JRC SCIENCE FOR POLICY REPORT

Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) - Evaluation of the 2020 Annual Reports for data collection and Data Transmission issues (STECF-21-09)

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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 presents the STECF findings based on the Report of the Expert Working Group (EWG 21-09) which was held virtually from 21-25 June 2021, to evaluate MS Annual Reports on data collection for 2020 and the Member States' data transmission to the end users during 2020. The report of the EWG was reviewed by the STECF during its 67th plenary meeting held virtually from 5-9 July 2021.

SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COMMITTEE FOR FISHERIES (STECF) - Evaluation of the 2020 Annual Reports for data collection and Data Transmission issues (STECF-21-09)

Background provided by the Commission

Article 11 of the Data Collection framework (DCF) Regulation (EU) 1004/2017 requires Member States to submit to the Commission an annual report (AR) on the implementation of their national work plans (WPs) and requires STECF to evaluate: (a) the execution of the WPs and (b) the quality of the data collected by the Member States. These tasks have been conferred to EWG 21-09 [ToR 1, 2]. In addition, EWG 21-09 was asked to validate the outputs of the pilot studies run under the EU MAP 2017-2019 and their potential extension to 2020-2021. This task refers only to the two first pilot studies: (1) on recreational fisheries and (2) impacts on the ecosystem [ToR 3]. Following consultations on the draft WP/AR templates and guidelines and documents accompanying the assessment process, EWG 21-09 is requested to assess the proposed amendments to the grid and evaluators' guidance for WP 2022-2024 [ToR 4]. Finally, EWG 21-09 is requested to assess the proposed amendments to the WP/AR templates and guidelines after the consultation to Member States and regional coordination groups [ToR 5].

Two pre-screening exercises have taken place to facilitate the work of the EWG: one related to the pilot studies (1) and (2), and the second one related to annual reports from the Member States. The EWG evaluation is actually run as a second level assessment, focusing on topics where the pre-screeners have raised an issue or where the pre-screeners assessment have not been conclusive.

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. In addition, PLEN 21-02 is asked to review input to the AR/WP templates that DG MARE received in an inter-service consultation with COM services, after the EWG had finalised its work.

STECF comments, observations, recommendations etc.

EWG 21-09 met virtually on 21-25 June 2021. Since there was just one week between the end of the EWG and the start of STECF PLEN 21-02, the final EWG report was not yet available to PLEN 21-02. The following STECF comments and suggestions are consequently based on discussions among STECF members based on a presentation of outcomes from the EWG 21-09 meeting made by the chairperson, a preliminary draft of the EWG 21-09 report and various background documents provided to STECF.

Evaluation of 2020 Annual Reports

STECF observes that the evaluation of 2020 Annual Reports (ARs) was based on the outcome from the pre-screening exercise, guidance documents for AR-WP evaluators, a

stand-alone document of assessment criteria as proposed by EWG 20-18 and agreed by PLEN 21-01, and the results from the Covid-19 questionnaire compiled by DG MARE in 2020.

STECF notes that it was the first time that, following the approach endorsed by PLEN 21-01, Member States were contacted prior to the EWG meeting to resolve AR issues detected by the pre-screeners. The Member States had the chance to provide clarifications and resubmit the ARs, if necessary, until the first day of the EWG. STECF notes that rules concerning the prior communication had been pre-defined stating that all identified issues had to be reviewed by at least two pre-screeners before the issue was sent to the Member States. Moreover, the issue types (inconsistencies, formatting issues, missing tables etc.) initiating a request to Member States for clarification or AR re-submission had also been defined before the pre-screening. The communication with Member States both prior to the EWG and after was thoroughly documented for future reference.

Prior to the EWG, 22 Member States were contacted for clarification on various AR sections. During the EWG, the Commission re-contacted 7 of them for clarification on various AR sections. Overall, 20 Member States replied, which led to the improvement and finalisation of assessments.

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the data collection efforts in all Member States. STECF observes that the Commission, as suggested by EWG 20-18 and endorsed by PLEN 21-01, required Member States to clearly highlight any deviation from the Work Plan (WP) due to Covid-19 in their AR. Based on this input the EWG evaluated the Covid-19 consequences on the data collection in 2020.

STECF observes however that the impact of Covid-19 on the data collection in 2020 was not fully reflected in all AR sections. The effects of Covid-19 were most prominent for the evaluation of AR sections 1F (incidental by-catch) and 1G-H (research surveys-at-sea) in which lower assessment scores were obtained compared to last year. At contrary, even though Covid-19 likely affected the sampling reported in the sections 1 A-C (required stocks and sampling intensity for biological variables) and 4 A-C (sampling frame description and data on fisheries), the assessment scores were not lower than last year.

STECF understands that this effect is due to the way the questions in the assessment grid are formulated. The assessment questions are in some sections currently formulated to ask whether deviations are justified or whether a valid explanation is presented for each deviation from the WP, and whether actions considered/taken are appropriate to minimize deviations in the future. Hence, even where impacts on achievement of data collection due to Covid-19 are evident, an appropriate justification for this will result in a high score. A Member State could thus appear as having a high overall score of their AR even if that one was affected by Covid-19. Moreover, some MS, applied alternative ways for sampling such as training of crew on self-sampling, purchasing samples and etc. in order to mitigate the impacts of Covid-19. It was therefore not possible for STECF to quantify the impact of the pandemic on the data collection within the agreed AR assessment process. STECF notes thus, an evaluation of the impact of Covid-19 on data quality issues would be better addressed in a separate analysis that is not bound to follow the agreed AR assessment grid. STECF notes also that more information on the Covid-19 impacts in 2020 might appear when data are being used following the 2021 data calls, and potential issues reported in the DTMT which will be analysed in 2022.

Beside this issue, STECF observes furthermore that the overall scores of performance level by Member States decreased slightly compared to the previous year. The number of Member States that were given the highest overall performance score > 90 % (Yes) decreased from 8 to 5 and 3 Member States as opposed to 1 in 2019 were receiving the compliance level of 10-50 % (partly). STECF observes that based on the information

provided by the Member States, the decrease in the overall assessment is partly but not all due to Covid-19 effect.

Evaluation of DCF data transmission issues

STECF observes that as in 2019 and 2020, the assessment of Data Transmission issues (DTi) was based on the Guidance document (version 30-05-2019) coupled with additional assessment criteria suggested by EWG 19-09.

STECF observes that the EWG assessed 555 DTi from 5 data calls in 2020 and 2 end users (STECF EWGs and ICCAT) that had been uploaded to the Data Transmission Monitoring Tool (DTMT). 438 DTi were related to Coverage, 116 to Quality and 1 to Timeliness. 273 issues were assessed by the EWG as Unsatisfactory, 189 as Satisfactory and the remaining 92 issues as Follow-up needed.

In particular, STECF notes that a high number of DTi were reported from the fleet economic data call and EWG on Annual Economic Report AER (391 issues). This high number was mainly due to the fact that, in contrary to previous years, the issues had not been aggregated before being inserted in the DTMT. This high number should thus not be interpreted as a deterioration in data quality.

Indeed, STECF observed that the number of DTis has globally increased substantially, from 106 issues raised in the previous year. As illustrated with the AER issues above, STECF reiterates that the number of DTi is not comparable between years. STECF observes that there is large heterogeneity of reporting between end-users (see also ToR 7.6). STECF even acknowledges that the increase in reported DTi may rather be a sign of a general improvement in the awareness, communication and traceability of detected DTi with the aim of highlighting any issue encountered.

Should a true comparison of DTi changes over years be requested by DGMare, STECF suggests that this shall be done in a specific intersessional analysis (e.g. through an ad-hoc contract reviewing all DTi in the DTMT to assess their severity, aggregation levels etc. Since end-users have different data quality procedures the study would need to look at all end-users separately as well as provide general recommendations. Such a study could then help identify shortfalls in the current reporting procedure in the DTMT and propose improvements to ensure a harmonised approach for monitoring data quality changes between years. STECF further highlights that the revised DTMT guidance (see also ToR 7.6) should improve the assessment of DTi in the forthcoming EWGs dealing with this subject.

The 140 DTi referring to Mediterranean and Black Sea data calls were reported in the DTMT in 2020 during the two stock assessment EWGs 20-09 and 20-15. STECF notes though that most of the DTi relates to historic data and have already been assessed during the EWG 21-02 that asked for the re-submission of the data.

STECF observes that as the DTi in the DTMT relates to data issues occurring in 2019 and before, no DTi due to effects of Covid-19 were assessed by the EWG, but specific attention might be paid to this question next year in relation with the issues raised above in the ARs.

Validation of outputs of pilot studies on recreational fisheries and the level of fishing and impact of fisheries on biological resources and marine ecosystem

STECF observes that the EWG validated two review reports prepared under ad-hoc contracts concerning pilot studies on recreational fisheries and impact on marine ecosystems, undertaken under the EU-MAP 2017-2019.

STECF notes that the report reviewing pilot studies on marine recreational fisheries (MRF) covers pilot studies carried out in most European Member States with the exception of Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Netherlands. The report constitutes an integrated view of the work done at European level to improve scientific estimations of catches and fishing effort related to recreational fisheries both in freshwaters and marine waters. Furthermore, it provides individual assessments of the different pilot studies as well as general remarks and provides best-practice examples to improve the data collection. STECF notes that the main challenge encountered in the different sea regions is the difficulty to work with official data, either by lack of a mandatory license system and/or because the existing one is not suitable to be used as sampling frame for MRF data collection (e.g., not covering all fishing modalities, missing contact information, data protection requirements preventing use of contact data etc.). Accordingly, national population surveys are required, which incur substantial additional costs.

STECF notes that these structural issues will likely persist, and highlights the necessity to further work on a clear and cost-efficient EU common strategy to attain the desired final objective of accurately assessing the relative share of catches of recreational fisheries compared to commercial fisheries. STECF notes that beyond this pilot studies review, some expert working groups already contribute to this process by providing scientific evidence and methodologies, mostly the ICES Working Group on Recreational Fisheries Surveys (WGRFS) and the Working Group on Recreational Fisheries (WGRF) of the GFCM.

The second review report on the level of fishing and impact of fisheries on biological resources and marine ecosystem refers to the analysis of 32 pilot studies from 17 Member States. The report consists of two parts, a general part including general comments and a separate summary of all Pilot Studies undertaken by Member States. The report includes general comments regarding main achievements, methodologies, difficulties encountered and potential solutions, conclusions and areas that could be improved. In the second part of the study the structure and content of each pilot study was evaluated against a set assessment criteria. STECF agrees with the comments and suggestions proposed by the EWG.

<u>Proposed amendments to the assessment grid and evaluators' guidance for WP 2022-2024 and to the WP/AR templates and guidelines.</u>

STECF observes that the EWG assessed a number of new amendments to the assessment grid and evaluators' guidance for WP 2022-24 and the most recent version of the WP and AR templates and guidelines, considering the questions from Member States and the Commission's comments in the documents. STECF notes that the assessment of the documents by the EWG closes the external review process of these documents before distribution to Member States for submission of WP 2022-24 by 15 October 2021. STECF observes that DG MARE asked STECF to consider input to Text Box 4.2 from the Inter-service consultation within the Commission.

STECF Conclusions

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

STECF concludes that the communication with Member States prior to the start of the EWG was a positive development of the feedback process from the Member States. Since issues had been identified and adressed prior to the meeting the early communication allowed for a more efficient and timely assessment of ARs as compared to previous years.

STECF concludes that the impacts of covid-19 restrictions on data collection were not fully reflected in the assessment, due to the standard formulation of the assessment questions that proved sometimes inappropriate for assessing this specific issue. STECF also concludes that the slight quality decrease in the overall assessment of ARs is partly but not all due to Covid-19 effect.

STECF notes that no DTi due to Covid-19 effects were yet assessed by the EWG as the DTi in the DTMT refer to data issues occurring in 2019, but specific attention might be paid to this question next year.

STECF concludes that the high number of DTi this year (555) shall not be interpreted as a deterioration of data quality but is an artefact of some DTi being not aggregated (in contrast to previous years) before being inserted in the DTMT. Furthermore, the high number may actually rather reflect a general improvement in the awareness, communication and traceability of detected DTi. STECF further concludes that the revised DTMT guidance (see also ToR 7.6) should improve the assessment of DT issues in the forthcoming EWGs dealing with this subject.

STECF concludes that the review of the pilot studies on recreational fisheries constitutes a valuable analysis relevant to define next steps in this field and can therefore be published. Given the acknowledged structural challenges of the exercise, STECF further concludes on the necessity to progress work towards a clear and cost-efficient EU common strategy to accurately assess the relative share of catches of recreational fisheries, in close collaboration with ICES and GFCM.

As regards the study on the level of fishing and impact of fisheries on biological resources and marine ecosystem STECF concludes that the report provides a useful summary of activities of Member States but needs to be redrafted following the comments raised by the EWG before publication. STECF concludes that the assessment of the updated review report could be included at terms of reference for the EWG 21-17.

Regarding the WP/AR templates and guidelines, STECF concludes that the EWG revised them appropriately to reflect the changes introduced in the EU-MAP. STECF concludes that regarding the additional question addressed to the plenary regarding the input from the Inter-service consultation (Text Box 4.2), the proposed changes are redundant, as the aspects of sampling design and data quality are already covered in Annex 1.1.

