

STECF PLENARY MEETING 20-01

16 MARCH 2020 (START 9:00H) – 20 MARCH 2020 (END: 16:00H), MAI BRUSSELS

Draft Terms of Reference (06/03/2020)

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. List of participants	2
3. Information to the Plenary	2
4. STECF INITIATIVES	2
5. Assessment of STECF EWG reports	2
5.1. EWG 19-19: Outermost Regions	2
6. Additional requests submitted to the STECF plenary by the Commission	2
6.1. CFP monitoring	2
6.2. Monitoring the Landing Obligation	3
6.3. Improved selectivity measures under Article 13 of the 2020 Atlantic and North Sea Fishing Opportunities	5
6.4. Undulate ray	6
6.5. Evaluation of Joint Recommendation on updated Discard plan for Venus Clams in Italian waters	7
6.6. Joint Recommendation on Norway Pout fishery	8
6.7. Revision of work plan and annual report templates as well as annual report guidance for data collection	9
6.8. STECF opinion on conclusions from the Liaison meeting report	10
6.9. STECF opinion on Bulgaria request for clarification on the expanded list of stocks for the Black Sea demersal trawl survey	11
6.10. STECF evaluation of the Danish weighing proposals	12
6.11. Preparation of joint recommendations under the Technical Measures Regulation	14
6.12. Closure areas under the multiannual plan for demersal fisheries in the western Mediterranean Sea (Italy and Spain)	15
6.13. Derogation for 'Volantina' demersal otter trawls in the territorial waters of Slovenia	16
6.14. Management plan for boat seines in the Balearic Islands, Spain	18
6.15. Italy request of scientific research on "SARDELLA" (<i>S. pilchardus</i>) in Liguria (GSA 9)	18
7. Items/discussion points for preparation of EWGs and other STECF work	19
7.1. State of play and update of guidelines on Data Transmission Monitoring	19
7.2. Preparation of EWG 20-01 on methods for supporting stock assessment in the Mediterranean	19
7.3. Preparation of the EWG 20-02 and 20-07 on the review of the Technical Measures Regulation	19
7.4. Preparation of EWG 20-06 on methods for defining sustainable fisheries and aquaculture	20
7.5. Preparation of the EWG 20-12 on EU Aquaculture sector. Economic report 2020.	20
7.6. Preparing EWG 20-14 on the social dimension of the CFP	20

7.7. Information on the outcomes of the Regional Coordination Group Med & BS End-users meeting	20
7.8. Preparation of the EWG 20-10 Fisheries Dependent Information (FDI).....	21

1. INTRODUCTION

[Does not belong to the ToRs but is listed here to avoid confusion with the section numbering when editing the plenary report.]

2. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

[Does not belong to the ToRs but is listed here to avoid confusion with the section numbering when editing the plenary report.]

3. INFORMATION TO THE PLENARY

4. STECF INITIATIVES

5. ASSESSMENT OF STECF EWG REPORTS

5.1. EWG 19-19: Outermost Regions

DG MARE focal person: Christine Rockmann (C3)

Possible STECF Rapporteur: tbd

Possible Presenter: L. Borges

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.

6. ADDITIONAL REQUESTS SUBMITTED TO THE STECF PLENARY BY THE COMMISSION

6.1. CFP monitoring

DG MARE focal person: Kenneth Patterson (D3)

Possible STECF Rapporteur:

Possible Presenter: JRC tbd

Background provided by the Commission

Article 50 of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP; Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013) stipulates: "The Commission shall report annually to the European Parliament and to the Council on the progress on achieving maximum sustainable yield and on the situation of fish stocks, as early as possible following the adoption of the yearly Council Regulation fixing the fishing opportunities available in Union waters and, in certain non-Union waters, to Union vessels."

Request to the STECF

STECF is requested to report on progress in achieving MSY objectives in line with the Common Fisheries Policy.

6.2. Monitoring the Landing Obligation

DG Mare focal person: Evelien Ranshuysen (D3)

Possible STECF Rapporteur: tbc

Background provided by the Commission

Regulation (EU) No 2015/812¹, introduced an obligation for the Commission to report annually on the implementation of the landing obligation, based on information transmitted by the Member States, the Advisory Councils and other relevant sources.

According to Article 9 of this Regulation, Commission report should include the following elements:

- steps taken by Member States and producer organisations to comply with the landing obligation;
- steps taken by Member States regarding control of compliance with the landing obligation;
- information on the socioeconomic impact of the landing obligation;
- information on the effect of the landing obligation on safety on board fishing vessels;
- information on the use and outlets of catches below the minimum conservation reference size of a species subject to the landing obligation;
- information on port infrastructures and of vessels' fitting with regard to the landing obligation; for each fishery concerned; and
- information on the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the landing obligation and recommendations to address them.

In order to facilitate the reporting, and in line with the outcome of STECF EWG 16-04, in 2017 Member States were invited on a voluntary basis to complete questionnaires seeking more detailed information on the impact of the landing obligation and national steps taken to assist with its implementation. In 2018 and 2019, Member States were asked to update the information provided as appropriate with additional questions on control and enforcement.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2015/812 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2015 amending Council Regulations (EC) No 850/98, (EC) No 2187/2005, (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1098/2007, (EC) No 254/2002, (EC) No 2347/2002 and (EC) No 1224/2009, and Regulations (EU) No 1379/2013 and (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, as regards the landing obligation, and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1434/98

The Commission's report in 2020 will cover the implementation of the landing obligation in 2019 – the year it fully entered into force. Against this background, and to be able to report comprehensively on the implementation, the Commission stressed the importance that every Member State fills in the enclosed questionnaire as comprehensively as possible or update the information submitted, whenever appropriate. Aside from the Member States, all the Advisory Councils² and the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) were asked to submit information on the themes covered in the questionnaire.

