators and Submitters – The same automation or checks could also be used in any pre-evaluation of the WPs;

- Standard table templates to limit the data provided and flag when further information was required based on what was entered. MS could use standard or shared code for pre-screening their own ARs before submission;
- A web application to give a pre-submission report after upload allowing MS the time to correct any omissions before formally submitting their final report. This could be further enhanced by referring to datasets already held on Regional Databases;
- Standard reports from these databases to summarise sampling achievements against population data;
- Linking these reports to any pre-screening exercise would allow MS to review and answer any flagged deviations from what was planned.

The EWG 17-17 produced a first draft of the Annual Report guidance and templates which will allow for the evaluation of both conformity and quality of MSs National Work Plans for the DCF. The EWG has catalogued existing approaches to automated checking of Work Programme and Annual Report tables and has provided worked examples and options of how automated checking can be further developed. It is suggested that as checking issues are common between both AR and Work Plans, any procedure adopted should be applied to both.

3.2 Review of Annual Report templates and guidelines

The EWG revised the documents with the new proposed excel tables, report text and guidelines from EWG 17-17. The EWG split into subgroups, dealing with (i) the Annual Report templates and guidelines, and (ii) the evaluation of data quality assurance. The following comments were made:

Section 1: BIOLOGICAL DATA

For **ALL** Tables, change the text in the final column from "AR Comments" to "MS comments on AR"-

Table 1C: Sampling intensity for biological variables

The only changes suggested by the EWG 17-13 were:

- Table 1C, column N entitled "% of achievement (100*M/J)") should be in yellow in the excel table.

- Table 1C, to add in the Guide for Evaluators for column entitled "% of achievement (100*M/J)" the following text "**Please note that for countries that are not doing targeted sampling this cell will be blank*"

Table 1D: Recreational fisheries

This table was thoroughly discussed and several issues were raised. After some discussion, a compromise was reached and the following changes are suggested:

- It should be made clear in the text of the guidelines that MS carrying out pilot studies on recreational fisheries do **not** need to fill the information related to these pilot studies into the Table 1D, since Table 1D is for reporting information on ongoing sampling.

- For Columns "Estimation of the yearly weight and numbers of catch (Y/N)", "Estimation of the yearly percentage release (Y/N)" and "Collection of catch composition data? (Y/N)" the EWG

suggests to change the guidelines to reflect that these columns should be filled with "Y" (yes) or "N" (no). Therefore, the new text below is suggested for the guidelines:

Estimation of the yearly weight and numbers of catch	Member State shall indicate with 'Y' (yes), 'N' (no) or 'NA'
Estimation of the yearly percentage release	Member State shall indicate with 'Y' (yes), 'N' (no) or 'NA'
Collection of catch composition data	Member State shall indicate with 'Y' (yes), 'N' (no) or 'NA'

The EWG found the reference to Table 5A confusing in the following columns Q, R and S:

Is the sampling design documented? (Linked to Table 5A)	Are non-response and refusal recorded? (Linked to Table 5A)	Are the editing and imputation methods documented? (Linked to Table 5A)
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Because the guidelines specify that "*If name of sampling scheme (see name of sampling scheme column) is included in Table 5A, member State shall indicate with 'Y' (yes) or 'N' (no). If 'N' (no), go to AR Word Document and follow Text Box "Type of Survey" instructions*". Therefore, the EWG felt that these columns were not adding information to what should already have been included in Table 5A. It also represented a discrepancy in relation to the level of information asked for in other sections. The EWG suggests that these three columns should be removed.

For the pilot study case, the EWG considers that if the MS is conducting a pilot study, it should be noted in column O of Table 1D and it should be made clear in the guidance that all other columns are left blank. All other pilot study information should be in the text box. Also in the guidance for filling text boxes, the wording should change from: "*If this was not the case*" to "*If this was not achieved*".

The EWG suggests in the Guidance that the MS have to state in the Comments column of the Annual Report whether a licence is required to fish for each species.

Table 1E: Anadromous and catadromous species data collection in fresh water

The EWG suggests that the word "marine" should be added to the guidelines in page 17, bullet 5. The new text suggested is: "*The sampling strategy for biological information from marine commercial fisheries, and recreational fisheries, and for eel, salmon and sea trout life stages: should be described in Table 4A*"

Tables 1F and 1Fa: Incidental by-catch of birds, mammals, reptiles and fish

These tables raised concerns which are summarised below.

- For by-catch data, it was felt that some of the columns in the table, specifically those providing number of bycatches, were not appropriate since the information contained would be highly sensitive. There was also the issue of data confidentiality in case individual boats could be identified (in those cases where the size of a PSU would allow it).
- For both tables, it was felt that information could not be requested since MS had not included these data in their WP.

In addition, the general principle is that only meta-data (inventories) should appear in the tables.