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[1] - Information on STECF members' affiliations is displayed for information only. In any case, Members of the STECF shall act independently. In the context of the STECF work, the committee members do not represent the institutions/bodies they are affiliated to in their daily jobs. STECF members 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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REPORT TO THE STECF

EXPERT WORKING GROUP ON
Evaluation of the 2020 Annual Reports for data collection and data transmission issues from 2020
(EWG-21-09)

Virtual meeting, 21-25 June 2021

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

1 INTRODUCTION

The assessment of Annual Reports (ARs) on data collection in 2020 and data transmission issues (DTi) raised in relation to data calls in this year were carried out by the STECF Expert Working Group (STECF EWG 21-09) between the 21st to the 25th of June 2021.

Under the process of evaluation and approval of the outcomes of the Work Plans (WP), the European Commission is legally bound to consult STECF on the execution of the WPs approved by the Commission and the quality of the data collected by the Member States (MS) in accordance with Article 11 of Regulation (EU) No 2017/1004[1].

Thirty independent experts conducted the evaluation. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the EWG meeting was held as a virtual meeting using Microsoft Teams as a platform. The list of participants is included in Section 9 and the draft agenda is included in Annex 1.

The evaluation of ARs and DT issues was undertaken by subgroups to which experts were allocated according to their expertise. Prior to the EWG assessment, sections 1 to 5 of Member States' ARs for 2020 and DT issues raised in response to 2020 data calls underwent a pre-screening process. All pre-screening was undertaken by experts under contract to DG MARE.

1.1 Terms of Reference for EWG-21-09

Background

Article 11 of the Data Collection Framework (DCF) Regulation (EU) 1004/2017 requires Member States to submit to the Commission an annual report (AR) on the implementation of their national work plans (WPs); and requires STECF to evaluate:

(a)   the execution of the WPs; and

(b)   the quality of the data collected by the Member States.

In preparation for the above, EWG 21-09 will be convened as a teleconference on 21-25 June 2021.

Request to EWG 21-09

EWG 21-09 is requested to evaluate Member States' AR on the implementation of their WPs in 2020, which have been submitted to the Commission by 31st of May 2021, and to report their findings to the plenary meeting of the STECF, which will take place 5-9 July 2021.

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[1] REGULATION (EU) 2017/1004 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 May 2017 on the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the common fisheries policy and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 199/2008 (recast).

In particular, the EWG 21-09 is requested to report its findings regarding:

ToR 1 & 2: Evaluation of AR and DTi

1. Evaluate Member States' AR on the implementation of their WPs in 2020, submitted to the Commission by 31 May 2021.

2. Evaluate the data transmission issues (DTi) reported by end users for data calls launched during the year 2020.

3. For each MS and each region, evaluate Covid-19 consequences for the data collection in 2020, based on information provided in the AR and in the CoV-Sars-2 questionnaire compiled by DG MARE C3.

EWG 21-09 will work on the ARs submitted by Member States, the DTi uploaded on the Data Transmission Monitoring Tool (DTMT), and the results of the pre-screening, following relevant guidance documents. The Commission may address additional requests to EWG 21-09 in relation to specific issues that arise from the pre-screening exercise.

Prior to the EWG 21-09 meeting, a pre-screening of Member States' ARs and DTi will be undertaken through a series of ad-hoc contracts. The pre-screeners will use a grid for the evaluation of ARs (provided as background document 2), the guidance for AR-WP evaluators (provided as background document 4)), and a stand-alone document of assessment criteria (provided as background document 3).

To improve efficiency of the final STECF assessment, pre-screeners will signal issues that can be fixed by the MSs before EWG 21-09 starts. The MS will provide explanations and resubmit the ARs if necessary. The following rules will apply to the prior communication:

1. All identified issues will be reviewed by at least two experts before being sent to the Member States.
2. The issues will be collated and reviewed together with the Commission. Following this filtering exercise, the Commission will relay issues with AR submissions to Member States at the end of the pre-screening exercise.
3. The issues can relate to inconsistencies, formatting issues, missing tables, missing explanations in the text boxes, misplaced information, wrong references etc.

For DTissues, EWG 21-09 is requested to focus on the following data transmission issues from 2020, recorded in the DTMT:
- DTi from the Fleet Economics data call (391 issues reported)
- DTi from the Med&BS (140 issues reported)
- DTi from FDI (14 issues reported)
- DTi from Aquaculture (9 issues reported)
- DTi from ICCAT (one issue reported)
- DTi from ICES (tbc). However, these issues may not arrive on time for a pre-screening and may go directly to the EWG.

The experts are requested to use the DTMT guidance version 30052019 for the evaluation, and to provide feedback to the guidance if needed.

ToR 3: validate the outputs of pilot studies 1 and 2

Under the EU MAP 2017-2019, Member States (MS) run pilot studies on four different topics: (1) recreational fisheries, (2) impacts on marine ecosystem, (3) employment data and (4) aquaculture environment. The Commission asked MS to submit reports on these pilot studies on 15 March 2021, to analyse the results and draw conclusions that might be shared with interested stakeholders: regional coordination groups, other MS across different sea basins, beneficiaries of MARE/2020/08 grants, and interested end users. Pilot study 1 and 2 reports have been analysed under ad-hoc contracts issued in April-May 2021.

Based on these ad-hoc contract outcomes, EWG 21-09 is requested to check and harmonise the results of the ad-hoc contracts, and in particularly verify if information included in the ad-hoc outcomes can be published.

ToR 4: assessment grid and evaluators' guidance for WP 2022-24

Following consultations on the draft WP/AR templates and guidelines, and the documents accompanying the assessment process, a number of amendments have been gathered to the assessment grid and evaluators' guidance for WP 2022-24.

EWG 21-09 is requested to assess the proposed amendments, so that the final approved version of the WP assessment grid and evaluators' guidance can be distributed among MS in due time for the MS to prepare the WP 2022-24 submission by 15 October 2021.

ToR 5: draft of the WP/AR new templates and guidelines amendments after ISC

After STECF 21-01 plenary in March 2021, the Commission consulted informally Member States and regional coordination groups on the first draft of the WP/AR new templates and guidelines, to be used with new EU MAP from 2022. In May 2021, an interservice consultation with the Commission services resulted in some further proposed amendments, especially to Text Box 4.2 and the quality annexes.

EWG 21-09 is requested to assess the proposed amendments, so that the final approved version of WP/AR templates and guidelines can be distributed among MS in due time for the MS to prepare the WP 2022-24 submission by 15 October 2021.

EWG 21-09 report

The report of the EWG 21-09 should contain the following:

  1. At the EU (and regional) level:

a. An overall evaluation of the execution of data collection, including an estimate of the performance of Member States, major issues and recurring issues across Member States. The overall evaluation should also aim to highlight any deficiencies in data collection in relation to end user needs at the regional level in order that such deficiencies can be taken into account in planning future regional work programmes. A separate section on Covid-19 consequences in the data collection activities should be included per each region (ToR 1 & 2)

b. General recommendations to RCG/MS based on the analysis of pilot projects 1 and 2 (ToR 3)

c. EWG 21-09 comments on assessment grid and guidance for October 2021 WP assessment exercise (ToR 4)

d. EWG 21-09 comments on amendments to the draft WP/AR templates and guidance, introduced since STECF 21-01 plenary (ToR 5)

2. For each Member State:

a. With regard to ARs:

(i) An overall evaluation of whether the Member State executed its data collection activities in accordance with its agreed WP for 2020. A separate section on Covid-19 consequences for data collection activities should be included per each MS.

(ii) A detailed evaluation of the AR, based on the AR evaluation grid provided by the Commission, which will already include the result of the pre-screening exercise. The completed grid should highlight:

- any persistent or recurring issues regarding execution of data collection activities;

- any persistent or recurring issues regarding reporting of data collection activities;

- all issues that may require the Commission to take remedial action (request for resubmission of the AR or clarification of specific issues). The Commission will seek clarification from Member States on any issues raised during the EWG meeting and feedback from Member State should be evaluated by the EWG during the meeting. The EWG is not required to evaluate feedback from Member States received after 24 June (one day before the EWG meeting ends);

- any issues that are 'for information' only.

(iii) A summary list of follow-up actions to be addressed by Member States at the end of the EWG.

b. With regard to DT issues:

(i) An overall evaluation of Member State performance, of main DT issues per end user/data call and of recurring issues by Member State.

(ii) An evaluation of Member States' responses via the Data Transmission Monitoring Tool online platform to issues raised by end users of scientific advice (i.e. the STECF, RCGs, ICES and RFMOs to which scientific data is provided by Member States) in relation to data calls issued in 2020. The EWG is requested to evaluate DTi in terms of content by closing issues which have been clarified and highlighting outstanding issues (recurrent and or having an important impact on the activity of a stock assessment working group and the quality of the assessment etc.). The data sets affected shall be underlined.

(iii) Identify in the evaluation per Member State the comments which require a reaction from Member State (draft a summary list) and those points which are for information only.

Following review and endorsement by the STECF plenary in July 2021, all resulting documentation (annual report evaluation and summary list of follow-up actions and evaluation of data transmission issues and summary list of points requiring reaction) will be communicated to Member States by DG MARE.

1.2 Structure of the report

The different sections of the report correspond to the terms of references, section 2 including the evaluation of Member states Annual Reports (ARs) and section 3 evaluation of DT issues. Each part is sub-divided into the sections: setting the scene and results. Section 4 includes the outcomes on the review of the pilot studies 1 and 2 reports (ToR 3) and section 5 includes review of the assessment grid and evaluators' guidance for WP 2022-24 (ToR 4) and section 6 the draft of the WP/AR new templates and guidelines amendments after ISC (ToR 5).

To ease navigation and comprehension, an overview of the structure of Member states Annual Reports is given in Table 1 below.

Sections of Member states Annual Reports	
1A	List of required stocks
1C	Sampling intensity for biological variables
1D	Recreational fisheries
1E	Anadromous and catadromous species data collection in fresh water
1F	Incidental by-catch of birds, mammals, reptiles and fish
1G	List of research surveys at sea
1H	Research survey data collection and dissemination
2A	Fishing activity variables for data collection strategy
3A	Population segments for collection of economic and social data for fisheries

3B	Population segments for collection of economic and social data on aquaculture
3C	Population segments for collection of economic and social data for the processing industry
4A	Sampling plan description for biological data
4C	Data on the fisheries by member state
5A	Quality assurance framework for biological data
5B	Quality assurance framework for socioeconomic data
6A	Data availability
7A	Planned regional and international coordination
7B	Follow-up of recommendations and agreements
7C	Bi- and multilateral agreements

Table 1 –Sections of Member states Annual Reports (ARs).

1.3 Pre-screening exercise

Prior to EWG 21-09, 14 independent experts were contracted by DG MARE to pre-screen sections 1 to 5 of the ARs as well as DT issues that had been reported in the Data Transmission Monitoring Tool (DTMT) and referred to data calls in 2020.

To undertake the pre-screening exercise the pre-screeners were requested to use the updated evaluation grid for pre-screeners (Task 2-3 of March ad-hoc)[2] the Guidance for AR-WP evaluators with comments (Task 4 of March ad-hoc)[3], Stand-alone document of assessment criteria for the evaluation of annual reports[4], Covid-19 questionnaire results, compiled in 2020 by DG MARE[5] and relevant files from all previous STECF EWGs dealing with Annual Reports, Data Transmission issues, DTMT guidance version 300520196 and National Work Programmes for the 2020, including final evaluation per Member State for Annual Reports and Work Programmes.

The pre-screening output was made available to the EWG in the AR evaluation grid template and in an Excel sheet extract from the DTMT, respectively. Also, the MS were contacted to signal issues that can be fixed by the MSs before the EWG 21-09 meeting.

The pre-screening exercise run well. However, EWG 21-09 experts highlighted that the comments from the pre-screeners were not comprehensive enough for the EWG experts to take decisions and to follow the process. Currently the guidelines for pre-screeners focus on the assessment grid and on the feedback to the Member States, not on the communication with the EWG experts. In order to facilitate better communication between pre-screeners and EWG a row was included in the Feedback to Member State Excel template where the pre-screeners can include their comments to EWG to clarify issues (Table 3 and Electronic Annex 2 –FeedbackToMS Communication Template).

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[2] EWG 21-09 - Background document 2 - Updated AR evaluation grid by MS (Task 2-3 of March ad-hoc)

[3] EWG 21-09 - Background document 4 - Guidance for AR-WP evaluators with comments (Task 4 of March ad- hoc)

[4] EWG 21-09 - Background document 3 EWG-20-18_Annex5-StandAloneDocument Assessment Criteria Evaluation 2020 ARs

[5] EWG 21-09 - Background document 5 05_Covid19 Questionnaire_December_2020

[6] EWG 21-09 – Background document 6 06_EWG-19-09_Doc3-DTMT-GuidanceVersion30052019

2 EVALUATION OF MEMBER STATES ANNUAL REPORTS FOR 2020

2.1 Setting the scene

2.1.1 Formation of subgroups and task allocation

The assessment of Annual Reports (AR) and Data Transmission issues (DT issues) was undertaken by subgroups to which experts were allocated according to their expertise. In each subgroup one expert was identified as group facilitator. Each subgroup was tasked with the assessment of different sections of the AR.