Throughout the transition period (2015 – 2018), intense collaboration and exchanges with all stakeholders have taken place and have helped to reach a better, and in some instances a common, understanding in both the solutions and challenges in implementing the landing obligation. STECF concluded in [PLEN 19-01](#) that there are many sources of information in addition to the Member States' reports and concludes that these should be better integrated into the review process of the landing obligation. Including quantitative data, research projects (Minouw, DiscardLess) as well as last-haul analyses from EFCA and European Parliament hearings. As in previous years, STECF is asked for a review and a summary of these reports via two ad hoc contracts – to feed into the STECF PLEN 20-01.

Request to the STECF

Based on the report of the STECF ad hoc contracts (2003) on the monitoring of the landing obligation, STECF is requested to:

- 1) To advise the Commission on the elements appropriate to meet the reporting requirements of Article 9 of Regulation 2015/812, review and summarise the main findings of the reports highlighting, in a structured manner, key salient points raised by each MS and to provide an overview of them at the sea basin level, including for the long distance fleet operating beyond EU waters with an emphasis of 2019 being the first year of full implementation.

This structured manner also to be considered as appropriate in the points below:

- 2) To identify to what extent discard rates are being reduced in specific fleets or fisheries;
- 3) Identify specific actions where Member States and producer organisations have made adjustments to support the implementation of the landing obligation, and if any differences in actions occurred in 2019;
- 4) Identify the most important challenge or weakness in implementation and the lessons to be learned from best practices. Where available, identify specific fleets and stocks where the landing obligation has had a direct impact on fishing activity;
- 5) Highlight the most important weaknesses in the reporting and registration of all catches and the lessons to be learned from best practices;
- 6) Make any further recommendations as appropriate to improve the full implementation, as of 1 January 2019, its identified challenges and the reporting of catches;

² Except for the Aquaculture Advisory Council

- 7) To advise the Commission on the elements appropriate to meet the reporting requirements of Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2015/812 and, if deemed appropriate, to provide suggestions for modifications in the questionnaire.

6.3. **Improved selectivity measures under Article 13 of the 2020 Atlantic and North Sea Fishing Opportunities**

DG Mare focal person: Jonathan Shrives (C1)

Possible STECF Rapporteur: tbd

Background provided by the Commission

Both cod and whiting in the Celtic Sea are regulated as target stocks under the Western Waters Multi-annual plan (WWMAP)³, but since 2019, only by-catches are allowed for both stocks, a targeted fishery being prohibited. In 2019, ICES' catch advice showed that cod and whiting stocks in the Celtic Sea are below B_{lim} . Following Article 8 of the WWMAP, the EU was legally obliged to adopt remedial measures as safeguards, to help rebuild these stocks. The ICES mixed fisheries advice⁴ estimated that without any change in exploitation pattern in 2020, catches of cod would have been 2055t, while ICES advised zero catch and while a TAC was agreed at 805t for 2020.

The Fisheries Council of December 2019 adopted the "*Remedial measures for cod and whiting in the Celtic Sea*" under article 13 of the 2020 Fishing Opportunities regulation⁵.

The basis for these measures was the urgent need for a general improvement in selectivity by increasing mesh sizes in a specific part of the Celtic Sea and the requirement for bottom trawlers to use fishing gear that avoids cod by-catches. Article 13 requires for vessels fishing in the Celtic Sea cod protection zone with more than 20% haddock catches to use certain gear configurations (paragraph 1a) and, in addition as of 1 June, a "raised fishing line" configuration or another dispositive equally selective for avoidance of cod (paragraph 1b). It also provides for the use of selective gear as alternatives to the above if they result in catches of less than 1% of cod (paragraph 4).

The "raised fishing line" option offered by article 13 has been trialled in several studies; the only recent studies conducted in the Celtic and Irish Seas was by the BIM in 2017⁶ and 2019⁷. However, the basis of these gear trials were for trawls with 80-90mm cod-ends in the former and 80 mm with a 120 mm square mesh panel in the later. However, the requirements under article 13, will see the raised fishing line being used by vessels with 100 mm T90 cod-ends, 110mm cod-end with 120 square mesh panel and 120 mm cod-ends.

Request to the STECF

The Commission is therefore requesting that the STECF:

- (a) Considering similar and relevant studies in both the Celtic Seas and other regions, estimate the likely differences in selectivity parameters (e.g. L50 and SR) on cod,

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1562943926061&uri=CELEX:32019R0472>

⁴ http://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2019/2019/FisheriesOverviews_CelticSeas_2019.pdf

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1581520382306&uri=CELEX:32020R0123>

⁶ <http://www.bim.ie/media/bim/content/publications/fisheries/6495-BIM-Raised-Fishing-Line-report.pdf>

⁷ www.bim.ie/media/bim/content/publications/fisheries/BIM-Staggering-the-fishing-line-report.pdf

whiting and other target and bycatch demersal species observed in the BIM studies when using mesh size combinations of (i) 100 mm T90 cod-ends; (ii) 110mm cod-end with 120 square mesh panel; (iii) 120 mm cod-ends and; (iv) 100 mm with 160 square mesh panel.