Therefore, the EWG decided by consensus that in Table 1F, the columns **Q, R, S and T** should be deleted. The heading in column U 'Additional Data/samples available?' should be changed to '**Are data available**'.

The following changes to the guidelines of Table 1F are therefore also proposed:

Are Data available	Member State shall indicate if data and/or additional information are available (such as i.e. samples, etc.) with a 'D' (data) or 'S' (samples) or 'N' (no data).
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In the Annual Report comments column, the MS should now report whether the strata have been specifically designed to monitor bycatch of PETS.

Table 1Fa (suggested by EWG 17-17) should be deleted.

Table 1G: List of research surveys at sea

- Additional column stating the location of the manual (hyperlink)
- Column for the actual year(s) the survey will be carried out. If that is not possible, then it is recommended that MS add the survey year(s) between brackets. This is especially relevant for biennial and triennial surveys.

In Table 1G, the column 'Participation of MS' should include the other MSs participating in the survey and their respective contribution. Recommended format: type of participation followed by the MSs participating in that way. Example (F=financial contribution, C=conducting the survey): F: DEU, ESP, FRA, GBR; C: IRL, NLD.

Currently, the MS should state the name of the international database. If no international database exists, MS should be asked to describe how survey data are being made available for the end-user.

- 'Threshold applies' is not clear, and it is not clear what you have to report on. Guidelines should be more specific in what to do, e.g. by having some examples.
- 'Agreed at RCG level' is sometimes (correctly) interpreted as agreed on coordination group level

Table 2A: Fishing activity variables

The EWG felt there were inconsistencies between the new column added on "Variables" in the AR template and the information provided in the WP template, since in the latter, the information is given at "Variable group" level. The EWG felt the information on variables could be provided but this should bring about a change in the WP structure.

Tables 3A– 3C: Economics - fleet, aquaculture, processing

The EWG stresses the strong recommendation that tables for fleet economics and transversal data are filled by JRC using the FDI and fleet economics data calls wherever possible. If MS agree, this procedure should be regarded fully sufficient to fulfil AR requirements with respect to these particular tables.

The EWG 17-13 suggests the following changes to the templates as proposed by 17-17.

For the sake of simplicity and consistency and in order to avoid redundancy, the clustering scheme should be provided in a separate table:

MS	Fishing technique	Length class	Cluster Name
DNK	Beam trawlers	0-< 10 m	TBB1012*
DNK	Beam trawlers	10-< 12 m	TBB1012*
DNK	Beam trawlers	24-< 40 m	TBB2440*
DNK	Beam trawlers	40 m or larger	TBB2440*
DNK	Drift and/or fixed netters	12-< 18 m	DFN1824*
DNK	Drift and/or fixed netters	18-< 24 m	DFN1824*

The entries for "fishing technique" and "Length class" should be identical to the ones used in other tables, e.g. Tables 2A and 3A. Thus far, the rules for cluster names as used in the past were such that it should be named after the most important segment and marked with an asterisk. There is no naming convention on the technique and length class. It appears appropriate to use a combination of gear code and length code. However, it is beyond the scope of the EWG 17-13 to forecast the implications of naming conventions for clustering.

The column on clustering should be removed from Tables 3A and 2A.

The EWG suggests some changes to Tables 3A, 3B and 3C. A column "Planned sample no." should be included, which is filled automatically as "(population)*(sampling rate)/100". Taking into account the underlying equation in the original template, the column "Achieved Sample Rate %" should be renamed "Achieved coverage %". In this context, coverage refers to the number of vessels. Column P "Response Rate %" is identical to column Q "Achieved Sample no./Planned sample no.". The latter should thus be removed. The example as provided in the original template ("100") does not appear appropriate.

The EWG suggests including a column containing the coefficient of variation (CV). This is in contrast to the outcome of EWG 17-04, where it was recommended to remove the CV. However, that recommendation basically referred to biological data. For economic data, it was suggested to keep it and develop an approach for evaluation.

All cells in yellow are filled automatically. MS has to provide only figures in the grey cells.

Planned sample no. = (Planned sample rate)*(Frame population)

Achieved coverage = (achieved sample no.)/(Frame population)

Response rate = (Achieved sample no.)/(Planned sample no.)

The amended table would look as follows:

	WP years	2017-2019
AR year		

Planned sample rate %	Frame population	Planned sample no.	Achieved sample number	Achieved Coverage %	Response rate %	Coefficient of variation	Comments	AR Comment
30	150	45	40	27%	89	0.23		
34	23	8	6	26%	77	0.12		
23	35	8	4	11%	50	0.35		

The example is taken from Table 3A. Tables 3B and 3C should be adjusted accordingly.

Table 4A: Sampling plan description

The EWG suggested that columns Y, Z, AA, AB & AC should be removed because these data are already available in Table 1C.