AR sections	Subgroup	Expertise	Subgroup facilitator
1A, 1C, 4A, 4C	Subgroup 1	Biology	Jens Ulleweit
1D, 1E, 1F, 1G, 1H	Subgroup 2	Biology	Harriet van Overzee
2A, 5A, 5B, 6A, 7A, 7B, 7C	Subgroup 3	Economics and Biology	Joel Vigneau
3A, 3B, 3C	Subgroup 4	Economics	Evelina Sabatella

Table 2 – Allocation of AR sections by subgroup and expertise.

The AR sections were reviewed by the EWG; an overview of the EWG findings by subgroups (section 2.2.1) and per MS (Annex 3) is provided, together with evaluation grids per MS in an Excel file (Electronic Annex 1 EWG-21-09 - Evaluation of ARs per MS).

This year, to improve the efficiency of the final STECF assessment, pre-screeners signalled the issues that can be fixed by the MSs before EWG 21-09 started. The MS had the chance to provide explanations and resubmit the ARs if necessary, until the first day of the EWG. The following rules applied to the prior communication:

1. All identified issues were reviewed by at least two experts before being sent to the Member States.
2. The issues were collated and reviewed together with the Commission. Following this filtering exercise, the Commission relayed issues with AR submissions to Member States at the end of the pre-screening exercise.
3. The issues related to inconsistencies, formatting issues, missing tables, missing explanations in the text boxes, misplaced information, wrong references etc.

To facilitate communication between experts and the COM, comments were incorporated in an Excel file, shared in TEAMS. The Excel file included pre-screeners comments to MS, MS feedback, EWG experts' comments to MS, and MS feedback, allowing two rows of communication with the MS in a more coordinated and structured way. First questions to MS were sent immediately after the pre-screening exercise and prior to the EWG, to have MS' replies and resubmission of AR if needed, from Monday 1 pm. The COM clearly indicated that comments were from pre-screeners. For the first time, MS received comments from the pre-screeners.

During the EWG the experts continued working on the same Excel file filled out by the pre-screeners with issues identified per MS (row) and different sections (column) and sent to the MS (the usually called "ping-pong" process) (Electronic Annex 2-FeedbackToMS Communication Template). This Excel file contained separate sheets for biological and economical sections, and during the EWG a new section for the mixed group, including both biological and economical experts (subgroup 3 above), was created. During the meeting experts used the same Excel file to add new issues that they identified during the first days of the EWG. The procedure was similar as previous years (two rounds of contacts to MS), however, this year the exercise began before the EWG since the first one was initiated by the pre-screeners. Based on the evaluation by experts at the EWG, the Commission contacted the MS and asked for clarifications and/or re-submission of AR files during the EWG (the usually called "ping-pong" process). In their communications, the COM clearly indicated that the second comment came from the experts in the EWG. Only major issues which needed urgent actions for resubmission or clarification, and which were essential to evaluate the ARs, were sent to the MS. MS responses were added to the same Excel file as a new row and marked with country code and reply, in light grey (Table 3). The issues identified during the EWG and any other comments by the EWG were added as a new row marked with country code and EWG, in light yellow. And the new feedback from MS was marked in grey.

MS
Pre-screeners to EWG
MS reply
MS EWG
MS reply to EWG

Table 3 – Labelling of the Excel file for the ping pong process see Electronic Annex 2 – FeedbackToMS Communication Template.

This process worked well, however deadlines should be kept stricter: not accepting neither comments from experts to MS, nor feedback from MS later than the mentioned deadline agreed at the beginning of the EWG.

Prior to the EWG 21-09, 22 MS were contacted for clarification on various AR sections. During the EWG 21-09, the Commission contacted 7 MS for clarification on various AR sections. Over all 20 MS replied, which led to the improvement and finalisation of assessments. The questions for the MS and related responses by AR sections have been documented for future reference (COM internally, as usual).

EWG 21-09 found the communication with MS following the pre-screening and prior to the STECF EWG a positive development and improvement in the feedback from the MS process (ping pong). However, the EWG also emphasized the importance of keeping the deadlines of the response from MS during the EWG week. The continuation of the feedback process (ping pong) during the EWG week should be limited and kept during the first half of the week as it was done in the EWG 21-09.The EWG 21-09 pointed out the importance of marking the revisions in the AR text and tables in red, as indicated in the guidance for the submission and evaluation of annual reports, to make these changes easily visible to the EWG reviewers. Revised text and Excel files should adhere to a standardised naming convention as specified in the guidance for the submission and evaluation of annual reports.

2.1.2 Background Information

To carry out the evaluation, the EWG was provided with access to supporting information such as the results from the pre-screening, the updated AR evaluation template with the reintroduced regional dimension, the ARs and WPs for all MS as well as an extract of DT issues from the DTMT, access to the DTMT platform and the DTMT guidance document.

2.1.3 Tools and criteria for the assessment

As in previous years, the EWG agreed that the STECF assessment provided in the AR evaluation template need to be clear and self-explanatory. It is also necessary that the evaluation is carried out coherently across subgroups so that the results are comparable and transparent. A standalone document was used as a basis for the assessment as requested by the EWG 20-18 for AR evaluation, listing assessment criteria that facilitates for a more consistent and less subjective evaluation. The assessment criteria are available in Annex 2 and includes a set of agreed rules/assessment criteria with the aim to increase consistency in the responses from different evaluators.

Four main categories were used to judge AR achievements. These four categories are shown in Table 4:

% of achievement	Classification
<10%	NO
10-50%	PARTLY
50-90%	MOSTLY
>90%	YES

Table 4 – Performance levels for the assessment of Annual Reports.

As regards the EU overview, the EWG agreed that the overall performance by MS's is only for illustrative purpose and that Commission and MS primarily should refer to the assessment of each section in the AR evaluation grid.

It was also agreed that the overall performance by MS is based on expert judgement, which is also based on the evaluation grid questions, and no fixed assessment criteria can be set since the sections of the AR do not carry the same weight within the overall performance. However, as a general guide (in addition to table 4 above) for the overall performance the EWG agreed that two MOSTLY can still generate a YES and if one section has been assessed as NO the overall performance can only be MOSTLY, PARTLY or NO. In case of the land-locked countries the overall assessment can only be Non applicable (NA) if no regular data collection is undertaken or PARTLY/MOSTLY/YES if there is data collection, but two MOSTLY will not generate a YES as the number of modules is low.

In addition to evaluate the ARs, each subgroup considered and provided answers to nine questions related to the assessment and supporting documents. These questions were aimed at addressing all the Terms of References. The questions provided to the subgroups were:

1. How was the assessment performed in your sub-group?

2. Overall performance of the MS on your sections.

3. Overall, what were the four major issues that arose in your evaluation? How would you resolve these?

4. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the execution of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

5. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the reporting of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

6. Any comments on the updated AR evaluation grid (Ref: task 2-3 March ad hoc)

7. Any comments on the updated guidance for AR-WP evaluators with comments (Ref: task 4 March ad hoc)

8. Any comments or suggested improvements on the DTMT guidance document (Ref: Doc 3 DTMT Guidance version 30052019)?

9. Any comments on the compilation of all relevant input for the on new WP/AR templates in line with new EU-MAP (Ref: task 1 March 2020)

2.2 Results

2.2.1 *EU Overview*

The overall evaluation shown in Table 5 is the summary evaluation of each MS based on the traffic light system in Table 4 above. First, each subgroup assessed the performance of their allocated sections and later, the overall evaluation by Member State was agreed upon with the experts in the plenary.

The overall scores of performance level by MS was lower compared to last year with the number of AR sections receiving a compliance level score of ´MOSTLY´ increasing (3 more than last year). Notably, the number of MS that had an overall performance assessed as ´PARTLY´ have increased from 1 to 3.

All Sections	AUT	BEL	BGR	CYP	CZE	DEU	DNK	ESP	EST	FIN	FRA	GBR	GRC	HRV	HUN	IRL	ITA	LTU	LVA	MLT	NLD	POL	PRT	ROU	SVK	SVN	SWE
Overall Performance	NA	M	Y	Y	P	M	M	M	M	Y	M	M	M	Y	P	M	M	M	M	M	M	Y	M	M	NA	P	M
1A-1C	NA	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	M	Y	M	Y	Y	M	Y	Y	NA	Y	M	Y	Y	Y	Y	M	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y
1D	NA	Y	NA	NA	NA	Y	M	Y	Y	M	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y	Y	Y	M	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	P	M
1E	NA	P	NA	NA	N	M	M	M	M	Y	M	M	M	NA	NA	M	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y	M	NA	NA	NA	M
1F	NA	M	Y	M	NA	M	M	M	M	Y	M	M	Y	M	NA	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	NA	P	M
1G-1H	NA	M	Y	Y	NA	M	M	M	Y	Y	M	Y	M	M	NA	Y	M	M	M	Y	M	Y	M	M	NA	M	M
2A	NA	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y
3A	NA	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y	M	Y	Y	M	M	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y	Y	Y	M	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	M
3B	NA	NA	Y	NA	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	M	Y	NA	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	N	Y	Y
3C	NA	M	Y	NA	NA	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	NA	Y	M	Y	NA	M	Y	Y	Y	M	NA	Y	NA	Y	NA	Y	Y
4A-4C	NA	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y	Y	M	Y	M	M	Y	Y	NA	Y	M	M	M	Y	M	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y
5A	NA	M	M	Y	NA	Y	M	M	Y	M	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y	M	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	M	NA	P	M
5B	Y	Y	Y	Y	M	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	M	Y
6A	M	Y	Y	Y	M	Y	M	Y	M	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	P	Y
7A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	M	Y
7B	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	M	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y
7C	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y

Table 5 – Summary of the assessment of Member states 2019 Annual Report.

The EWG reiterates the conclusion from EWG 19-09 that sections 7A, 7B and 7C should not have a weighting in the overall assessment by Member States because there are no reference lists of meetings, recommendations or bi- and multilateral agreements. In coherence with the evaluation of AR for 2017, 2018 and 2019. However, this year for the AR 2020, we leave the colouring as it is to be able to judge them separately and the EWG 21-09 has not included them in the overall evaluation. The EWG evaluated sections 1A to 1C as one section as it was agreed in the EWG 20-08.

Overview tables on the MS DCF performance for the years 2010-2019 can be found in the following STECF reports; STECF12-01[7]; STECF-OWP-12-05[8]; STECF13-14[9]; STECF14-

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[7] Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries. Analysis of the DCF Annual Reports for 2010 (STECF-12-01). 2012. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, EUR 25250 EN, JRC 69389, 251 pp.

[8] Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries. Evaluation of MS Annual Reports for 2011 of the DCF (STECF-OWP-12-05). 2012. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, EUR 25450 EN, JRC 73248, 239 pp

[9] Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Evaluation of 2012 MS Technical Reports under DCF (1) (STECF-13-07). 2013. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, EUR 26090 EN, JRC 83658, 183 pp.

13[10], STECF15-13[11], STECF16-12[12], STECF 17-07[13], EWG STECF 18-10[14], EWG 19-09[15]. EWG 20-08[16].

The detailed evaluation template for each MS is presented in the electronic annex of this report (EWG-21-09 Electronic annex 1 - Evaluation of ARs by MS).

2.2.3 Overview of Covid-19 impact per section and MS

The Covid-19 impacts on the different sections of the Annual Report per Member State was summarised under the overview of reporting and execution of the 2020 WP by Member State (Annex 3). An additional question was included to address the effects of Covid-19 on the deviations and issues and the responses were compiled in a table by section and MS together with the overall assessment achieved by the MS (Electronic Annex 3 – Covid overall consequences per MS).

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[10] Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Evaluation of 2013 MS DCF Annual Reports & Data Transmission (STECF-14-13) 2014. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, EUR 26811 EN, JRC 91550, 257 pp.

[11] Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) Evaluation of 2014 MS DCF Annual Reports & Data Transmission (STECF-15-13). 2015. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, EUR 27410 EN, JRC 96975, 287 pp.

[12] Reports of the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Evaluation of DCF 2015 Annual Reports & Data Transmission to end users in 2015 Quality assurance procedures (STECF-16-12); Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg; EUR 27758 E; doi:10.2788/352294.

[13] Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Evaluation of DCF 2016 Annual Reports & Data Transmission to end users in 2016 & preparation for the new assessment of Annual Reports and Data transmission (STECF-17-10). Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2017, ISBN 978-92-79-67482-2, doi:10.2760/036445, JRC107502.

[14] Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Evaluation of DCF 2017 Annual Reports (STECF-18-10). Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018, ISBN 978-92-79-79393-6, doi:10.2760/03593 JRC112750.

[15] Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Evaluation of the 2018 Annual Reports for data collection and Data Transmission issues (STECF-19-09). Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2019, ISBN 978-92-76-09518-7, doi:10.2760/434566, JRC117489.

[16] Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Evaluation of the 2019 Annual Reports for data collection and Data Transmission issues (STECF-20- 08). Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020, ISBN 978-92-76-20803-7, doi:10.2760/661005, JRC121415.