- (b) Estimate and contrast the selectivity characteristics (e.g. L50 and SR) of the above mesh sizes with and without the raised fishing line on cod and other species where available, specifically whiting, haddock, megrims, anglerfish (monkfish), hake, pollock, ling and skates and rays (in general). Other commercial flat fish and commercially important species (non-TACs included) should be considered if possible, as were reported in the results of the BIM studies.
- (c) Explore whether alternative criteria to the existing haddock threshold would cover equivalent amounts of by-catches of cod, and how the number of vessels covered by the measures under each paragraph of Article 13 would evolve when changing the existing haddock threshold or adding an extra threshold of one or many species to the original haddock threshold of 20%.
- (d) The STECF is also asked to identify alternative technical measures (as explored for instance by IFREMER) that would achieve similar selectivity characteristics as the gear combination specified in Article 13.1(a) and 13.1(b)(i), especially those where the selectivity characteristics of which reduce cod or whiting catches but maintain (largely) catches of other species.⁸
- (e) An analysis should also consider spatial and temporal restrictions or closures that would give similar outcomes in terms of reducing cod mortality, indicating what duration and spatial coverage of such closures would be needed.
- (f) Assess the socio-economic impacts of the above mentioned scenarios including, at least, the following indicators: value of landings, income, gross profit, gross profit margin, employment and average salaries at the level of MS and fleet segment. The number of vessels and fleet segments affected should be also provided for each scenario. External factors, where relevant in this assessment, such as quota uptake and first sale price effects in response to changes in the catch composition should be considered.

6.4. Undulate ray

DG Mare focal person: Caroline Alibert (C1)

Possible STECF Rapporteur: tbd

Deadline: STECF is requested to deliver its opinion by 20 March 2020.

Background provided by the Commission

⁸ For instance: Trial of a new escape panel concept to reduce cod catches in a mixed demersal fishery:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330882005_Trial_of_a_new_escape_panel_concept_to_reduce_cod_catches_in_a_mixed_demersal_fishery

The sub TAC of undulate ray in 8.a-b (RJU/8-C) is currently managed under the skates and rays Group TAC (SRX/89-C). The stock of undulate ray in 8.a-b is assessed by ICES under category 6 advice, which included new information on landings and discards provided by France in April 2018.

At the December Council 2019, a statement has been adopted which reads as follows: "On Undulate Ray in 8 (Commission): The Commission will request scientific advice from ICES on the opportunity to set an autonomous TAC for undulate ray in ICES subarea 8. The Commission will ask ICES to provide, if possible, this advice in time for it to be considered in the first amendment to the 2020 fishing opportunities. On the basis of the scientific advice, if appropriate, the Commission will consider proposing an amendment to the 2020 fishing opportunities."

- End January 2020, ICES replied to the Commission that the request "is more of a management question which put STECF in a better position to respond".
- Therefore the Commission is seizing STECF to carry out a scientific assessment of the impact of setting an autonomous TAC for the undulate ray stock in 8.a-b.
- The Commission asked STECF to take into account:
 - [Recoam project](#) on stock identity
 - Report of [WGEF ICES, 2018](#)
 - ICES WGEF, 2018: "Annex 8: Report in response to the French request for updated advice on Undulate ray (Raja undulata) in Divisions 7.d-e and 8.a-b for 2018"
 - STECF, 2015: "Possible by-catch provisions for undulate ray in ICES areas VIIde, VIIIab and IX (STECF-15-03)"
 - French catches estimates of undulate ray in 2016 and 2017 in ICES Divisions 27.7.d, 7.e, 8.a and 8.b
 - ICES advice, July 2018: "Undulate ray (Raja undulata) in divisions 8.a-b (northern and central Bay of Biscay)"

Request to the STECF

STECF is requested to undertake an assessment on the opportunity to set an autonomous TAC for undulate ray in ICES divisions 8.a-b. for conservation and management purposes.

6.5. Evaluation of Joint Recommendation on updated Discard plan for Venus Clams in Italian waters

DG Mare focal person: Chato Giacomo Osio (D1)

Possible STECF Rapporteur:

Possible Presenter:

Background provided by the Commission

The landing obligation is compulsory, as from 1 January 2017, for the species that define the fisheries (other than small pelagics) and that are subject to a minimum conservation reference size (MCRS) according to Annex IX of the Technical Measure Regulation adopted in July 2019. The fisheries targeting the mollusc bivalve Venus clams (*Venus gallina* – as originally described – or *Chamelea gallina*)² are therefore subject to this provision.

In 2019 Italy submitted to the European Commission a proposal of a three-year discard plan for the fisheries targeting Venus clams by hydraulic dredges in the certain Italian waters. Following STECF advice a high survivability derogation was granted for 3 years and a 1 year derogation to MCRS for one year. With the latter derogation in December 2020, the IT administration is submitting a new Joint Recommendation to update the 2019 discard plan.

After the entry into force of the new Technical Measures Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2019/1241) Member States have the possibility to develop joint recommendations that can be used to amend certain regional baseline selectivity standards through the Commission empowerment to adopt delegated Acts on the basis of these joint recommendations. This permits the tailoring of detailed and technical rules so as to take into account regional specificities. The alternative measures should as a minimum lead to such benefits for the conservation of marine biological resources that are at least equivalent to the ones provided by the baseline standards. As such, the joint recommendation shall not lead to a deterioration of baseline standards and also aim at achieving the objectives and targets set out in Articles 3 and 4 of Regulation (EU) 2019/1241.

The new Joint Recommendation is supported by a study which evaluates the possible effects of re-defining the MCRS.

Request to the STECF

STECF is requested to review and make any appropriate comments and recommendations on the draft discard plan for the fisheries targeting Venus clams in the Northern Adriatic Sea and its supporting study.

In particular, STECF is requested to:

- Assess the potential past and future impacts on the stock of the proposed change in the MCRS for Venus clams from 25 mm to 22 mm on exploitation rates and stock biomass.

In making this evaluation, STECF is asked to take into account the works of the STECF-EWG 15-14, 16-06, 19-01, 19-02, and of the European Parliament.