Number of species with biological data (age wgt sex maturity)*	Total age structures collected*	Total weight measurements collected*	Total sex determinations made*	Total maturity measures taken*

The Guidelines would need to be updated accordingly.

Table 4C: Data on the fisheries

The EWG suggests deleting the columns headed:

- Number of vessels,
- Number of fishing trips,
- Number of fishing days,
- Landings (tons)
- Landings (tons) in national ports,
- Landings (tons) in foreign ports

The EWG suggests that all of the grey columns added to Table 4C should be removed, as it felt that all this information is already in Table 4A.

The EWG suggests also a change to the guidelines as follows: "If any substantial change has occurred in the number of vessels, number of fishing trips, number of fishing days, or landings, MS should provide information". A column for MS comments should be added to this table.

Table 7A: Planned regional and international coordination

The EWG noted that this table is informative and that it should be filled by MS with the list of meetings the MS is planning to attend. If a MS has attended more meetings than the ones originally planned in the WP, then additional rows can be added to reflect this information. In this case, the column "**Planned MS participation**" can be left blank. MS need to be informed that they do not now need to list all the possible meetings (as was previously the case).

Table 7B: Follow up recommendations

The EWG proposes that this table should be grey to reflect the fact that each year recommendations can change. The table should be updated annually.

Table 7C: Bi- and multilateral agreements

The subgroup proposes that this table should be grey to reflect the fact that each year agreements can change, added or become not valid. The table should be updated annually.

3.3 Evaluation of data quality assurance

3.3.1 Biological data

The EWG 17-13 focused on regrouping all recommendations of modifications on the set of tables for WP and AR and on the guidelines document, made by previous EWG meetings (EWG 16-16, EWG 17-04). The purpose was to complete the work of the EWG on the template for the AR (basing their work on EWG 17-17) and summarise all the remaining work to be done in future stages.

Table 1A

Proposed initiatives to improve the reporting of data quality for biological data from EWG 17-17:

- Finalise the automatic filling of Table 1A – see also work of the RCGs 2017 on this issue

- Double check the stock entries in the EU-MAP tables – there are errors to be corrected
- Review the entries for Region in the guidelines, since reference to Table 5C of the EU-MAP refers to the economic variables and is not adapted to the biological variables
- Recommendation to enable the possibility to conduct historical analysis of proposed WPs
- Consistency of Tables 1A, 1B and 1C: issues for incidental catches contributing to samples unplanned, virtually all stocks. The solution could reside in noting in Tables 1B and 1C only those stocks selected for sampling in Table 1A, and invite MS to add information collected incidentally on other stocks when reporting in the AR.

Threshold (Y/N)	Modification of the label of the column to ‘Threshold rules used’ The accepted entries for this column would be ‘TAC< 10 %’, ‘Landings < 10%’, ‘Landings < 200 t.’
Data sources	Addition of the column. The entries to be agreed after finalization of Table 1A automatic filling process.
RFMO/IO	Deletion of the column given to be of no use
Regional coordination/arrangement	Addition of column. Aim is to identify bilateral agreements and RCG agreed sampling plans - this should be filled in at the species / stock level.

Table 1B

The precise user needs could be accounted for in Table 1B by colouring the cell in grey when the information was clearly required by an end-user. In this case, any initiative to pre-fill the colouring feature by RFMO would be welcome.

Table 1C

Planned minimum number of individuals at National level Planned minimum number of individuals at regional level	Deletion of columns. Replaced by the proposed columns below. In a 4S sampling, there is nothing such as number of individuals to be sampled. Instead, there is a planned number of samples (i.e. Primary Sampling Units given in Table 4A) and a protocol for collecting the data (given in Table 5A).
Sampling protocol	Addition of the column. The entries should be a concise description like ‘10 ind/haul’, ‘max. 50 ind/box (comm cat)’, ‘5 ind./cm/quarter’, (see section on AR template).
Achieved number of PSUs	Addition of the column to be documented in the AR (see section on AR template).
Achieved number of individuals	Addition of the column to be documented in the AR (see section on AR template).

Table 1D

For quality evaluation of the WPs, additional information would be required beyond this table. Therefore, Table 1D needs to be linked to Table 5A. The column "*Unique Survey ID or Name of sampling scheme (Linked to Table 5A)*" in Table 1D (proposed by EWG 17-04 and EWG 17-17) enables to link this table to Table 5a. However, for consistency, it is suggested that the naming of this unique column is identical in both tables (see also table text for Table 5A).

The EWG 17-04 suggested that a column should be added to Table 1D:

Licence (Y/N)	Member State shall indicate by 'Y' (yes) or 'N' (no) whether, for the mentioned species, a licence by a delegated authority is required.
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Table 1E

For quality evaluation of the WPs, additional information would be required beyond this table. Therefore, Table 1E needs to be linked to Table 5A. The column "*Field Survey ID*" in Table 1E (proposed by EWG 17-04 and EWG 17-17) enables to link this table to Table 5A. However, for consistency, it is suggested that the naming of this unique column is identical in both tables (see also Table text for Table 5A).