2.2.3 Results by subgroups

Subgroup 1

1. Overall performance of the MS on your sections.

Of the MS in your sections how many were Yes, Mostly, Partly, No based on the evaluation criteria below? Please list the country and indicate your evaluation:

Subgroup 1	Sections	Yes	Mostly	Partly	No	NA	Sum
	1A/1C	18	5			4	27
	4A/4C	16	7			4	27

2. Overall, what were the four major issues that arose in your evaluation? How would you resolve these? Make recommendations.

1. Great idea to have the communication with MS after the pre-screening and before the STECF EWG, however there needs to be a standardised approach to the replies from MS.

   We recommend the following:

   - Revisions in text and tables should be highlighted in red to make these easily visible to the EWG reviewers.
   - There should be an agreed deadline for the replies from MS – by the end of Day 1 of the STECF EWG. But there should only be a need to do this once, as it's not useful or practical to continue with the ping pong during the STECF EWG.
   - Revised text and Excel files should adhere to a standardised naming convention such as *MS_AR_2020_Tables_Revised submission date*, *MS_AR_2020_Text_Revised submission date*.
   - The EWG appreciates the excellent job done by the pre-screeners, in such a short time frame. In order to avoid having to redo the work of the pre-screeners during the STECF EWG, it is important to remember that where a pre-screener has evaluated a MS's achievement as 'Mostly', 'Partly' or 'No' it is necessary to provide a detailed comment as to why this is the case.
   - Although it is possible to have the STECF EWG as a remote meeting in principle, it is preferable to organize future EWGs as physical meetings. It is much easier in a physical meeting to follow different ToRs and subgroups. In addition, few members experienced technical issues related to remote logins, which can be very frustrating, but finally all technical

issues were solved. However, working with living documents in MS Teams is definitely an improvement, and streamlines the MS compilation process, which has always been time consuming and prone to human error (copy and paste issues).

- As the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic will also be evident in the 2021 ARs, MSs are asked to provide as much detail as possible of what steps they have taken to mitigate the impact of Covid both at sea and onshore, under the 'Actions to avoid deviations' heading in the relevant Text Box.
- Stratum ID codes, should be consistent between Tables 4A and 4B.

3. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the execution of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

1. Empty cells are very difficult to evaluate, as it is unclear if a value is missing or if in fact there was no sampling. MS's are requested to ensure that all cells are completed e.g., 0 observations or the question is not applicable which should result in a 'NA'. This issue is already highlighted in the guidelines, but is still a recurring issue. We suggest that conditional formatting is introduced in the excel tables where empty cells are highlighted as red and only change when the cells are filled with the relevant number or 0 or NA.

2. Table 4A: The planned strata should be broken down by scheme, it's not advisable to combine at-sea and on-shore planned sampling into a single scheme; they should be reported in separate lines. However, if the NWPs are accepted with the merged schemes, then guidance is required on how to evaluate these merged schemes. This point is particularly important when trying to estimate the incidental by catch of sensitive species, which ideally should be done through observers at sea.

3. Unsampled strata should be detailed in Table 4A of the NWP with supporting text, as once the NWP is approved it is not possible to change in the AR. This issue should be highlighted to all MS's who are currently or will very shortly begin the process of creating their new NWPs for 2022.

4. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the <u>reporting </u>of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

1. Values in the white cells of the AR (the planned sampling from the NWP) should not be changed from the accepted NWP. If errors are found in the accepted NWP, comments can be added to the AR comments column in the Table and also in Text Box under 'Deviations from the NWP'.
2. Inconsistencies in table 1 A, 1B and 1 C were evident by region/area/species.

5. Any comments on the updated AR evaluation grid (Ref: task 2-3 March ad hoc)

1. Table 4A Question: Is the total number of length measurements in alignment with the number of individuals (length parameter from the commercial data source) in Table 1C? – this question still gives room for misinterpretation as the number of length measurements in 4A can easily exceed the number given in table 1C due

to the fact that much more species can be length measured during concurrent samples in comparison to the species list 1C. This question should be removed from future evaluation grids.

2. In Comparison by Region: Differences can appear because the strata of sampled fisheries are merged over several regions in 4A or the measurements of some widely distributed fish stocks like mackerel are listed for the overarching region only (Northwestern waters) and not for the North Sea in 1C due to the stock area (II, IIIa, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX).
3. Remove the question on Table 1C "Are all Regional Sampling Agreements and Bilateral in 1C detailed in 7C and being implemented?" This question should be removed from the grid as it does not add value to the AR evaluation.

6. Any comments on the updated guidance for AR-WP evaluators with comments (Ref: task 4 March ad hoc)

The guidance to evaluators should be updated, so that achievement above 150% of planned targets should be judged as acceptable, when this additional sampling is achieved at no additional expense to the DCF or which are achieved at national expense. Justifications should be provided clearly in 'AR Comments' column in the relevant Table and in the Text Box.

7. Any comments or suggested improvements on the DTMT guidance document (Ref: Doc 3 DTMT Guidance version 30052019)?

No comments

8. Any comments on the compilation of all relevant input on the new WP/AR templates in line with new EU-MAP (Ref: task 1 March 2020)

No comments as an own subgroup working on this.

Subgroup 2

1. Overall performance of the MS on your sections.

Of the MS in your sections how many were YES, Mostly, Partly, No based on the evaluation criteria below? Please list the country and indicate your evaluation:

Subgroup 2	Sections	Yes	Mostly	Partly	No	NA	Sum
	1D	16	4	1	0	6	27
	1E	6	10	1	1	9	27
	1F	3	19	1	0	4	27

	1GH	8	15	0	0	4	27

The Covid-19 pandemic affected the execution part for the different sections; for section 1D two countries were affected, for section 1E nine countries were affected, for section 1F 20 countries were affected, and for section 1GH 14 countries were affected.

2. Overall, what were the four major issues that arose in your evaluation? How would you resolve these? Make recommendations.

The approach of having communication with MS after the pre-screening and before the STECF EWG was found positive. However, there needs to be a standardised approach to the replies from MSs.

Pre-screeners should give comprehensive comments for their decisions during pre-screening to make it easier for EWG experts to follow up. Currently there are no clear guidelines for pre-screeners in this respect.

Section 1DE

Four major issues that arose in sections 1DE:

1. Unique survey IDs should be included in all surveys and have to be concise with Table 5A
2. MS to make sure that sampling periods are filled in correctly in Table 1E
3. Even if fisheries or species do not exist in an area, the relevant rows should still be filled in the NWP and AR tables, explaining reasons for not sampling.
4. MS should copy exactly the WP planned actions (white part) to the AR TextBox and Tables

Section 1F

The evaluation has shown that the guidelines in relation to columns P-T in Table 1F have resulted in MSs not being consistent in using the available codes (i.e. Y, N and NA). 'Y' can include zero by-catch as can 'N'. The way the codes are presented in the AR at present means that there is no clear way to identify zero by-catch. The subgroup has not marked this as negative but has evaluated as to if the MSs have endeavored to provide meaningful information.

Because many MSs have chosen to report on groups of vulnerable species (e.g. "birds", "mammals", etc.), columns P-T in Table 1F have become somewhat redundant for these MSs.

It is not mandatory to provide data by Region for the Text Box and some MSs give data for combined areas in Table 1F. Where possible evaluation was undertaken by Region where a MS provided this level of detail.

Section Pilot Study 2

Where there is more than one Pilot study identified, MSs have reported in different ways from reporting each individual Pilot studies separately, following the guidelines, as

separate Text Boxes to reporting all Pilot studies in a single text box with the results at the end of the section. This can make evaluation of the individual Pilot study difficult.

Section 1GH

In Table 1G two columns (Y and Z) are colored yellow and are so-called "support columns". These columns indicate if the achieved values for effort and spatial coverage filled in by the MS require a comment in column AA (AR Comments) from the MS. The function is included to support the MS completing the table as well as the STECF EWG when evaluating the achievements of the MS. In addition, in Table 1H one "support column" (L) is present indicating if a comment is requested from the MS. Unfortunately, by mistake the EU Commission initially has circulated the AR table template without the formula in columns Y and Z in Table 1G and column L in Table 1H to the Member States and has therefore afterwards requested the Member States to transfer the formulas from the previous year AR tables to the circulated template. This message has not always been recognized by the MS and as a consequence a significant number of MS have submitted Tables 1GH contain no formula in those particular columns. The lack of indications have to some extent made the evaluation less smooth and have probably led to an increased incompliance of Tables 1GH.

3. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the execution of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

Section 1DE

One MS has had recurring administrative issues that compromised mandatory eel sampling.

Section 1F

For some MSs Pilot Study 2 has been delayed.

4. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the reporting of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

Section 1DE

Multiple countries repeatedly do not use correct and corresponding unique survey IDs in Table 1E and 5A

Section 1F

The strata defined in Tables 1F and 4A do not always match and Achieved and Sampled PSU numbers for the strata is often different in the two tables.

Where strata are combined in 1F it is not possible to evaluate coverage against the individual strata presented in 4A.

5. Any comments on the updated AR evaluation grid (Ref: task 2-3 March ad hoc)

Section Pilot Study 2

Each individual Pilot Study should be evaluated as a separate section. Unfortunately, this was missed in Pre-screening the 2020 AR and there was insufficient time to rectify this.

6. Any comments on the updated guidance for AR-WP evaluators with comments (Ref: task 4 March ad hoc)

No comments

7. Any comments or suggested improvements on the DTMT guidance document (Ref: Doc 3 DTMT Guidance version 30052019)?

No comments

8. Any comments on the compilation of all relevant input on the new WP/AR templates in line with new EU-MAP (Ref: task 1 March 2020)

Section 1DE

The guidance to evaluators should be updated, so that achievement above 150% of planned targets should be judged as acceptable, when this additional sampling is achieved at no additional expense to the DCF or which are achieved at national expense. Justifications should be provided clearly in 'AR Comments' column in the relevant Table and in the Text Box.

Subgroup 3

The evaluation tasks were shared among the sub-group by teams of two or three experts, one dealing with tables 2A and 5B and Data Transmission issues (DTI) on Aquaculture, one for table 5A and DTI on FDI Data call and one for tables 6A and 7ABC. A virtual meeting room was opened permanently to share issues among the sub-group, and each experts' team used a specific virtual meeting room for their collaborative work.

To increase consistency in the responses from different evaluators, the document on "criteria for assessment of annual reports (annex 2)" were used as a reference in addition to the existing guidelines for evaluators. To ensure consistent and objective evaluation, the final assessment were agreed in sub-group plenaries.

As in previous years, the overall performance of Member States on module 2A (fishing activity variables) was good. The vast majority of data under this header is collected under the Control Regulation (CR), thus the focus of this table should be on additional collection of data in case the CR data are insufficient for scientific use. In general, Member States put considerable effort in collecting these data, most of which are related to small vessels which are very large in numbers.

Many MS still provide information also on variables which are both covered by the CR and appropriate for scientific use. This often is connected to the Work Plans which already contained CR data. It appears necessary to stress this point in future guidelines for both Work Plans and Annual Reports. By definition, all capacity data are to be derived exhaustively from the Fleet Register. Therefore, capacity data should not appear in table 2A or its successor at all. As a consequence, questions in the evaluation template that are related to capacity could be erased in the future.

In 2A, some Member States did not provide the full list of effort variables for all segments. This appears to be reasonable as not all variables which are listed in Table 4 (Commission Implementing Decision 2016/1251) are applicable to all fleet segments. As an example the variable "number of hooks" should apply to long-liners only. However, it is not always that evident: "Number of fishing operations" could be collected for several fishing techniques, but apparently it is only regarded relevant for purse seiners. The former legislation (Commission Decision 2010/93/EU) was more specific on that issue, and some Member States implicitly still applied the principles laid down there. The subgroup accepted this approach during the evaluation.

In 5A, EWG noted some progress from the precedent years, although the following two main difficulties remained:

1   complete the availability of public documents related to the methodologies and technical processes, some indicating they plan to complete the work by 2021, others to continue in 2022 or justify the non-availability of these documents and

2   ensure the exact match between the rows of Table 5A and sampling schemes in Table 1D ('type of survey'), in Table 1E ('species' *'method') and in Table 4A ('Scheme').

Quality assurance framework (Q AF) for socio-economic data is reported by the checklist of the selected main European Statistical System QAF principles covering three main areas: Institutional environment, Statistical processes and Statistical outputs. These three main areas are divided to the principles, for example, Confidentiality, Sound methodology, appropriate procedures etc. (see table 5B). Concerning quality assurance framework implementation for the socio-economic data (5B) most Member States provided comprehensive information by the Sector (Fishing, Aquaculture and Fish processing) and by separate data source. In 2020 overall establishment of the QAF among MS was sufficiently high, only around 10% of the checklist was identified with N meaning that particular principles of QAF are not in the place yet. For some landlocked countries QAF implementation improved considerably compared to previous AR as the starting of data collection was followed of the application of QAF standards, whereas marine MS implementing data collection framework for long period has already established sufficient compliance to the QAF principles. The highest level of QAF implementation was related with use of statistically sound sources and methods (P3), entries and coding of collected data are properly checked (P6), procedures are in place to ensure timely execution (P11), Procedures are in place to monitor internal coherence (P12). These QAF indicators are implemented by average 98% in total MS evaluated. The lowest implementation among MS was for indicators as the absence of agreements for access and quality of administrative data between partners (P6), absence of automatic techniques for data capture, data coding and validation (P8) and publicly available methodological documents (P13). Among MS around 75% of data sources followed these principles whereas for 25% still need to be established.