Documentation: The discard plan for the fleets fishing Venus Clams in the Northern Adriatic

6.6. Joint Recommendation on Norway Pout fishery

DG Mare focal person: Maria Moset (D3)

Possible STECF Rapporteur: tbd

Background provided by the Commission

The entry into force of the Regulation (EU) No 2019/1241, new Technical Measures Regulation (TMR)⁹ introduces the process of regionalization to amend certain regional baseline selectivity

⁹ Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1224/2009 and Regulations (EU) No 1380/2013, (EU) 2016/1139, (EU) 2018/973, (EU) 2019/472 and (EU) 2019/1022 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 894/97, (EC) No 850/98, (EC) No 2549/2000, (EC) No 254/2002, (EC) No 812/2004 and (EC)

standards. Member States with interests in a given region may adapt various aspects of fisheries management to ensure that activities carried out are consistent with the objectives proposed by the aforementioned legal text. This permits the tailoring of detailed and technical rules so as to take into account regional specificities. In this regard, the Scheveningen Regional Group has developed the attached joint recommendation in accordance with articles 15 of TMR and 18 of Regulation EU no 1380/2013. This joint recommendation needs to be assessed by the STECF in order to determine to what extent it goes in line with achieving the objectives and targets set out in Articles 3 and 4 of Regulation (EU) 2019/1241, and does not lead to a deterioration of selectivity standards.

Request to the STECF

Linked to point 6.11, STECF is requested to evaluate the attached joint recommendations on the use of “excluder” grid device in the Norway Pout fishery in the North Sea¹⁰ on the basis of Article 15(4) (5) and (6) of Regulation 2019/1241. It should be assessed to what extent it helps at achieving the objectives and targets set out in Articles 3 and 4 of Regulation 1241/2019, and whether the joint recommendation presented on the use of the “excluder” could lead to a deterioration of selectivity standards.

More specifically, STECF advice is requested to assess, in particular:

- to what extent does it achieve the by catch reduction similarly to the existing grid, or improves it, compared to what was existing on 14 August 2019 (date of entry into force of Regulation 1241/2019)
- Whether the technical specifications of the excluder are appropriate or should be modified for an increase in by catch reduction.
- Whether the materials, methods and statistical analysis used may be considered as adequate and fit for purpose, and whether data and information submitted are considered robust and enough.
- In the event that STECF identifies shortcomings in the joint recommendation, it is requested to provide guidance on whether these can be overcome through further work and if so, the specific elements that should be further considered

Documentation: Joint recommendation of the Scheveningen Group: Use of the ‘Excluder’ grid in the Norway pout fishery. Annex to Joint Recommendation.

6.7. Revision of work plan and annual report templates as well as annual report guidance for data collection

DG Mare focal person: Monika Sterczewska, Blanca Garcia Alvarez (C3)

Possible STECF Rapporteur: tbd

Background provided by the Commission

The Data Collection Framework (DCF) Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 stipulates that the Commission shall establish a multiannual Union programme (EU-MAP) for the collection and management of data. The current EU-MAP set in Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/909 and Commission Delegated Decision (EU) 2019/910 is subject to revision, hence the work plan (WP) template and annual report (AR) template that help Member States to

No 2187/2005

¹⁰ As defined by Article 5a of Regulation (EU) No 2019/1241.

plan their data collection and report on it should be updated to reflect the contents of the revised EU-MAP. Some preparatory work for the WP templates have been conducted during EWG 19-12 on the EU-MAP revision in September 2019, and comments on the WP/AR guidance for Member States have been gathered during EWGs assessing the AR/WP in years 2016-2019. The EWG 20-18 on WP/AR templates would therefore incorporate and critically assess contributions made so far, to finalize the guidance and templates for a single Commission implementing decision that will replace current decisions (EU) 2016/1701 and (EU) 2018/1283.

In view of EWG 20-08 on AR 2019 assessment, there is a need to improve structure and usability of the evaluation grid and assessment criteria. Following the EWG 19-09 recommendations, the AR assessment guidance should be discussed by STECF plenary, based on the outcomes of ad-hoc contracts conducted early March 2020. The improved AR evaluation grid and assessment criteria guidelines, approved by STECF plenary, will then be used in the AR 2019 assessment exercise in June 2020 (EWG 20-08).

The ad-hoc output will also feed into the STECF preparatory works for the revision of the Commission implementing decisions on Work Plan and Annual Report templates for the new EU-MAP, to be executed during 2020. The overarching goal is to improve the assessment procedure, allowing for more efficient and harmonised evaluation of both compliance with the data collection framework (DCF) and quality of the data collected by MS.

Request to the STECF

STECF is requested to: (1) scope the work needed to finalise the STECF input for a single Commission implementing decision that will replace current decisions (EU) 2016/1701 and (EU) 2018/1283, and recommend timing and a STECF member to chair the related EWG 20-18.

STECF is requested to (2) discuss and approve the results of ad-hoc contracts on the AR evaluation grid and assessment criteria in view of EWG 20-08 on the assessment of 2019 AR.

6.8. STECF opinion on conclusions from the Liaison meeting report

DG Mare focal person: Venetia Kostopoulou (C3)

Possible STECF Rapporteur: tbd

Background provided by the Commission

The Liaison Meeting (LM) is a subgroup of the Expert Group on fisheries data collection (E02750) and brings together the chairs of the Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs), Planning Group for Economics (PGECON), main end users (STECF/JRC, ICES, GFCM, ICCAT etc.), other stakeholders (for eg. pan-regional subgroups) and COM. During the annual LM, all work carried out by the RCGs and PGECON is summarised, and next steps are discussed. The 16th Liaison Meeting (LM) was held at the Borschette Centre (European Commission), Brussels, from 3 to 4 September 2019 and was chaired by Joel Vigneau (IFREMER, France). The STECF was represented by its members Christoph Stransky (participating as chair of STECF EWGs on DCF issues) and Willy Vanhee.

In the LM report 2019¹¹, a number of points related to STECF, were identified. The LM agreed to follow the same process as in the past¹², and send the recommendations stemming from RCG and PGECON 2019 work to STECF, for information and opinion.