To avoid confusion, maintain consistency in naming and aid clarity of meaning, change column "*Area*" to "*Region*" (EWG 17-04).

Table 1F

For quality evaluation of the WPs, additional information would be required beyond this table. Therefore, Table 1F needs to be linked to Table 5A. The column "*Stratum ID code / Name of the survey*" in Table 1F enables to link this table to Table 5A. However, for consistency, it is suggested that the naming of this unique column is identical in both tables (see also table text for Table 5A).

For the column "*Expected occurrence of recording*", the current guidance states: "*Member States shall indicate the expected occurrence of recording for individuals caught as incidental by-catch, including releases in accordance with Table 1 (D) of the multiannual Union programme. Fill in with (+/-) number or X*". As it is not possible to estimate the expected occurrence of recordings, this field should be completed with an "X" to indicate if some recordings are expected (EWG 17-04).

The EWG 17-04 suggested that a column should be added to Table 1F:

PETS specific survey (X)	Only fill in with an "X" if it is a PET specific survey. All other rows should be left blank.
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Table 1G

MS should include a line for a survey in the text box even if the contribution is financial. This should be clearly stated in the guidelines.

The question 2 in the WP guidelines needs to be adjusted to also cover the design of the survey.

Region	Addition of the column – Member State shall refer to the naming convention used in Table 5(C) of the implementing decision 2016/1251 or an alternative convention if agreed (see comments on the use of Table 5C for biological purpose in table 1A section). This column would provide a reference for the appropriate RCG. If a survey covers more than one region, each region (and the relative contribution of the survey to that region) should be indicated by a line.
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Table 1H

To clarify the guidance required on which species and data types should be listed in Table 1H, the EWG-17-04 suggested two new fields in line with Table 1A. The type of data collected can then be limited to a list and associated to stock references used in other tables.

Species	Addition of the column – Member State shall report the scientific name of the species/stocks for which biological variables sampling is required according to the Tables 1(A), 1(B) and 1(C) of the multiannual Union programme, for all areas where the Member State's fishing fleet is operating
Area/Stock	Addition of the column – Member State shall indicate the area of the mentioned species/stock, in accordance with Tables 1(A), 1(B) and 1(C) of the multiannual Union programme (e.g. GSA 16; ICES areas I, II; ICES areas IIIa, IV, VIIId, etc.).
Data used in advice (Y/N)	Addition of the column (EWG 16-16)

Tables 4A and 4B

The EWG 17-04 emphasised again the importance to refer to effective sample size as part of a quality indicator, rather than the number of fish measured (WKPICS3). The EWG 17-04 was of the opinion that this effective sample size was given in Table 4A related to sampling scheme and sampling frames. As not all sampling schemes were described in Table 4A (self-sampling, purchase of fish for biological parameters, ...), reference to sampling schemes should be made in Table 1C in the column 'Data sources'.

There should be a row for each of the strata referred to in Table 1F in Table 4A.

The EWG 17-04 suggested to merge Tables 4A and 4B into a single table, without adding or deleting any column. This proposal is to be given due consideration when the opportunity is given to restructure the WP set of tables and guidelines.

The guidelines may need to be more explicit that "Strata with no coverage (i.e. no planned number of PSUs) shall also be detailed, in order to provide measurement on coverage of the sampling plan." – A good sampling design should not have unsampled strata, but should explain parts of the population with no coverage.

Table 5A

Data processing should be described in more detail in this table. The EWG 17-04 has stated that *"Age determination and other processes should be included in this table as this can aid in the assessment process in trying to identify possible sources if an error is identified and a possible first step to finding a solution."*

The guidelines for this table should be amended to "this table is intended to identify data to be collected under Tables 1A to 1H" (EWG 17-04).

The unique column to link Tables 1D, 1E and 1F to Tables 4A, 4B and 5A should be identical. At present, naming of this unique column differs between the tables:

Table no.	Unique column name to link Tables 1D, 1E and 1F to Tables 4A, 4B and 5A
1d	Unique Survey ID or Name of sampling scheme (linked to Table 5A)
1e	Survey ID
1f	Stratum ID code / Name of the survey

4a	Stratum ID code
4b	Stratum ID code (EWG 17-17 report Annex 1 AR Guidance.doc) Stratum ID number (EWG 17-17 AR tables.xlsm)
5a	Name of Sampling Scheme

The EWG 17-04 suggested that the following columns should be added to Table 5A:

Have the processes been reviewed externally (Y/N)	Member state shall indicate by 'Y' (yes) or 'N' (no) whether the process has been reviewed by an external expert or body relevant to the process.
Do they conform with accepted standards (Y/N)	Member State shall indicate by 'Y' (yes) or 'N' (no) whether the process conforms to an agreed regional or international standard
Body that undertook the review	Name of the relevant expert or body
Link to review documentation	Link to review documentation
Review accepted by	Name of body who ratified the document (ICES / ISO organisation / RCG)

3.3.2 Economic and social data

As indicated by the EWG 17-04, the Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs) (following the recast of the Data Collection Framework regulation 2017/1004) extended their scope to develop and implement procedures, methods, quality assurance and quality control. The role of the RCGs has a clear objective to improve quality assurance and quality control.