In table 6A, almost all MS provide sufficient information for the availability of the data collected. Also in most of the cases, the data has been made available within a reasonable time, and where there are deviations, MS well described that this was mainly due to Covid-19.

In 7A, EWG appreciated MS's indication of their participation in Inter-Sessional Sub-Groups (ISSG) of RCG. Participating to RCG/ISSG is an essential prerequisite for improving cooperation and networking in Europe concerning fisheries data collection. This was also included in the Regional Work Plan (RWP) test run proposed by RCG NANS&EA and Baltic in 2021. Therefore, EWG recommends that this inclusion of ISSG participation is formally required in the new templates and guidance for NWP/AR from 2022 onward.

In 7A and 7B, reference lists of meetings and recommendations to be followed by MS are still missing. This is a long-standing issue that was never resolved, which hampers the ability of STECF to evaluate the following-up of the guidelines by MS correctly. A specific point in 7B was the indication 'NA' given by all land-locked countries, although RCG ECON issued recommendations on aquaculture. EWG suggests using future RWP to collaboratively develop the reference lists of meetings to attend and recommendations by region.

For some years, the tables 7ABC were kept out of the summary evaluation of each Member State based on the traffic light system in the STECF report. EWG believes that keeping these tables out of the summary evaluation is not a correct message given to MS. In order to progress toward a full integration, these tables were kept colored and not with a grey background and kept out of the overall performance evaluation for harmonisation with previous years. The principal reason for not including these tables in the overall performance was the absence of reference lists for meetings and recommendations upon which EWG could carry a full objective evaluation (see text above). Eventually, it should be highlighted that Coordination is a very important section and MS shall have into account all the EWG comments.

1. Overall performance of the MS on your sections.

Of the Member States in your sections how many were Yes, Mostly, Partly, No based on the evaluation criteria below?

Subgroup 3	Sections		Yes	Mostly	Partly	No	NA	Sum
3	2A		23				4	27
	5A		14	8	1		4	27
	5B		24	2			1	27
	6A		22	4	1			27
	7A		25	1	1			27
	7B		22	1	1	2	1	27
	7C		26				1	27

2. Overall, what were the four major issues that arose in your evaluation? How would you resolve these? Make recommendations.

1 Impossibility to evaluate correctly tables 7A and 7B because of the lack of reference tables. Such reference tables should be developed by RCG taking the opportunity of Regional Work Plans in the future.
2 Late ping-pong responses lead to extended working hours during the EWG; see general comments on the issue.
3 Mismatch of sampling schemes' names between Table 5A and Tables 4A, 1D and 1E as well as schemes from Tables 1D and 1E missing in Table 5A.

3. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the execution of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

Land-locked countries express they are not involved in any coordination (Table 7A & B), which should not be the case. This is an important point to resolve.

4. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the reporting of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

- Most of the issues observed during the evaluation of module 2A refer to formal aspects. As in previous years, the evaluation was hampered by the fact that templates for WP and AR differ due to an introduction of a new column "variable" in the AR. MS have listed all variables in one cell corresponding to the variable group instead of providing per each variable in separate lines, which would allow to evaluate achievements per variable in AR.
- 6A: inconsistencies in guidelines: In the guidelines for ARs, it is specified in column "Date when data was available" that Member State shall indicate the date when data was made available. This statement is unclear, since it is not specified if it was the dates when data were available during the AR year (e.g. 2020 here) or if it was linked to the information in column "Reference year". Moreover, some types of data are still missing for some MS.

5. Any comments on the updated AR evaluation grid (Ref: task 2-3 March a-hoc)

6. Any comments on the updated guidance for AR-WP evaluators with comments (Ref: task 4 March a-hoc)

7. Any comments or suggested improvements on the DTMT guidance document (Ref: Doc 3 DTMT Guidance version 30052019)?

See general comment on expressing 'Failure' in STECF comments

8. Any comments on the compilation of all relevant input on the new WP/AR templates in line with new EU-MAP (Ref: task 1 March 2020)

Subgroup 4

1. Overall performance of the MS on your sections.

Of the MS in your sections how many were YES, Mostly, Partly, No based on the evaluation criteria below? Please list the country and indicate your evaluation:

Subgroup 4	Sections	Yes	Mostly	Partly	No	NA	Sum
	3A	18	4	0	0	5	27
	3B	18	1	0	2	6	27

	3C	14	4	0	0	9	27

2. Overall, what were the four major issues that arose in your evaluation? How would you resolve these? Make recommendations.

The communication of the results of the pre-screening to MS prior to the EWG has been positive as it allowed to solve most of the issues. However, some improvements would be useful: MS should highlight in red the revisions in text and tables to easily detect them and the deadline should be set at the end of the first day.

Another improvement has been the possibility to work through "living documents" in Teams.

The EWG appreciated the work done by the pre-screeners. It turned out that some of the comments appeared to be not enough detailed for EWG experts to follow up and would thus leave too much room for interpretation. This is the case for the "low response rate" that is reported as an issue for several MS/variables/segments, in particular for the processing sector, but it is rather vague to be translated into the evaluation criteria. Guidelines for pre-screeners with criteria, for instance, how to "score" the low response rate (<50%, 50%-70%, >70%) or to inform on how many variables/segments the low response rates are related to, would be useful[1]. From a MS perspective, the SG also considered that if Census Type of data is planned but response rate for the most of variable are from 20%-50% it would be more appropriate to change the type of data collection and describe it in deviations.

The major issues that arose from evaluation are:

- the evaluation of pilot studies of land-locked countries for their volunteering activities in 2020 has been difficult because some MS did not report the adequate information, or they did not strictly follow the guidelines. Regarding pilot studies 3 (social data) and 4 (enviromental data for the aquaculture), EWG considers that the pilot study results are going to be evaluated by STECF in second half of 2021. The reports about committed Pilot Study were provided to COM by MS at the end of March 2021. For the next AR, MS should be informed where to report the routine data collection of social variables that is under implementation (if in text box 3A/3B or under the pilot study 3 text box).
- For land-locked MS, the level of achievements and the presentation of tables/text are missed in several cases. This is a recurrent issue that should be considered for the presentation of the WP under the revised EUMAP.

3. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the execution of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

The recurring issues can be listed as follows:
- for some Member States, the level of achievements is low compared to the planned sample rates, thus implying a low statistical quality of final estimates; this situation is rather usual for the census approach applied for the processing sector. Only very few MS explain how they recover the missing information (statistical techniques, integration of missing replies, etc.)

- there are still some ARs with wrong codification for variables or fleet segments; this is not an issue related to the AR but to the work plan. The updated template for WP will include a "MasterCodeList" with all the codes and strings to be used and this should help in reducing inconsistencies.

4. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the reporting of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

The communication of the results of the pre-screening to MS prior to the EWG allowed to correct most of the issues regarding the reporting of the data collection. Application of such approach for future AR assessment could facilitate the AR evaluation process.

Several tables and text boxes have been resubmitted by MS and additional clarifications and comments were received during the meeting.

A different situation refers to some land-locked MS for which several issues in reporting have been detected and not corrected for tables 3B and 3C.

Formulas of calculation of "Achieved Sample Rate %" and "Achieved Sample no/Planned sample no." were not present in the Excel files of several MS. This implied to check for the accuracy of the figures reported by MS. The SG considers that if a database approach was applied, this issue would be solved implicitly.

5. Any comments on the updated AR evaluation grid (Ref: task 2-3 March a-hoc)

No comment

6. Any comments on the updated guidance for AR-WP evaluators with comments (Ref: task 4 March a-hoc)

No comment

7. Any comments or suggested improvements on the DTMT guidance document (Ref: Doc 3 DTMT Guidance version 30052019)?

The assessment of DT issues was performed starting from the evaluation of pre-screeners. The number of issues to be assessed were 391 (compared to 23 of last year). The evaluation followed the STECF document on assessment criteria for DT issues. A final assessment of the "unsatisfactory" issues was agreed by the whole sub-group.

The huge increase in data issues is mainly due to the checks of "zero" values reported by MS in the fleet economic data call. Therefore, the issue is not intended as a data "failure" but as a request to the MS to confirm if the zero value is not to be considered as a missing value. Most of these issues are related to the "new" variables of the EU MAP that have been requested for the first time in the 2020 data call. For the future, the EWG considers that it should be advisable to reduce the number of issues to be assessed to facilitate their evaluation and to lower the burden of MS in replying to them. If possible, the SG suggests that only the questionable zero values for fleet segments should be investigated as a DTI, that is, zero values for those variables in fleet segments for which it is unlikely not to have a positive value. This could be either due to certain specific

characteristics of the fleet segment (e.g., large number of vessels, mean vessel age, capital value, etc) or due to the recommended methodology or data collection scheme.

In addition, the Subgroup reminds MS that zero values should only be used in cases where in fact the value is zero (e.g., when a fleet segment receives no subsidies on investment, receives no income from fishing rights, etc.). For missing information, the MS should leave the "value" cell blank (null value) and use the field "comment" to specify why the value is missing (e.g. the variable was not collected, the data collected are of insufficient quality to be reported, confidentiality reasons, etc). This exercise of confirming the zero-value revealed that the PIM method is still not used by several MS, bringing to zero estimates for depreciation costs of the fleet (the application of the PIM method and of the degressive depreciation scheme, as recommended by the RCG ECON (former PGECON), will never produce null estimates of depreciation costs). In these cases, the assessment of the issue has been as "satisfactory" because there is no obligation to apply the PIM method, but in the comment, it is recommended to the MS to follow the common harmonized approach.

Most of the original assessment of the data issue by pre-screeners have been changed by the EWG. An ad hoc DTMT Guidance only for evaluators is needed, as the present guidance document (DTMT Guidance, version 30 May 2019) is more a general descriptive document of the process to assess the data issues. The criteria applied by the EWG is the one reported in the guidance document: if the data were not provided in time to be used by the relevant EWG, then the assessment is "unsatisfactory". The EWG also considers that, according to the guidance, the comment should be very concise, and the standard comments reported in table 2 have to be used. Indeed, the complete understanding of the issue can be achieved following the complete "story" in the DTMT: Data Requested -> Issue -> MS Comment -> STECF Comment ->STECF Assessment.

The DTMT Guidance document does not distinguish between "unsatisfactory" cases when the issue was solved in the next year data submission and cases for the unchanged data failure. For the "unsatisfactory" cases when the solution has been found by MS it would be useful to mark in DTMT such improvements.

8. Any comments on the compilation of all relevant input on the new WP/AR templates in line with new EU-MAP (Ref: task 1 March 2020)

No comments, see TOR5.

3 EVALUATION OF MEMBER STATES TRANSMISSION OF DATA TO END USERS IN 2020

3.1 Setting the scene

End-users are requested to report data transmission issues (DTi) that relate to Member States not having provided data, provided data late or provided data with quality issues, in the Data Transmission Monitoring Tool (DTMT). In the DTMT end-users should indicate the type of data issues by selecting QUALITY, TIMELINESS, or COVERAGE and whether the issue has a LOW, MEDIUM or HIGH impact on the work.

Following up on the recommendation from PLEN 18-02 a sub-group of EWG chairs, JRC experts and the Commission met during the PLEN 19-01 to discuss improvements on the DTMT tool and the evaluation process of DT issues. The sub-group drafted a DTMT

guidance document for the submission of data issues by end-users, technical changes to the DTMT as well as the evaluation of DT issues. During EWG 19-09 on the evaluation of AR and DTi, the guidance was updated (Table 2, final evaluation by STECF of DTi including MS comment). The guidance[17] was used by end-users, MS, pre-screeners prior to EWG 21-09 and experts during the EWG 21-09.

The DTMT is accessible at https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/dcf/dtmt. The EWG experts worked on the online platform (DTMT) while the pre-screeners worked in an excel file, exported from the DTMT.

The initial assessment of the DT issues was carried out in subgroups, related to the expertise in the group. As for the Annual Reports, the DT issues had undergone a pre-screening assessment prior to the EWG final assessment. The pre-screeners were requested to run a first assessment of the issues and to propose draft comments. In order to ensure harmonisation and consistency, two EWG experts revised all issues for consistency after the sub-group assessments were finalised. Table 7 below shows that in total 555 DT issues, from 5 data calls in 2020 and 2 end users, were reported in the DTMT. 438 DT issues were related to COVERAGE, 116 to QUALITY and 1 to TIMELINESS. The number of DT issues increased from 106 issues raised in the previous year. However, end-users are reporting issues in different levels of aggregation and for this reason, the number of DT issues between years are not comparable.

End User	Data Call	Issue Type			Grand Total
		COVERAGE	QUALITY	TIMELINESS	
STECF EWG	Med and Black Sea	43	97		140
	Fleet Economics	391			391
	Aquaculture	3	5	1	9
	FDI		14		14
ICCAT	Task I	1			1
Grand Total		438	116	1	555

Table 7. DT issues in the DTMT by end-user and issue type (Coverage, Quality, Timeliness).