Request to the STECF

STECF is requested to analyse the recommendations of the RCGs in the light of their possible impact and to inform the Commission on the possible actions or different options (where relevant).

6.9. STECF opinion on Bulgaria request for clarification on the expanded list of stocks for the Black Sea demersal trawl survey

DG Mare focal person: Venetia Kostopoulou (C3)

Possible STECF Rapporteur: tbd

Background provided by the Commission

Following the outcomes of the EWG 19-05 and the EWG 19-12 on the evaluation of the list of mandatory surveys under the DCF, the STECF Plen 19-03 was asked to address two additional Member States requests for clarification on the list of mandatory surveys at sea. One of these requests came from Bulgaria. Bulgaria requested to limit the list of target species in the Bottom Trawl Survey in the Black Sea (BTSBS) to turbot, while Romania – when asked by COM - requested to keep the list of target species proposed by EWG 19-05 (turbot, whiting and picked dogfish).

STECF, in its Plen 19-03 Report, noted that turbot, picked dogfish and whiting have been target species in historical bottom trawl surveys in the Black Sea since the 1980s, and keeping them in the BTSBS would assure the continuity of survey time series. Moreover, the data on biomass and density of those species are needed for the tuning of analytical stock assessments, as those are priority species. STECF was aware that in a recent exercise of standardisation of survey indices (within the RECFISH project), there was a lack of Bulgarian data, which caused incomplete coverage of EU waters. STECF noted that these three species were assessed by the GFCM in 2018. The fact that they occur rarely in the surveys can be linked to their status, the picked dogfish stock being assessed as depleted, while whiting is considered to be overexploited. Picked dogfish is listed in Annex II of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) of Wild Animals, and considered as endangered in the latest IUCN assessment. Any information on this species that could be gathered from both fishery-dependent and independent sources of information should be considered as very valuable. STECF concluded thus that the three species should remain target species of the BTSBS and should be collected by all countries participating in the survey, regardless of the number of individuals that are caught during the survey.

Following STECF Plen 19-03 Report, Bulgaria requested further clarifications on the last sentence: *'STECF concludes thus that the three species should remain target species of the BTSBS and should be collected by all countries participating in the survey, regardless of the number of individuals that are caught during the survey.'* Bulgaria would like to clarify whether this sentence means that scientists should calculate biomass/abundance based on a very low number of individuals caught in the survey. The scientists in the Member State have expressed

¹¹ The LM Report 2019 is published on the DCF website.

¹²The LM has requested COM in the past to address points relevant for STECF to its Plenary (for eg. see Plen-17-03 Report).

the opinion that they could provide the biological information for the collected specimens, but, in some cases, the number of individuals caught is not sufficient for stock assessment (biomass and abundance).

Request to the STECF

STECF is requested to clarify whether it would be mandatory to calculate the abundance and biomass of the expanded target species of BTSBS, as proposed by EWG 19-05 (whiting and picked dogfish), in those cases where the number of individuals caught is low.

6.10. STECF evaluation of the Danish weighing proposals

DG Mare focal person: John Hederman (D4), tbc

Possible STECF Rapporteur: tbd

Background provided by the Commission

Article 60 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 (hereafter 'Control Regulation') requires that Member States shall ensure that all fishery products are weighed on systems approved by the competent authorities. Weighing must be done in a manner that accounts for each quantity of each species for the completion of catch registration documents. By default, all fishery products must be weighed at landing before transport, storage or sale. However subject to Commission approval, granted in the form of Commission Implementing Decisions, the following derogations from the requirement to weigh each quantity of each species before transport, storage or sale may apply:

1. The sample weighing of fishery products at landing according to a Commission approved sampling plan (Article 60(1) of the Control Regulation). This provides an exemption from the requirement to weigh all fishery products at landing and the methodology for this type of sampling plan is detailed in Annex XIX of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 404/2011 (hereafter 'Implementing Regulation').
2. The sample weighing of fishery products at landing, which have been already weighed on board a fishing vessel, according to a Commission approved sampling plan (Article 60(3) of the Control Regulation). This provides another exemption from the requirement to weigh all fishery products at landing and the methodology for this type of sampling plan is detailed in Annex XX of the Implementing Regulation.
3. The weighing of fishery products after transport, to a destination within the Member State of landing, according to a Commission approved control plan (Article 61(1) of the Control Regulation). The methodology for this derogation is detailed in Annex XXI of the Implementing Regulation.
4. The weighing of fishery products after transport, to a destination within another Member State, according to a Commission approved common control programme (Article 61(2) of the Control Regulation). The methodology for this derogation is detailed in Annex XXII of the Implementing Regulation.

In the event that a Member State has adopted any of the Commission approved weighing provisions outlined above, the results of weighing according to these provisions shall be used to complete catch registration documents such as weighing records (Article 70 of the

Implementing Regulation), landing declarations, sales notes, transport documents and take-over declarations (Art 60(5) of the Control Regulation).

As catch registration documents are necessary for Member States to monitor quota uptake and to report the quantities landed to the Commission, it is essential that the weighing provisions submitted to the Commission, for approval, ensure the accurate weighing of all catches. In cases where fishery products are to be sample weighed, it is important to ensure that the prescribed sample size is sufficient to be representative of the overall quantities of each species landed.

Denmark submitted, on 30 September 2019, to the Commission proposals for three sampling plans, three control plans and a common control programme for weighing fishery products, post transport, in Belgium (these were subsequently revised on 20 December 2019 and 21 January 2020). These proposals address respectively the weighing of unsorted species not intended for human consumption (i.e. industrial species), unsorted species intended for human consumption (i.e. pelagic species) and demersal species.

This ad hoc contract aims to evaluate the sampling plans and control plans submitted by Denmark for Commission approval. The proposed common control programme shall not be included in this evaluation. In particular, an evaluation of the plans shall assess whether the prescribed sample amounts are sufficient to ensure an accurate representation of each quantity of each species landed.