To address this, PGECON established a subgroup on Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) and drafted the first recommendations relevant to the reporting of quality. These quality measures have been extended into the AR text boxes for 3A, 3B and 3C and now request information to be reported on selected quality assurance principles, namely 'sound methodologies', 'sampling strategies', 'state of data accuracy and clarity'.

In line with additional quality reporting requirements, guidelines for filling the AR templates were complemented for the relevant sections. These checkpoints were recommended to be used by the PGECON 2017 Subgroup on QAF and can reflect a part of the quality assurance process in MS. Further quality assurance principles and their implementation should be continuously tackled in annual PGECON meetings, particularly in the Subgroup of QAF.

Selection of quality indicators for AR templates

The EWG 17-04 reports that the quality of data collection has generally been quantified through figures like sample rate, response rate, coverage rate and CV. It was suggested that these figures could also further be used as quality indicators. However, the evaluation of "acceptable data quality" should be performed with caution. Fleet segments are often small populations which cannot necessarily be regarded homogeneous. Therefore, CV can easily be high even though the

coverage is high, too. Therefore, CV is not selected as quality indicator for new AR templates. Based on the SGECA 09-02 report dealing with quality aspects of the collection of economic data, calculation methods for the indicators and sampling strategies, for evaluation of quality for economic and social variables in fleet, aquaculture and fish processing sectors, indicators were unchanged from the previous AR format.

Following previous AR practice, for economic and social variables, data quality will be evaluated by response rate, achieved sample rate and achieved coverage rate for fishing activity variables. However, as the AR template had to be developed according to the WP template, some WP amendments (which are not introduced yet) have been taken into account and were included in AR tables. Changes were made based on the summarized remarks and proposed amendments listed in the EWG 17-04 report Annex 4.

The following table does not include additional AR template indicators which were developed in EWG 17-17.

AR	Proposed amendments listed in EWG 17-04 Annex 4(originally developed in EWG 16-16)	AR template EWG 17-17
Table 2A	The WP template for Table 2A should include also a “variable” column, not only “variable group” (WP is meant to be the standard against which the AR is compared and the AR will probably contain data by variable).	Done: “Variable” Member State shall refer to the naming convention used in Table 4 of the Multiannual Union Programme. "Variable" has been added since variable group from the WP can only be Effort / Landing / or Capacity. For ease and improved consistency between MS these need to be considered as new. They offer an alternative to the WP Variable Group already submitted. As in Table 4 of the Multiannual Union Programme both the Variable Group and the Variable are dependent but listed separately
Table 2A	Data collection schemes may change within a length class (mainly logbooks that are available for vessels >8m in the Baltic); in this case, it should be clarified how the differing sampling schemes are reported. Should it be reported using the standard length class from the Regulation (“0-<10m”) with some additional explanatory text in the comment and/or text box, or should it be reported using the actual threshold (i.e. “0-<8m”)? It would be preferable to allow the use of length classes which differ from the standard segmentation (i.e. using thresholds which refer to the Control Regulation, like 8m for logbooks in the Baltic).	Done partially “Length class” Member State shall refer to the naming convention used in Table 5(B) of the multiannual Union programme.
Table 2A	The header “Planned coverage of data collected under complementary data collection (% of fishing trips)” in Table 2A does not appear to be applicable in all cases, e.g. when sampling is performed on a vessel basis. “% of fishing trips” should be changed in “% of fishing trips or % of fishing vessels”.	Done: Achieved coverage of data collected under complementary data collection Only for complementary data collection it should be applied. For each of the data sources and variables, the achieved coverage percentage, estimated on the basis of fishing trips. If WP will be amended to “Planned coverage of data collected under complementary data collection (% of fishing vessels) as suggested by EWG 17-04, it should be achieved coverage percentage, estimated on the basis of fishing vessels. In case of Control Regulation and Fleet register, put NA.
Table 3B	According to the EU MAP, there are different levels	Done:

	<p>of threshold that could have different implications in data collection. In particular, the following types of threshold are allowed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • total production of the Member State is less than 1 % of the total Union production volume and value • for species accounting for less than 10 % of the Member State's aquaculture production by volume and value • simplified methodology for Member States with a total production of less than 2,5 % of the total Union aquaculture production volume and value • no environmental data on aquaculture where the total aquaculture production of the Member State is less than 2,5 % of the total Union aquaculture production volume and value <p>In addition, freshwater aquaculture is optional. This situation creates different interpretation by MS and it is difficult to verify if thresholds are correctly applied. Table 3B should allow to discriminate different types of thresholds.</p>	<p>Threshold Type Threshold Type described in Chapter V (5) of the multiannual Union programme to be indicated as 1,2 or 3.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. total production of the Member State is less than 1 % of the total Union production volume and value 2. for species accounting for less than 10 % of the Member State's aquaculture production by volume and value 3. simplified methodology for Member States with a total production of less than 2.5 % of the total Union aquaculture production volume and value
Table 3C	Table 3C should allow to identify variables already available under Structural Business Statistics (SBS). This could be possible by adding a specific column requiring if for each segment the variable is already collected and available within SBS.	<p>Done Data Sources Member State shall enter the data sources used (accounts, questionnaires, etc.). Data sources shall be clearly stated for each variable.</p>
Table 5B	In Table 5B, instead of "Name of data collection scheme", the "Name of the section" should be provided (fleet, aquaculture, fish processing).	<p>Done Sector name Member State shall indicate the sectors for which data was collected: Fishing; Aquaculture; Processing.</p>
Table 5B and Text box 5B	Table 5B In Table 5B, instead of "Name of data collection scheme", the "Name of the section" should be provided (fleet, aquaculture, fish processing). Table 5B should be regarded a preliminary starting point for further development on quality assurance, being amended by relevant bodies, e.g. PGECON. Over time a number of reference documents should be developed serving as a standard reference for quality assurance which is applicable to all MS (e.g. for statistical procedures <the repeatedly recommended handbook on statistics>, raising/estimation procedures, sampling schemes etc.).	<p>Done Text box 5B for AR was created to reflect the constrains to achieve the QAF principles listed in Table 5B. The selected QAF principles were added to Text box 3A, 3B and 3C to report achievements on principles as 'sound methodologies', 'sampling strategies', 'state of data accuracy and clarity'.</p>

Concerning generic principles underlying data quality for economic modules, the EWG 17-04 made a reference to the PGECON 2017 meeting, where these generic quality norms were already investigated. The EWG 17-04 suggested to review the WP Table 5B in accordance with 4 out of 15 ESS Quality Assurance Framework Principles concerning Sound methodology, Appropriate statistical procedures, Accuracy and reliability and Accessibility and Clarity (Moura, C. 2016 (Ed.) Quality Guidelines for the DCF). In relation to the PGECON 2017 recommendation and EWG 17-04 proposals, the economic modules 3A, 3B and 3C were expanded by subchapters for reporting quality assurance in terms of Sound methodology, Accuracy and Reliability, Accessibility and Clarity.

4 IMPROVEMENTS IN THE EVALUATION OF WORK PLANS, ANNUAL REPORTS AND DATA TRANSMISSION

The EWG 17-13 discussed procedures for submission and evaluation of Work Plans, Data Transmission and Annual Reports and decided that separation between the 'transition period' 2017-2019 and a time after the transition (2020 onwards) should be made. In the transition period, all developments should be taken on board when ready, but it cannot be expected that everything is ready in 2018. Current processes include: Development of regional sampling plans, development of IT facilities (platform, R scripts, Excel sheets) for storing, validating and cross-checking Work Plans and Annual Reports.

The Commission asked the EWG 17-13 to:

- Review the proposed evaluation procedures for DT and AR, and develop evaluation procedure for WP
- List the difficulties and strengths of the current process (mapping the situation), from EWG, pre-screeners' as well as MS perspective

Review of EWG 17-07 recommendations and suggestions

<i>EWG 17-07</i>	<i>EWG 17-13</i>
AR date of submission 31 st of May	Agree
AR pre-screening comments to MS, and request for clarification based on the agreed pre-screeners' comments	<i>Addition: No</i> resubmission of AR (text or table) should be allowed at this stage (see below for further information).
Online facility available from 1 st January 2018 onwards	<i>Addition: In the transition phase (2017-2019), provide options to hand in via the platform or in the traditional manner.</i> <i>Addition: If the platform cannot be available by 1st January 2018, then as soon as possible.</i> <i>Addition: For the AR 2017, MS should be allowed to choose the most suitable way for submission (Excel or platform).</i>
First carry out data transmission evaluation before AR evaluation	<i>Addition: Change name of the EWG into 'Evaluation of Data Transmission and Annual Reports' to underline this.</i>
Improved communication to regional bodies	<i>Addition: Actively send STECF AR/DT evaluation report to all regional bodies involved (action: COM).</i> <i>Addition: Effort should be directed to development of tools to provide data to AR from various regional databases.</i>

Proposed update for time schedule Data Transmission and Annual Report evaluation

The EWG on DT/AR evaluation should first focus on Data Transmission (failures and achievements), and then on the AR. The AR should mainly consist of the tables, and text is only to be supplied for:

- Explanation of deviations that need more space than an Excel cell – unless the comment box provided in the IT platform supplies sufficient space for that;
- Information on pilot studies (preferably links to existing reports, or otherwise in an Annex);
- Recent developments that have not been mentioned in the WP and could not be foreseen;
- Actions to avoid deviations in future if deviations occurred.