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[17] EWG-21-09 Background document 6 - DTMT Guidance version 30052019

3.2 Tools and criteria for the assessment

During STECF 19-01 spring plenary, a parallel group worked on a guidance to fill in the Data Transmission Monitoring Tool. The group produced the DTMT guidance 5.2 document, later used and modified by EWG 19-09 on AR and DT issues, and updated as a Doc 3 DTMT Guidance version 30052019. STECF 19-02 decided to wait until 2020 to endorse a new version of the DTMT guidance. The updated version was later used by the EWG 19-18 on WP and DT issues. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the DTMT version 30052019 could neither be approved/endorsed by STECF 20-01 spring plenary but were nevertheless used by the pre-screeners for the assessment of DT issues prior to EWG 20-08. The EWG 20-08 agreed that the DTMT Guidance should be used as basis for the assessment during the EWG with suggested minor editing that was provided by the EWG 19-09.

EWG 21-09 used the DTMT Guidance version 30052019 by both the pre-screeners for the assessment of DT issues prior to and during the EWG 21-09 when evaluating and assessing the DT issues. In addition to table 2 of the guidance the EWG reiterates the conclusions from EWG 19-09 and based the assessment of the DT issues on the agreed assessment criteria from EWG 19-09 as given below:

- The basis for the evaluation of the DT issues should be whether the Member State has provided a response to the issue raised by the end-user that clearly justifies whether the requirements of the relevant data call were fulfilled or not. The assessment of DT issues should only consider the current state of the issue. For example, if a Member State states that data has been corrected and resubmitted after the deadline for the data call/ the finalisation of the EWG, the response from the MS should be considered as UNSATISFACTORY since the information in the relevant data call was not met and did affect the work of the end-user: data were transmitted late.

In addition to the modifications suggested by the EWG 19-09 the EWG provided below points to be considered to improve the guidance document that would be endorsed at the upcoming workshop on DTMT during Plenary 21 02:

- An ad hoc DTMT Guidance only for evaluators is needed, as the present guidance document (DTMT Guidance, version 30 May 2019) is more a general descriptive document of the process to assess the data issues.
- According to the guidance, the comment should be very concise and the standard comments reported in table 2 have to be used. The complete understanding of the issue can be achieved following the complete "story" in the DTMT: Data Requested -> Issue -> MS Comment -> STECF Comment ->STECF Assessment.
- Issues aggregated as one issue or recorded as separate many issues.
- The DTMT Guidance document does not distinguish between "unsatisfactory" cases when the issue was solved in the following years data submission and cases for the unchanged data failure. For the "unsatisfactory" cases when the

solution has been found by MS it would be useful to mark in DTMT such improvements.

- The wording for failure, is it a failure or shall it be defined as data collection issue or data transmission issue instead of failure.

3.3 Results

The evaluation concluded that out of the 555 DT issues that were reported in the DTMT referring to 5 data calls in 2020, 189 issues were justified as SATISFACTORY, and 273 as UNSATISFACTORY. In addition, issues could not be assessed because the MS and end-user comment were either contradictory or the MS comment unclear (1 NOT ASSESSED and 92 FOLLOW-UP NEEDED).

End User	Data Call	COVERAGE								QUALITY									Grand Total
		HIGH		LOW			MEDIUM			HIGH			LOW			MEDIUM			
		F	U	F	S	U	F	S	U	F	S	U	F	S	U	F	S	U	
STECF EWG	Med and Black Sea			12	13		3	14	1	2			16	23		16	39	1	**140**
	Fleet Economics			2	94	63	28	1	203										**391**
	Aquaculture	1				2										2	3		**8**
	FDI									5		1	4	2	1				**13**
ICCAT	Task I	1																	**1**
Grand Total		2		14	107	65	31	15	204	7		1	20	25	1	18	42	1	**553**
		1 issue Timeliness Medium Unsatisfactory in Aquaculture. 1 issue Quality Low not assessed in FDI= Total 555																	

Table 8. DT issues in the DTMT by end-user, type (Coverage, Quality, Timeliness), severity (High, Low, Medium) and STECF Assessment (Follow-up needed (F), Satisfactory (S) and Unsatisfactory (U)).

Out of 391 data transmission issues for the Fleet economic data call only 95 were considered SATISFACTORY; while 266 UNSATISFACTORY and 30 assessed as FOLLOW-UP NEEDED. None of them marked as high severity, but were medium and low.

The most common issues (158) for the Fleet economic data call were mistakes in data transmission where the missing information had an impact on the EWG work. The issues were with medium severity and were not recurring. All those issues were assessed as UNSATISFACTORY. The 157 issues from one single MS recognised by the MS as a mistake (and resubmitted in the following data call). These issues were of medium severity and not recurrent but as the missing information had an impact on the EWG, the final assessment was UNSATISFACTORY.

The 145 data issues related to the Fleet Economic data call, were mainly due to the checks of "zero" values reported by MS to confirm if the zero value is a missing value or not. Some related to the "new" variables of the EUMAP that have been requested for the first time in the 2020 data call. Of the 145 data transmission issues, 58 were considered UNSATISFACTORY while the other 87 were SATISFACTORY.

EWG 21-09 suggests only the zero value for the "bigger" segments should be investigated, which is unlikely to have a zero value. If the data were not provided in time to be used by the relevant EWG, then the assessment is UNSATISFACTORY (266 issues) for the Fleet Economic data call.

All three UNSATISFACTORY issues from the Aquaculture data call were connected with late submission or no delivery that resulted in the absence of data for analysis. The severity was medium and low, and only one was recurring. The three issues need a follow up, one because the MS did not comment on it. Only three issues were considered SATISFACTORY.

The issues relating to Med and Black Sea data call, most issues out of 140 were fixed during the EWG 21-02 that asked for the re-submission of the data. This exceptional EWG helped solve many issues verifying the data already submitted by the MS. As a result 89 issues were assessed as SATISFACTORY. Other issues raised were related to historical data missing or submitted wrong in the past. When the response from the MS relates to re-submission of the corrected or missing data in the next data call the issue was flagged as FOLLOW-UP NEEDED (49 issues). Finally, for the issues relating to Med and Black Sea data call, only two of the issues were unsatisfactory, when MS did not acknowledge that they need to submit data or do not specify any time frame to do so.

4 VALIDATE THE OUTPUTS OF PILOT STUDIES ON RECREATIONAL FISHERIES AND IMPACTS ON MARINE ECOSYSTEM

Under the EU MAP 2017-2019, Member States (MS) have executed pilot studies on four different areas of data collection: (1) recreational fisheries, (2) impacts on marine ecosystem, (3) employment data and (4) aquaculture environment. The descriptions of these pilot studies are shortly included in the work plans and annual reports. Before the submission of the future national work plans (from 2022 onwards under the new EU MAP) DG MARE intends to make an in-depth analysis of the outcomes and progress of the pilot studies - those already finished 2017-2019 and those still running for 2020-2021.

The Commission requested MS to submit a detailed but concise report in English (maximum 30 pages) with description of each pilot study (aim, methodology, available results, inclusion (or not) in regular sampling, difficulties encountered during the implementation, lessons learned and additional useful information). MS submitted their pilot studies reports by March. However, some reports came later and/or did not follow the proposal format for the report.

The Commission then requested STECF to evaluate the pilot study reports (1) and (2), in first instance through specific ad-hoc contracts that have provided two final reports: one related to marine recreational fisheries and a second one related to fisheries impacts on the ecosystem.

EWG 21-09 has reviewed both final reports from the ad-hoc contracts. After their comments, the COM decided to publish the final report on pilot study 1, marine recreational fisheries, as received; and redraft the final report on pilot study 2, impacts on the ecosystem, before publication to take into account the suggestions made by the EWG.

The COM will follow the same process for the pilot study 3 and 4, first evaluation through ad-hoc contracts, and will ask EWG 21-17 to review the final reports (including the redraft report on PS 2).

After endorsement by STECF PLEN, all reports will be publicly available on the DCF website under the annual reports and work plans section.

4.1 Review of the pilot study on Recreational Fisheries

The Review of pilot studies under EU-MAP 2017-2019 (2020-2021) entitled "Relative share of catches of recreational fisheries compared to commercial fisheries" (pilot study 1) is a clear, understandable and extensive report covering the analysis of the pilot studies carried out in most part of European MS with the exception of the Black Sea countries (Bulgaria and Romania), Latvia, Lithuania, and the Netherlands.

The report constitutes an integrated view of the work done at a European level to improve scientific estimations of catches and fishing effort related to recreational fisheries both in fresh and marine waters. Apart from an individual assessment of the different pilot studies allowing a comprehensive knowledge of current situation, this report add general remarks and provide best-practice examples to improve the data collection.

The report shows that MS had different interpretations about the main objective of these pilots and the comparison among MS was not always possible. The review gives an overall description of the problems (such as no data provided on recreational and/or commercial catch) leading to a wide variety of reported results. As a result, the review shows that it was not always possible to assess the main objective of the pilot studies - the comparison of the catches between commercial and recreational fisheries. To be noted, that the analysis was carried out while some pilot studies are still in progress.

Among the several aspects to be highlighted, the report details the main difficulties encountered and contribute significantly by providing solutions that can be used by MS to improve data collection. For example, there is a problem to assess recreational fishing effort because not all countries have implemented fishing licensees (even some license systems are not homogeneous among regions within the same countries, e.g. in Spain), despite survey methodologies can be used to obtain the statistical universe (e.g. telephone screening surveys). On the other hand, some studies focus on particular species (such as elasmobranchs and highly migratory pelagic species) and other studies consider all species. Furthermore, many pilot studies relied on self-reported data by the respondents (telephone surveys, logbooks, etc.); in order to validate this type of data (that could be inaccurate), on-site sampling should be established in all MS thus integrating and validating data collected. Other interesting aspects found in this global review relate to issues as how fishing competitions are being used (e.g. Slovenia), etc. The review clearly shows the lack of standardization of methods, species and recreational fishing methods covered, goals and formats for the results.

Given the current lack of harmonization of methodologies to estimate recreational catches at European level, these pilot studies and the Review report constitutes a step forward to ensure information will be collected following a common approach. Given the characteristics of these fisheries and the geographical scope at EU level, a methodology that suits for all countries doesn't exist, but methods can be identified on the basis of regional national or regional peculiarities. That is, a common and standardized EU system could be achieved by different methodological implementations.

Overall, the review highlights the necessity to bring forward a clear EU common strategy to attain the desired final goal of assessing the relative share of catches of recreational fisheries compared to commercial fisheries.

Based on the results of the review, the EWG 21-09 suggests further action is needed to establish a clear and simple roadmap that can be easily followed by all MS and to that end, these pilots and this report are a complementary boost. Different working groups, mostly the ICES Working Group on Recreational Fisheries Surveys (WGRFS) and the Working Group on Recreational Fisheries (WGRF) of the GFCM provide scientific evidence and methodologies that can contribute. Complementary, NOAA maintains a specific

programme that could be also considered (https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/insight/recreational-fishing)

Additionally, EWG 21-09 considers the relevance of the recreational fisheries subgroup of the Regional Coordination Group (RCG NANSEA), who has recently recommended a pan-regional group integrating all EU regions to deal with recreational fisheries data collection.

This would enable all MS to work with a set of common and tested methodological approaches to fulfil overall goals.

EWG 21-09 considers that the Review constitutes a valuable analysis relevant to define next steps in this field and therefore can be published.

4.2 Review of the pilot study on the level of fishing and impact of fisheries on biological resources and marine ecosystem

The report refers to the analysis of 32 pilot studies (PS2 under the DCF) from 16 Member States and it provides concise and valuable summaries of the reports of individual MS. However, it is clear from the report that out of 16 MS listed, two of them did not conduct Pilot Study 2, so it is unclear why those two MS are included in the report. And the total number of MS reporting on pilot studies should be verified (according to Table 1, there are 17 MS involved, not 16).

The report consists of two parts, a general part, including general comments and the part summarizing separately all Pilot Studies 2 (PS2) undertaken by Member States.

The first part includes general comments regarding main achievements, methodologies and why they succeeded or not, difficulties encountered and potential solutions, conclusions and areas that could be improved.

In the second part the structure and content of MS reports for each pilot study was evaluated against the criteria in a set format and at the end a short summary for each pilot study follows. It should be clearly indicated that the evaluation criteria (Yes/No/Partly) refer to the format of the MS reports and does not serve to evaluate MS activity or pilot studies themselves.

It would be beneficial if the general comments included regional overview of PS2, so the reader could have an idea about the regional approach. It is stated however that in one region, Mediterranean and Black Sea, Member States followed a common approach, that is the GFCM criteria.

It would also be beneficial if the examples of best practices were highlighted in the general part. In a lot of cases positive comments for different approaches are included, but still the reader doesn't know by which MS those approaches were applied and which methodology deserves attention in order to analyze possible approaches helping to ensure replicability.

EWG is of the opinion that the report can be published after verification as a useful summary of activities of MS. And the best solution would be if, along with the publication of this report, the individual MS reports on the implementation of pilot studies were also made available.

Commonly the pilot study is run to test the most appropriate methodology for monitoring a specific activity. The results of the pilot study may confirm the adopted methodological assumptions or indicate directions of their modification in order to implement regular sampling or confirm that the adopted assumptions are incorrect. In

case of five pilot studies described in the report their results were not included into regular sampling. Therefore, it would be beneficial to receive the feedback from the MS concerned on reasons for that.