Request to the STECF

STECF is requested to:

- 1) Evaluate the methodologies outlined in the proposed Danish **sampling plan** and **control plan** for unsorted fishery products not intended for human consumption i.e. **industrial fishery products**. The Danish sampling methodology is supported by the *Sampling plan model for sampling small meshed landings* (DTU – Technical University of Denmark). In particular, an assessment shall be made of the prescribed sample quantities, per fishery, detailed in Table 1 of the proposed plans with a view to determining whether the sample quantities ensure an accurate representation of each quantity of each species landed.
- 2) Evaluate the methodologies outlined in the proposed Danish **sampling plan** and **control plan** for unsorted fishery products intended for human consumption i.e. **pelagic fishery products**. In particular, an assessment shall be made of the prescribed sample quantities detailed in the table of the proposed plans with a view to determining whether the sample quantities ensure an accurate representation of each quantity of each species landed. Note: the sampling methodology of these plans is based on Article 7 of Commission Regulation (EEC) No 3703/85, which is intended to provide a sampling basis for grading species, of a given 'lot', into freshness and size categories.
- 3) Evaluate the methodologies outlined in the proposed Danish **sampling plan** and **control plan** for fishery products, including those that have already been weighed on board, i.e. **demersal fishery products**. In particular, an assessment shall be made of the sample quantities detailed in Table 1 of the proposed plans with a view to determining whether the sampling provisions ensure an accurate representation of each quantity of each species landed.

6.11. Preparation of joint recommendations under the Technical Measures Regulation

DG Mare focal person: Maria Moset (D3)

Possible STECF Rapporteur: tbd

Background provided by the Commission

The entry into force of the new Technical Measures Regulation¹³ resulted in the introduction of the process of regionalization in numerous fields as far as technical measures are concerned. Member States with interests in a given region should adapt various aspects of fisheries management to ensure that activities carried out are consistent with the objectives proposed by the aforementioned legal text. In this process, the regional groups should develop joint recommendations that would need to go through the STECF in order to assess to what extent the recommendation proposed goes in line with achieving the objectives set out in the Regulation.

Request to the STECF

With respect to STECF workplan item “Evaluation of Technical Measures”, STECF is requested to address this term of reference in the spring plenary session:

- “ to develop methodologies to undertake evaluations of joint recommendations and scientific research operations and to identify the data and information requirements that should be included in the Joint Recommendations to support the work of STECF.

The remaining items should be retained and addressed by an EWG later in the year on an ad hoc basis using the methods developed as above.

- the evaluation of joint recommendations on technical measures on the basis of Article 15(4) (5) and (6) of Regulation 2019/1241 and the evaluation of scientific research operations submitted to the Commission on the basis of Articles 25(1) er) and (f) should be retained and addressed in an ad hoc meeting later in the year,

With regards to the joint recommendations, more specifically, STECF advice is requested on whether the joint recommendations modifying the mesh size specifications set out in Article 27 and in Part B of Annexes V to XI of Regulation 1241/2019:

- could lead to a deterioration of selectivity standards, in particular in terms of an increase in the catches of juveniles, existing on 14 August 2019 (date of entry into force of Regulation 1241/2019)
- aim at achieving the objectives and targets set out in Articles 3 and 4 of Regulation 1241/2019

¹³ Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1224/2009 and Regulations (EU) No 1380/2013, (EU) 2016/1139, (EU) 2018/973, (EU) 2019/472 and (EU) 2019/1022 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 894/97, (EC) No 850/98, (EC) No 2549/2000, (EC) No 254/2002, (EC) No 812/2004 and (EC) No 2187/2005, OJ L 198, 25.07.2019, p. 105.

With regards to scientific research operations involving more than six commercial vessels, STECF advice is requested on:

- whether this level of participation is justified on scientific grounds;
- if the level of participation is not considered justified on scientific grounds, which changes would be required to the conditions of the scientific research;
- in the case of scientific research operations involving electric pulse trawl, a review of the scientific research plan and accompanying system for monitoring, control and evaluation.

6.12. Closure areas under the multiannual plan for demersal fisheries in the western Mediterranean Sea (Italy and Spain)

DG Mare focal person: Laurent Markovic (D1)

Possible STECF Rapporteur:

Background

Under Article 11(1) of Regulation (EU) No 2019/1022 ("WMed MAP"), the use of trawls in the western Mediterranean Sea shall be prohibited within six nautical miles from the coast except in areas deeper than the 100 m isobath during three months each year and, where appropriate, consecutively, on the basis of the best available scientific advice. Those three months of annual closure shall be determined by each Member State and shall apply during the most relevant period determined on the basis of the best available scientific advice.

Provided that it is justified by particular geographical constraints, such as the limited size of the continental shelf or the long distances to fishing grounds, Member States may derogate from Article 11(1) and establish, on the basis of the best available scientific advice, other closure areas. Those closure areas shall account for a reduction of at least 20 % of catches of juvenile hake in each geographical subarea is achieved.

Italy and Spain were expected to provide scientific and technical documentation supporting the implementation of the closure area set in Article 11(1) or, where appropriate, requesting the derogation foreseen in Article 11(2).

Request to the STECF

- When the closure area set in Article 11, paragraph 1, applies: Review the supporting documentation provided to identify the most relevant period, taking into account the aim of protecting demersal resources, in particular juveniles, and sensitive habitats.
- When the derogation foreseen in Article 11, paragraph 2, is requested: Evaluate if the following conditions are fulfilled: (i) there are particular geographical constraints, such as the limited size of the continental shelf or the long distances to fishing grounds; and (ii) there are sound scientific basis indicating that the proposed closure areas would lead to a reduction of at least 20% of catches of juvenile hake in each GSA.