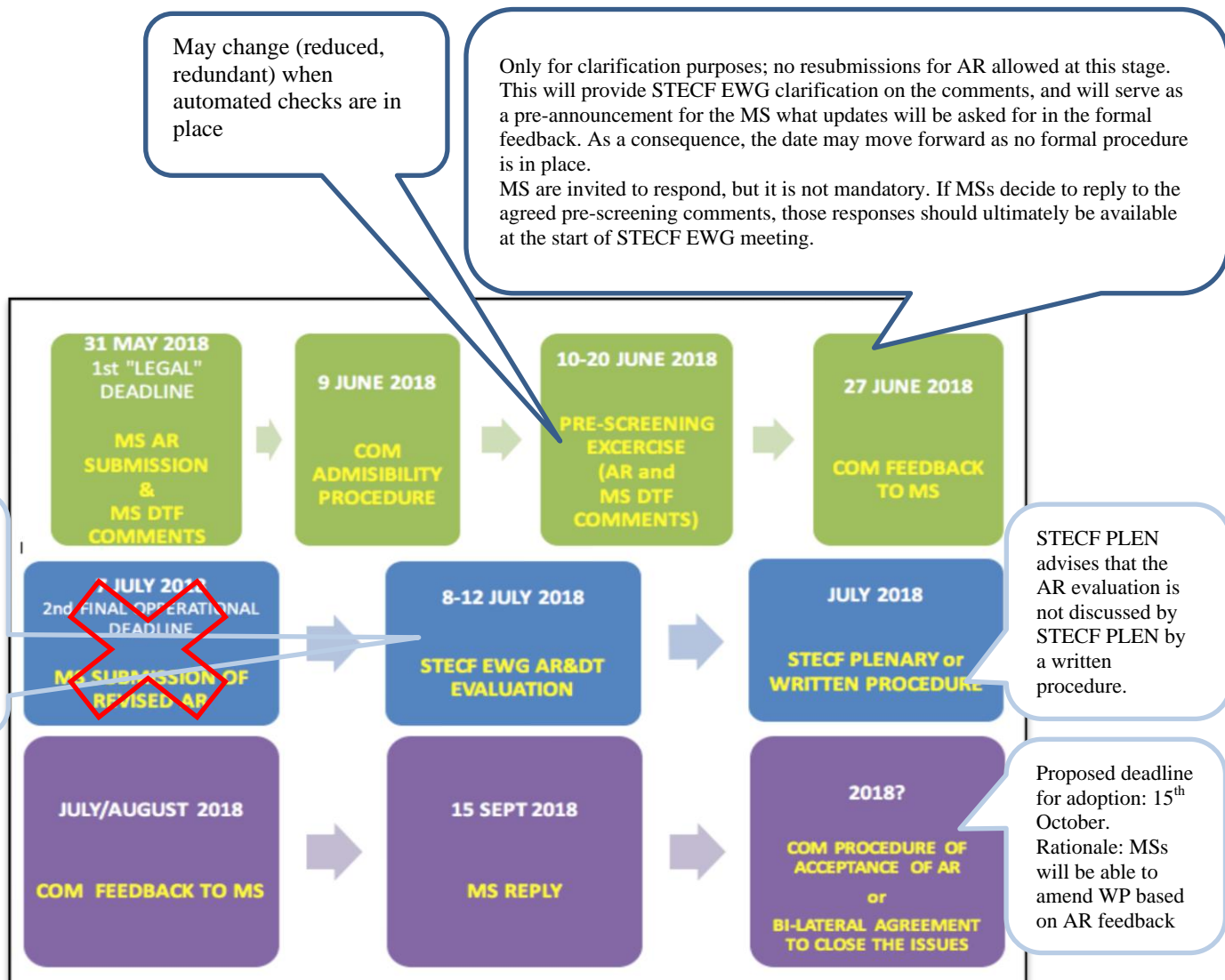
In this manner, it should be possible to limit the AR text to the absolute necessary for each MS.

Data Transmission evaluation

1. Before delivery of DT failures to COM: end-users and MS evaluate assumed DT failures in collaboration and update list before 31st May.
2. January: end-users send list of DT failures to COM
3. Pre-screening, EWG and feedback COM to MS as below.