5   ASSESSMENT GRID AND EVALUATORS' GUIDANCE FOR WP 2022-24

The assessment grid and evaluators guidance for WP 2022-24 was reviewed by the EWG after the amendments suggested by the RCGs and MS were made to the templates and guidelines. The changes proposed can be found in the Electronic Annex 4 Evaluation grid WP and Electronic Annex 5 Stand-alone document for WP evaluation.

6   DRAFT OF THE WP/AR NEW TEMPLATES AND GUIDELINES AMENDMENTS AFTER RCGS AND MS

6.1 Amended AR/WP templates and guidance for socioeconomic sections and fishing activity

The draft WP/AR templates adopted by STECF 21-01 plenary in March have been submitted for comments to MS and RCG. The EWG 21-09 was requested to reflect on major issues signalled by the MS and RCG in the WP and AR templates and propose solutions, to confirm or modify proposed changes, and to produce final version of the WP and AR templates and guidelines. The EWG 21-09 revised the most recent version of the WP and AR templates and guidance, considering the questions from MS and Commission's comments in the documents.

The structure of the WP and AR templates has not been changed. However, some minor revisions were made to codes in the MasterCodeList for the tables 3.1; 5.1; 5.2; 6.1 and 7.1. The revisions were aimed at eliminating redundancy, improving consistency in terminology between WP/AR templates and EU MAP, and improving structural consistency between Text Boxes for fleet and aquaculture sections.

EWG had a thorough discussion on ToR 5 regarding the comments from the Member States and regional coordination groups on the WP/AR new templates and guidelines. One of the topics was table 5.2 for planning and reporting economic and social variables for fisheries data collection, particularly on the stratification of social variables and its linkage to the economic indicators. Comments from RCG ECON suggested to add an optional code "all segments" for planning and reporting the social variables, to cover cases where MS do not stratify the social data. EWG agreed to include this option in the code list as it is consistent with legislation which requires to collect and provide social data as fleet totals only.

EWG can see a deviation in EU MAP legislation from PGEON 2017 recommendations of separating the fleet in three categories (Small scale fleet, large scale fleet, high seas fleet). The first report on Social data in EU fisheries was prepared, based on these categories, whereas collecting data for "All segments" would not allow for this kind of categorization. However, the three aforementioned categories are not fully consistent with the existing fleet segmentation either. This applies in particular to the "High seas fleet" category.

In the end, categorizing social data should occur in cooperation with end users. EWG participants did not feel that they were in a position to recommend levels of aggregation for future legislation. However, in the case of need of social data at certain aggregation levels, WP/AR tables appear to be ready to take these aspects into account. For ToR 5 the subgroup agreed that for this purpose the current framework of WP/AR, particularly

the MasterCodeList flexibility will allow to adopt new requirements to the current WP/AR framework.

One of the proposals from MS was to report fishing technique and length class instead of clustered segments in table 3.1. The clarification from the EWG was that if MS does not cluster the segments, then reporting is executed by fleet segment. If MS clusters segments, then it is quite straightforward to report also by cluster. Both fishing activity and economic variables in the tables should be provided at the same aggregation level (for tables 3.1; 5.1; 5.2), no matter whether clustering is applied or not, even if that implies additional coordination effort for MS. It should be mentioned that table 3.1 Fishing activity variables data collection strategy should be filled in only for the cases when the complementary data collection is planned.

The complementary data collection for fishing activity variables should be based on the vessel population in the Fleet Register, but not on the number of fishing trips, as requested in one feedback comment. The EWG suggests to keep the current description in the guidelines (Legal Annex) about fleet population for the Table 5.1 Fleet total population and clustering: "The population shall be all active and inactive vessels registered in the Union Fishing Fleet Register as defined in Commission Regulation (EU) 2017/218 on December 31st of the reporting year and vessels that do not appear on the Register at that date but have fished at least one day during the reporting year".

The database approach and automation of the reporting process for WP and AR can facilitate and simplify the submission of tables 3.1; 5.1 and 5.2 due to the automatic linkage between tables by columns "Segment or Cluster Name", "Supra region" and "GEO indicator".

6.2 Amended AR/WP templates and guidance for biological data sections

The EWG 21-09 was requested to consider issues in the WP and AR templates and propose solutions, focusing mainly on those issues compiled and commented by the recent RCG NANS&EA and Baltic and by COM. From RCGs, EWG received 69 commented issues, upon which 15 were given a high priority and 5 were considered as major to resolve. RCG also proposed modifications in the Master Code list, and these were also considered by EWG together with all other issues. In all cases, EWG tried to propose consistent solutions through all related documents (NWP/AR tables and textbox templates, Master code list and Guidance), but given the number of issues addressed during the meeting, a final check will be needed before publishing these.

Issues considered as major to resolve

1. <u>Sampling scheme</u>: The Master Code list on sampling scheme was found to be confusing and lacking consistency in the proposed modalities with e.g. unclear references to '4S'. The proposed solution by RCG was to consider two fields separating 'Observation type' and 'Sampling scheme type'. EWG had a thorough review of this pivotal field deemed important for detailing any sampling plan and achievement and directly linked to a Quality Document (Annex 1.1)[18]. EWG

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[18] SG-ECA 2009 -Quality aspects of the collection of economic data - methods of calculation of the indicators and sampling strategies - ISBN 978-92-79-15356-3, ISSN 1018-5593, DOI 10.2788/80550 provided some reflections about low responses in case of census

eventually proposed to replace the field 'Sampling scheme' by 3 fields in Tables 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 4.1:

    a. 'Sampling scheme identifier' to make the direct link to the Annex 1.1;

    b. 'Observation type' to distinguish whether the sampling scheme is carried out at-sea or on-shore and by whom (self-sampling, observer, electronic device);

    c. 'Sampling scheme type' to indicate if the sampling scheme is targeting commercial or research vessels, recreational fisheries or biological specific data collection. Specific diadromous schemes were also kept given the specificities of this sampling activity as detailed in Table 2.4.

In order to complete the overall references to sampling scheme and frame, EWG proposed to delete 'Species coverage' related to frame since this information could be given in the field 'Sampling frame description'. However, 'Species coverage' in table 2.5 was kept in relation to sampling scheme to differentiate those schemes covering all or only part of the species and the mastercode list was adjusted accordingly.

The new field 'Recording of non-responses/Refusals at PSU level' proposed by RCG was not added as this information was already covered in Annex 1.1 (quality) for each scheme/observation type.

2. <u>Reference to other regions and RFMOs</u>: RCG NANS&EA and Baltic proposed to create a proper regional code for the individual convention areas 'NAFO', 'CECAF', etc. OR add RFMO to table 1.1, review the regions for table 2.6 (surveys) and simplify the reference to 'Other regions' instead of the current extremely long text. EWG agreed with the ideas and proposed the addition of a column RFMO/RFO/IO in tables 1.1 and 2.6 in the templates and guidance, simplified reference to 'Other regions' in the master code list and added an 'X' to all tables with a column for 'Region'.

3. <u>Method of PSU selection</u>: RCG expressed that method of PSU selection was in previous table 4B and is now removed, and that it was more important to understand the quality of sampling design than labels such as, e.g., '4S'. Moreover, it was said that the RDBES had a code list for these sampling method, and their definitions that could easily be added to the Master Code list. EWG agreed to add the field in Table 2.5 and proposed the RDBES sampling methods as entries for this field in the Master Code list.

4. <u>Sampling frame fleet coverage</u>: The demand was to add such a field which should contain indication on the fleet coverage of the sampling frame (e.g. All fleet, Only trawlers, Gillnetters and longliners; Tourboats, Private recreational boats, shoreline fishers, etc.). EWG did not follow-up on this demand because this information was already covered by the field 'sampling frame description', text box 2.5 and Annex 1.1.

5. <u>Biological variables</u>: RCG asked why it was not required to state only number for single variables ('Age', 'Length', 'Maturity', …), instead of linking all variables to

@length or @age? This simple question triggered EWG to review the whole references to Biological parameters in the WP/AR templates.

EWG first agreed with the proposal to refer to the single variables rather than their link with length and age and modified the Mater Code list in consequence. Then the discussion from the plenary session was about the long-running ambiguity of planning a number of individuals to be collected for biological variables although these figures were a by-product of sampling plans from Tables 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 where the achievement should be evaluated vs the plan. The latest change to provide a 3-year average as an information continued to fuel confusion since the achievement ratio (the 'formula') was taking this 3-year figure vs the achievement. EWG agreed to propose the following new structure:

- Deletion of the field 'Average number of individuals sampled in the last 3 years'
- Addition of the field 'Opportunistic (O) or planned (P) Sampling' with this indication in the guidelines: if the number of individuals sampled is related to sampling schemes in 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 or 2.6 put 'O' (opportunistic) and no figures (N/A) in the column 'Number of individuals to sample". If the number of individuals sampled is related to a Biological Sampling Scheme, put 'P' (planned) and provide a figure in the column 'Number of individuals to sample'
- Modification of the field 'Planned minimum number of individuals to sample' into 'Planned number of individuals to sample' with this indication in the guidelines: N/A in case of an opportunistic sampling; a number in case of a planned sampling (Biological sampling scheme).

EWG believes this proposal will accommodate long-standing demands for clarification on this issue, since now the formula for achievement vs the plan will only be calculated from the biological specific sampling schemes (e.g. Age-Length Key, maturity, length weight relationship specific data collection not covered in at-sea, on-shore or research surveys), where Table 2.2 is the only place where this sampling scheme is introduced. Another long-standing question was about the possibility to refer to biological specific sampling scheme in Table 2.5, but EWG thought that it was not a good idea since it would add potentially hundreds of lines (species * variables) in a table aimed at focusing on commercial fisheries and realisation in terms of number of individuals collected would be duplicated in Table 2.5 and 2.2.

7 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

As in previous years' evaluations, the pre-screening of ARs and DT issues played a key role for an efficient evaluation of ARs and DT issues during the EWG.

Assessment of 2020 Annual Reports

As suggested by last year's EWG (20-18), moving the 'ping pong' process earlier, having the pre-screeners identifying issues and sending them to MS for feedback, was a very useful development for the process. An Excel template was created to compile all major identified issues by pre-screeners to be sent to MS. The responses received were

compiled in the same Excel file, in addition to the new issues that were raised during the EWG and sent to MS. This Excel template allowed for a good communication between the experts on the issues sent to the MS for feedback and enabled the experts to track the responses from the MS. This file was shared in the Groups Team Files and was updated during the meeting (live document).

The EWG evaluated the Covid-19 consequences for the data collection in 2020. Each subgroup reported the impacts of Covid-19 on their dedicated sections. Additionally, an extra question in the output by MS was included to describe the impacts of Covid-19 on the data collection per MS. The impact/consequences of Covid-19 were not fully reflected in the overall evaluation of the Annual Reports in 2020. The EWG agreed that this was due to the way the questions in the assessment grid for each section are formulated. The questions evaluating the execution asked if deviations were justified or if a valid explanation was presented for each deviation from the National Work Plan (NWP), and if considered/taken actions were appropriate to minimize deviations in the future. Even if there were impacts on achievement in the data collection, if the justifications were given for why the data collection had not been achieved, the evaluation score was high.

The overall evaluation was lower compared to last year (3 less YES, 1 more MOSTLY and 2 more PARTLY). The effects of Covid-19 were most prominent on the evaluation of sections (1F and 1G-H). These sections were particularly affected by Covid-19 restrictions that prevented the sampling of incidental by-catch and caused cancelation of research surveys, which resulted in low scores (high number of MOSTLY). However, for section 1 A-C, 4A-4C even though the impact of Covid-19 affected the sampling, the number of YES scores were higher than last year (lower number of MOSTLY). This suggests that the restrictions due to Covid-19 were not fully reflected in the Annual Report Evaluation for these sections because the justifications for the deviations were provided, which resulted in a high overall evaluation. Moreover, some MS, in order to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 applied alternative ways for sampling such as training of crew on self-sampling, and purchasing samples. Therefore, the impact of Covid-19 data collection was not fully reflected on the overall evaluation as low scores.

The increase to three PARTLY was due to a lower evaluation of the Annual report of the landlocked countries which were partly affected by Covid-19. The two NO scores were due to Covid-19, which finally resulted in PARTLY in the overall evaluation for the Member States. The socioeconomic data collection was little affected by Covid-19.

Evaluation of Member States transmission of DCF data to end-users in 2020

The high number of issues that were reported in the DTMT this year for Med and Black Sea data call were almost all resolved with the additional EWG 21-02 and its subsequent data call that aimed at checking the data. This data call enabled the MS to resubmit the data and resulted in fixing most of the problems.

The high number of Fleet Economics data issues were also explained by a change in the data call request that was aimed at clarifying the data. Some issues were still left for a follow-up that required a resubmission of the data, of which the MS has now been notified.

The Guidance document was used during the evaluation; however, the experts suggested a guidance document more aimed at guiding the evaluation process. Last year's suggestion to include concrete examples were repeated and put forward again.

The EWG reiterates its conclusion from EWG 19-09 and 20-08 that since DT issues in the DTMT differ widely in terms of severity (also within the agreed issue types), the number of unsatisfactory DT issues should not be used as an indication of the performance of execution of the Work Plans as is currently described in a working paper on definitions of EMFF common indicators (FAME SU: CT03.1).