6.13. Derogation for 'Volantina' demersal otter trawls in the territorial waters of Slovenia

DG MARE focal person: Chato Giacomo Osio (D1)

Possible STECF Rapporteur:

Background

In accordance with Article 13(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1967/2006 (hereafter the MedReg), the use of towed gears is prohibited within 3 nautical miles of the coast or within the 50m isobath where that depth is reached at a shorter distance from the coast. At a request of a Member State, derogation from Article 13(1) may be granted, provided that the conditions set in Article 13(5) and (9) are fulfilled.

In addition, a general condition for all derogations is that the fishing activities concerned are regulated by a management plan provided for under Article 19 of the MedReg. Under this provision, Member States are expected to adopt management plans for fisheries conducted by trawl nets, boats seines, shore seines, surrounding nets and dredges within their territorial waters.

In 2013, the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) introduced new elements for conservation such as the target of maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for all the stocks by 2020 at the latest, the landing obligation and the regionalisation approach.

In line with these two regulations, the plans shall be based on scientific, technical and economic advice, and shall contain conservation measures to restore and maintain fish stocks above levels capable of producing MSY. Where targets relating to the MSY (e.g. fishing mortality) cannot be determined, owing to insufficient data, the plans shall provide for measures based on the precautionary approach, ensuring at least a comparable degree of conservation of the relevant stocks.

The plans may contain specific conservation objectives and measures based on the ecosystem approach to achieve the objectives set. In particular, it may incorporate any measure included in the following list to limit fishing mortality and the environmental impact of fishing activities: limiting catches, fixing the number and type of fishing vessels authorized to fish, limiting fishing effort, adopting technical measures (structure of fishing gears, fishing practices, areas/period of fishing restriction, minimum size, reduction of impact of fishing activities on marine ecosystems and non-target species), establishing incentives to promote more selective fishing, conduct pilot projects on alternative types of fishing management techniques.

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2017/2383 granted a derogation to Article 13(1) of the Mediterranean Regulation for 'volantina' demersal otter trawls in the territorial waters of Slovenia. This derogation applies until 27 March 2020.

Slovenia, taking into account the STECF Opinion of PLEN 19-03, has re-submitted a request to prolong this derogation after its expiry on 27 March 2020.

Request to the STECF

TOR 1. Assess whether the management plan contains adequate elements in terms of:

1.1. The description of the fisheries:

- Recent and historical data on catches (landings and discards) of the species concerned, fishing effort and abundance indices such as catch-per-unit-effort;
- Data on length-frequency distribution of the catches, with particular reference to the species subject to minimum sizes in accordance with Annex IX of Regulation (EU) No 2019/1241;
- An updated state of the exploited resources; and
- Information on economic indicators, including the profitability of the fisheries.

1.2. Objectives, safeguards and conservation/technical measures:

- Objectives consistent with Article 2 of the CFP and quantifiable targets, such as fishing mortality rates and total biomass;
- Measures proportionate to the objectives, the targets and the expected time frame;
- Safeguards to ensure that quantifiable targets are met, as well as remedial actions, where needed, including situations where the poor quality of data or non-availability places the sustainability of the main stocks of the fishery at risk; and
- Other conservation measures, in particular measures to fully monitor catches of the target species, to eliminate discards and to minimise the negative impact of fishing on the ecosystem.

1.3. Other aspects:

- Quantifiable indicators for periodic monitoring and assessment of progress in achieving the objectives of the plan.
- If deemed necessary, provide any recommendations and guidance on how to obtain improved scientific/technical supporting material for the plan. This could be done in terms of collection of data, evaluation of the status of the target stocks, evaluation of conservation measures, impact on the marine ecosystem and monitoring programme.

TOR 2. Evaluate whether the following conditions concerning the derogation to the minimum distances and depths (Article 13, paragraphs 5 and 9) are fulfilled:

- There are particular geographical constraints, such as the limited size of coastal platforms or limited fishing grounds;
- The fisheries have no significant impact on the marine environment;
- The fisheries involve a limited number of vessels, with a track record of more than 5 years, and do not contain any increase in the fishing effort;
- The fisheries cannot be undertaken with another gear;
- The fisheries are subject to a management plan and carry out a monitoring of catches as requested in Article 23;
- The fisheries do not operate above seagrass beds of, in particular, *Posidonia oceanica* or other marine phanerogams;
- The fisheries do not interfere with the activities of vessels using gears other than trawls, seines or similar towed nets;
- The fisheries are regulated in order to ensure that catches of species mentioned in Annex IX of Regulation (EU) No 2019/1241 are minimal; and
- The fisheries do not target cephalopods.

TOR 3. Evaluate the implementation report of the current derogation and any additional documents provided to support the Slovenian request to renew the derogation.

6.14. Management plan for boat seines in the Balearic Islands, Spain

DG MARE focal person: Laurent Markovic (D1)

Possible STECF Rapporteur:

Background

The STECF assessed the Spanish management plan for boat seines in the Balearic Islands during STECF PLEN 19-03, under item 6.3 on page 92-104. The background information provided in pages 92-93 would also apply to the present request.

Report of STECF PLEN 19-03:

<https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/43805/2620849/STECF-PLN+19-03.pdf/3b331f34-5dee-48d7-b9dc-97d00b5f1f16>

Request to the STECF

The STECF is requested to review the additional documents Spain provided and assess whether these address the conclusions of STECF PLEN 19-03.

6.15. Italy request of scientific research on "SARDELLA" (*S. pilchardus*) in Liguria (GSA 9)

DG MARE focal person: Chato Giacomo Osio (D1)

Possible STECF Rapporteur:

Background

Italy intends to launch a scientific fishing programme for 3 years on sardine fry by granting a scientific fishing licence for up to 72 vessels in the Liguria Region in GSA 9.