Annual Report evaluation

As the EWG 17-13 agreed on 31st of May as the deadline for AR submission (in line with EWG 17-07), the time schedule drafted during the EWG 17-07 has been used as the starting point for an updated AR evaluation procedure.



(Original figure from STECF EWG 17-07 report)

The EWG 17-13 also discussed post-screening to evaluate MS responses; this is not preferred as then only a selected set of experts will in the end decide if a response is satisfactory or not. The EWG sees it as the Commission's responsibility to decide on the final MS response and adoption of the WP. Any exceptions on the procedure are under the responsibility of the Commission (e.g. accidental wrong or incomplete submission of AR, MS that are not able to comply with deadlines, etc.)

With respect to the feedback of pre-screeners' comments to MS, the EWG 17-13 discussed the following:

- Pre-screeners' comments should be self-explanatory
- If two pre-screeners have reviewed a module and their views contradict, there should be a final pre-screeners' comment with an agreed comment. If the pre-screeners cannot agree, the Commission should decide on the final comment.

Proposed time schedule Work Plan evaluation

The Work Plans are meant to be triennial. As a consequence, a full evaluation (all MS) will take place prior to year 1 of the WP, and evaluation of amendments will happen in the other two years. The work load for the STECF evaluation will therefore be higher for the new WP period than within the WP period. Likewise, pre-screening is recommended when MSs hand in a WP for a new triennial period, and not for the years in between.

Deadline	Time after 31 st October	Activity	Type Work Plan
31 st October		Amended WP submission	Amended WP within period
	week 1	COM admissibility procedure	Amended WP within period
	week 2	STECF-EWG*	Amended WP within period
	week 3	COM feedback to MS*	Amended WP within period
	week 4	MS feedback to COM*	Amended WP within period
31 st December		Adoption amended WP by COM	Amended WP within period
31 st October		WP submission	WP new triennial period
	week 1	COM admissibility procedure	WP new triennial period
	week 2	Pre-screening	WP new triennial period
	week 3	Clarification by MS on pre-screeners' comments (see AR)	WP new triennial period
	week 4	STECF-EWG*	WP new triennial period
	week 5	COM feedback to MS*	WP new triennial period
	week 6	MS feedback to COM*	WP new triennial period
31 st December		Adoption amended WP by COM	WP new triennial period

*in 2017, the Commission sent requests for resubmission to MSs on Wednesday afternoon, with the urgent request to resubmit by Thursday morning. If we would like to keep this as a standard, STECF EWG and National Correspondents should be made aware of it. The EWG 17-13, however, proposes not to ask for updates during the meeting, but only to ask MSs for clarification on issues, and/or pre-announce major issues pointed out by the EWG during the evaluation. The EWG 17-13 sees it as the Commission's responsibility to decide on the final MS response and adoption of the WP.

The EWG 17-13 discussed that the legal deadline for submission of (amended) WP of 31st October leads to a tight schedule. It is however considered to be difficult to change that deadline, due to changes necessary in the EMFF Reg. 508/2014. For MS, a shift to e.g. 30th September will only be feasible if the RCGs creating the regional sampling plan take place in spring.

Difficulties and strengths of the current process

Strengths of the current process of submission, evaluation and adoption are that all parties involved know what is to be expected on a specific date. Tasks are clear, and while we are in the process of developing automated checking, improving facilities to enter the WP and AR, developing regional sampling plans, the EWG 17-13 sees the procedures as currently followed as the stable part within a moving world.

Problems that arise are mainly related to (a) the work load as many things have to be carried out manually and often in a short time frame, directly leading to (b) tight schedules. For pre-screeners, time may be short to evaluate new WPs, Data Transmission issues and Annual Reports. So, automation of consistency and conformity may directly lead to a different workload. The problem (c) is the lack of clear guidelines for resubmission of WPs (major/minor changes), leading to uncertainty regarding the need for submissions of amended Work Plans within the triennial period.

5 CONTACT DETAILS OF EWG 17-13 PARTICIPANTS

¹ - 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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6 LIST OF ELECTRONIC ANNEXES

Electronic annexes are published on the DCF dedicated report section of the STECF website on:
<https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/dcf-dcr>

List of electronic annex documents:

EWG-17-13 – Annex 1 – Work Plan evaluation sheets by Member State (Excel file)

7 LIST OF BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

<http://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/stecf/ewg1713>

List of background documents:

EWG-17-13 – Doc 1 - Declarations of invited and JRC experts (see also section five of this report – List of participants)

Work Plan template:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016D1701&from=EN>

EU MAP:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L:2016:207:FULL&from=EN>

Relevant STECF EWG reports (EWG 16-16, 17-04, 17-07, 17-17):

<https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/dcf-dcr>

Ad-hoc contracts on socio-economic variables:

<https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/docs-links/socio-eco-var>

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