The proposed experimental fishing activity has a general strategic relevance as the expected results could possibly be a useful tool for the implementation of a long-term Management Plan that could be extended to the fishing communities in other areas of Italy, interested in fishing for juvenile sardine

With the entry into force in August 2019 of the new Technical Measure regulation (TMR, EC 1241/2019), there are new procedure and conditions for such fisheries (Art 25 of the TMR). In substance scientific fishing can be carried out by maximum 6 vessels and, shall the request cover more than 6 vessels, STECF needs to evaluate the scientific justification.

Request to the STECF

On the basis of the criteria established by Art 25 of EC 1241/2019 and on the basis of the information sent by Italy, evaluate if the participation of up to 72 vessels is justified on the scientific grounds presented in the background documents provided.

7. ITEMS/DISCUSSION POINTS FOR PREPARATION OF EWGs AND OTHER STECF WORK

7.1. State of play and update of guidelines on Data Transmission Monitoring

(Blanca Garcia Alvarez, Monika Sterczewska, C3)

STECF is requested to review and update the Data Transmission Monitoring Tool (DTMT) guidelines guidelines for (1) end-users to report issues, (2) MS to comment on issues and (3) STECF to assess the issue and the MS comment.

7.2. Preparation of EWG 20-01 on methods for supporting stock assessment in the Mediterranean

(Venetia Kostopoulou, C3; Chato Osio, D1)

STECF is requested to discuss the TORs and planning of this EWG.

7.3. Preparation of the EWG 20-02 and 20-07 on the review of the Technical Measures Regulation

(Maria Moset, D3)

STECF is requested to plan work for EWGs 20-02 and 20-07 (including intersessional ad hoc expert contracts as required) in order to deliver the ToR as below for the STECF summer plenary:

- STECF is requested to evaluate the performance of technical measures to conserve fishery resources and protect marine ecosystems according to article 31 of Regulation (EU) 2019/1241.
- In particular, STECF is requested to evaluate the extent to which technical measures both at regional level and at Union level have contributed to achieving the objectives set out in Article 3 of said Regulation and reaching the targets set out in Article 4, including progress that has been made or impact arising from innovative gear. STECF should have regard to advice from ICES and should draw conclusions about the benefits achieved for, or negative effects on, marine ecosystems, sensitive habitats and selectivity. Specific attention should be paid to areas where, at regional level, there is evidence that the objectives and targets as set out in Articles 3 and 4 of Regulation (EU) 1241/2019 have not been met.
- STECF shall calculate the length of optimal selectivity (L_{opt}) as defined in Article 6, point 50 of Regulation 2019/1241 for the stocks, species and areas given in Annex XIV

of that Regulation. STECF shall calculate the average length of fish of each species caught for each fishery for as long a time-series as practicable.

- In addition to these species is requested to extend the analysis to stocks covered by multiannual plans and for as many additional stocks of commercial importance in each area as practicable.
- STECF is also requested to refer to advice from ICES on the progress made or impact of innovative gear and should evaluate the use of innovative gears, drawing conclusions about the benefits for, or negative effects on, marine ecosystems, sensitive habitats and selectivity.
- STECF is requested to discuss on the initial scoping and planning for the review of Technical Measures during 2020 (EWG 20-02 and 20-07).

7.4. Preparation of EWG 20-06 on methods for defining sustainable fisheries and aquaculture

(Gerd Heinen, Laurene Jolly, A4)

STECF is requested to discuss on the feasibility of the draft ToRs. The Plenary should also reflect on what the EWG will be available to deliver for each tasks and how it will be achieved.

7.5. Preparation of the EWG 20-12 on EU Aquaculture sector. Economic report 2020.

(Javier Villar Burke, A4)

STECF is requested to review the draft ToRs for the EWG 20-12 assessing its feasibility. The Plenary should also indicate whether it considers that some preparatory work would be needed and, in that case, explain in details what would be needed and how it can be achieved.

7.6. Preparing EWG 20-14 on the social dimension of the CFP

(Raymond Maes, D3)

STECF is requested to examine the draft ToR for the EWG 20-14 on the social dimension of the CFP and make any appropriate comments and recommendations

7.7. Information on the outcomes of the Regional Coordination Group Med & BS End-users meeting

(Venetia Kostopoulou, C3)

The Subgroup on Data Requirements and Data Transmission Issues was established in line with Regional Coordination Group (RCG) Med & BS 2018 Recommendation 2 on the 'Establishment of Intersessional Subgroups for the RCG Med & BS'. The RCG Med & BS 2018 considered the need to establish a permanent subgroup on data requirements and data related regional specificities and issues by end-users. The aim of this subgroup was to try to streamline and simplify the process of data transmissions to end-users, in order to avoid duplication of reporting of the same type of data. In addition, the subgroup should assess data transmission failures at regional level. The RCG Med & BS 2018 considered that, apart from experts nominated by each MS, main end-users (European Commission, GFCM and STECF) and JRC should participate.

The first meeting took place on 12-14 March 2019 (GFCM Headquarters Rome, Italy) and JRC participated. The second meeting will take place from Thursday 12 to Friday 13 March 2020 at DG MARE in Brussels, Belgium . The STECF will be represented with Alessandro Ligas. JRC will participate via videoconference.

The STECF is requested to be informed on and discuss the outcomes of this meeting.

Relevant background documents: Final Report of the Meeting with End-users of Scientific Data 2019; draft agenda of Meeting with End-users of Scientific Data 2020.

7.8. Preparation of the EWG 20-10 Fisheries Dependent Information (FDI)

(Evelien Ranshuysen, D3)

STECF is requested to discuss the state of play and the development of the FDI data and its functionality. STECF will base the discussion upon the background document and analysis performed by the Joint Research Center and DG MARE of the FDI data and its use.