9   REFLECTIONS ON THE FUTURE PROCESS

Article 11 of the Data Collection Framework (DCF) Regulation (EU) 1004/2017 (recast) gives the mandate to STECF to evaluate both the execution of the WPs and the quality of the data collected by the Member States. STECF has conducted this work since the start of the Data Collection Regulation (in 2002) and continuously proposed improvements to its evaluation, working also on improving the WP and AR templates and the guidelines.

The experts agreed the early 'ping pong' process was an improvement however, it is also important to apply strict timelines for the feedback to and from the MS during the EWG week. The start the feedback to MS process earlier really helped the work to flow better during the EWG week. The use of the Excel file to compile the 'ping pong' process and monitor the communication with MS and EWG is suggest to be used next year.

The EWG experts highlighted that the comments from the pre-screeners were not comprehensive enough for the EWG experts to take decisions and to follow the process. Currently the guidelines for pre-screeners focus on the assessment grid and on the feedback to the Member States, not on the communication with the EWG experts. To facilitate a better communication between the pre-screeners and EWG a row was included in the Feedback to Member State Excel template where the pre-screeners can include their comprehensive comments that need to be communicated to the EWG.

The EWG emphasizes the importance of marking the revisions in the AR text and tables in red, as indicated in the guidance for the submission and evaluation of annual reports, to make these changes easily visible to the EWG reviewers. Revised text and Excel files should adhere to a standardised naming convention as specified in the guidance for the submission and evaluation of annual reports. This confirms the importance of following the guidelines for the submission and evaluation of annual reports.

Some of the main problems encountered by the EWG when evaluating Member State Annual Reports are due to the fact that the approved WP is in fact not in line with the submission guidelines and the AR can only be evaluated taking this into account. These inconsistencies have prevented the EWG from conducting the assessment (e.g. missing information in the WP implied no need to report in the AR) and this is consistently the main reason for some sections being highlighted as having a recurring issue when the EWG evaluates the AR. To address these problems, the Member States have been asked to consider these issues when redrafting a new WP. In some instances, Member States have presented an updated WP which has been approved but these recurring issues have not or partially been addressed and the problem remains. This is still the case for some 2020-2021 WPs (which have been approved), where problems identified in the evaluation of ARs for 2017/2018 have not been addressed. This means that the EWG will still be reporting the same issues in the AR 2020 evaluation in 2021. In order to address this recurring issue and mitigate as much as possible its consequences in the forthcoming years, it is therefore important that STECF gives a special consideration at the end of 2021 for a thorough evaluation of the WP 2022-2024, to agree and guarantee fewer errors in the WP for each Member State.

9 CONTACT DETAILS OF EWG-21-19 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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10 LIST OF ANNEXES

Electronic annexes are published on the meeting's web site on:
http://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/stecf/ewg08

List of electronic annexes documents:

EWG-21-09 – Annex 1 - EWG 21-09 - Evaluation of ARs per MS

EWG-21-09 – Annex 2 - FeedbackToMS Communication Template

EWG-21-09 – Annex 3 - Covid overall consequences per MS

EWG-21-09 – Annex 4 - 09.02_[STECF commented]_EWG 20-18 Annex 4 Stand alone document for WP evaluation

EWG-21-09 – Annex 5 - 09.01[STECF commented] EWG 20-18 Annex 3 Evaluation grid WP

EWG-21-09 – Annex 6 - 09.01[STECF commented]_EWG 20-18 Annex 3 Evaluation grid WP

EWG-21-09 – Annex 7 - 09.02_EWG 20-18 Annex 4 Stand alone document for WP evaluation

11 LIST OF BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background documents are published on the meeting's web site on:
http://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/stecf/ewg08

List of background documents:

EWG-21-09 – Doc 1 - *AR 2020 submitted by the MS, possibly updated following pre-screeners remarks*

EWG-21-09 – Doc 2 - *Pre-screening results, in evaluation grids (background document 2)*

EWG-21-09 – Doc 3 - *Stand-alone document for AR evaluation (Annex 5 EWG 20-18)*

EWG-21-09 – Doc 4 - *Guidance for AR-WP evaluators (Task 4 March 2020 ad-hoc)*

EWG-21-09 – Doc 5 - *Covid-19 questionnaire results, compiled in 2020 by DG MARE*

EWG-21-09 – Doc 6 - *DTMT guidance version 30052019 (background document 6)*

EWG-21-09 – Doc 8.1 - *08.PS1_Report MRF Pilot studies final.docx*

EWG-21-09 – Doc 8.2 - *08.PS2_Report_EcosystemImpacts*

EWG-21-09 – Doc 9.1- 09.01_EWG 20-18 Annex 3 Evaluation grid WP

EWG-21-09 – Doc 9.2 - 09.02_EWG 20-18 Annex 4 Stand alone document for WP evaluation

EWG-21-09 – Doc 10.1 - 10.01 Input from RCG COM to Legal annex WP AP

EWG-21-09 – Doc 10.2 - 10.02 Input WP_templates_economic

EWG-21-09 – Doc 10.3 - 10.03 WP AR templates tables draft

EWG-21-09 – Doc 10.4 - 10.04 Legal Annex WP AR draft with comments

EWG-21-09 – Doc 10.5 - 10.05 WP AR template text boxes draft

EWG-21-09 – Doc 10.6 - 10.06 Test WP AR template tables 12 Apr_Economic_LVA_test

EWG-21-09 – Doc 10.7 - 10.07 Delegated C_2021_2797_F1_ANNEX_EN_V3_P1_1165961

EWG-21-09 – Doc 10.8 - 10.08 Implementing C_2021_2801_F1_ANNEX_EN_V7_P1_1078784

DTissues recorded in the Data Transmission Monitoring Tool: https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/dcf/dtmt

EWG 21-09 should take into account relevant assessment files from previous STECF EWGs, including:

- *(WP): STECF EWG 16-16, STECF EWG 17-13; STECF EWG 18-18; STECF EWG 19-18; STECF EWG 20-16;*
- *(AR): STECF EWG 17-07; STECF EWG 18-10; STECF EWG 19-09; STECF EWG 20-08);*

For data transmission issues, EWG 21-09 should also consider reports from the following STECF EWGs reporting DTi to the DTMT:

- *(AER): EWG 20-03 and EWG 20-06*
- *(Med&BS): EWG 20-09 and EWG 20-15*
- *(FDI): EWG 20-10*
- *(Aquaculture): EWG 20-12*

Where applicable, EWG 21-09 should also take into account information from relevant ICES WGs (e.g. WGCATCH), JRC reports, PGECON reports, ESTAT relevant work and other end users.

ANNEX 1: AGENDA

Monday 21 June		
Morning Session	08:30	Connecting
Start	**09:00**	1. Welcome and house-keeping: introduction of participants (Chair)
		2. Introduction from JRC on STECF rules and FTP access (JRC)
		3. Introduction to ToRs, agenda and task allocation
Lunch	12:00-13:00	
Afternoon Session	13:00	Subgroup work: TOR 1 and 2
End of day	17:30 – 18	Daily wrap up in plenary
Tuesday 22 June		
Morning Session	09:00	Daily check-in
		Plenary on Introduction to ToR3 (Fabio and Renee)
		Plenary on Introduction to ToR4 and ToR5 (Monika)
		Subgroup work: ToR 1 and 2
Lunch	12:00-13:00	
Afternoon Session	13:00	Subgroup work: ToR 1 and 2
End of day	17:30 – 18	Daily wrap up in plenary
Wednesday 23 June		
Morning Session	09:00	Daily check-in
		Subgroup work: ToR 1 and 2
Lunch	12:00-13:00	
Afternoon Session	14:30	Plenary on assessment and agreement of DT issues
		Work on MS final overview and collation of subgroups output
End of day	17:30 – 18	
Thursday 24 June		
Morning Session	09:00	Daily check-in
Lunch	12:00-13:00	
Afternoon Session	13:00	Plenary on ToR 3 feedback
		Plenary on ToR 4 and 5 feedback
	16:00	Plenary session on the overall evaluation (traffic light table)
End of day	17:30 – 18	Daily wrap up in plenary
Friday 25 June		
Morning Session	09:00	Plenary on draft report and conclusions
Lunch	12:00-13:00	
Afternoon Session	13:00	Plenary Feedback on Tor 4 and Tor 5-Biologist and Economist
End of day and meeting	15-16	End of meeting

ANNEX 2: CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT OF ANNUAL REPORTS

1. Introduction

The evaluation of ARs are conducted by experts with knowledge and expertise from all areas of the DCF. To efficiently address the large amount of information to be evaluated, the work during assessment EWGs are carried out in sub-groups based on the expertise of the evaluators.
In order to ensure that the results from different evaluators are comparable and transparent, there is a need to ensure a consistent approach for evaluation of ARs.
This document provides a set of rules/assessment criteria to guide future evaluators of ARs and to increase consistency in the responses from different evaluators. The aim of the set of criteria is to, in addition to the existing guidelines for evaluators, provide guidance to the pre-screeners and evaluators at future EWGs and should not have legal status. The document should be a living document and updated after each EWG evaluating ARs, if needed.

2. General principles

For each AR section assess whether the MS executed the data collection in accordance with the NWP.

2.1. EWG evaluators should consider the following approach when evaluating the ARs in the provided evaluation grid provided in the Excel:

- In order for the Commission to be able to assess whether further clarification or action is required from MS´s all EWG comments need to be clear, self-explanatory and consistent.

- At the start of the EWG, the results from the pre-screening will be included in the evaluation grid under the heading ´Manual pre-screening´. If the issue has been marked as N, the pre-screeners have identified whether the issues is considered minor or major. The pre-screener will have provided a proposed final comment from the pre-screeners. These issues should have priority for evaluation during the EWG.

- The EWG is requested to make a final judgement based on the pre-screeners input and provide a comment and a potential action needed.

- For issues that are identified as *major* by the EWG the MS can be requested to resubmit the relevant part of the AR. For issues that are identified as *minor* by the EWG the MS can be requested to provide an explanation in the ping-pong process.

- The impacts on 2020 data collection activities will be evident in the 2020 and 2021 ARs and differences in reporting compared to previous years are expected. Reported effects due to Covid-19 should be differentiated from other factors in the AR evaluation grid and in the overall presentation of the evaluation results in the EWG report by shading the cells. MS have been given quarterly report on the implementation of the data collection to the RCGs. These reports can be used as reference for these cases.

2.2 Evaluators should complete the assessment of the relevant sections of the AR in the assessment grid as follows:

- The assessment results from the EWG should be filled in the below columns:

EWG comment	EWG judgement	EWG: Action needed?

- Assess issues flagged by the pre-screeners as minor and major. If pre-screeners have put Y (in the column "manual pre-screening) fill the below cells accordingly:

EWG comment	EWG judgement	EWG: Action needed?
No comment	Yes	No action needed

- No cells should be left empty. If the section is not relevant for the MS fill the cells accordingly:

EWG comment	EWG judgement	EWG: Action needed?
NA	NA	NA

- Concerning the question: *Are there any deviations?* If the answer from MS is no. Fill the cells accordingly:

EWG comment	EWG judgement	EWG: Action needed?

	63	
No deviations	Yes	No action needed

- Concerning the question: *Are there any deviations*? If the answer from the MS is yes. Fill the cells accordingly:

EWG comment	EWG judgement	EWG: Action needed?
Deviations exist	No, mostly, partly	Action needed

ANNEX 3: OVERVIEW OF REPORTING AND EXECUTION OF THE 2020 WP BY MEMBER STATE

Member State: AUT Austria

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP
The EWG was not able to fully evaluate the overall performance for Austria because it is a landlocked country and most sections are not applicable for the MS.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks
Not applicable.

3. Recreational Fisheries
Not applicable.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water
Not applicable.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems
Not applicable.

6. Surveys at sea
Not applicable.

7. Fishing activity variable
Not applicable.

8. Fleet socio-economic
Not applicable.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture
Concerning the reporting, Austria should submit WP and AR according to the guidelines in the future (i.e., Table 3B and Text Box 3B).

Concerning the execution, Austria should provide a clear explanation about when the collected data could be available. The planned sampling rate was not provided in WP 2020-2021, but this information was reported in the AR as a result of the pilot study. Information on regular data collection implementation should be provided in the Text Box 3B. The planned types of data collection should be provided in Table 3B according to the AR guidelines. Also, the information about frequency for the regular data collection should be provided. It is unclear if the Pilot study will be implemented and finalised, and regular data collection for aquaculture is not planned.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

Not applicable.

11. Data transmission issues

Not applicable.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

The Socio-economic pilot study for aquaculture was postponed to 2021 due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Member State: BEL Belgium

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

Overall reporting and execution of the national workplan is good. Only a few minor issues arise in some sections. However, some data transmission issues persist related to the fleet economics.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

1A/1C: Overall performance is good. Some deviations are due to the sampling design, but this is because MS is working towards matching statistically sound sampling.

4A/4C: There is a minor issue with regards to non-sampled strata which MS aims to correct in future WPs.

3. Recreational Fisheries

Overall performance is good. Some minor inconsistencies with regards to the guidelines. MS should provide proper description of sampling design and quality assurance following guidelines in future submissions.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

MS should include information on fisheries dependent sampling on eels in future submission of WP.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No major issues.

6. Surveys at sea

The information in sections 1-9 have to be separated by surveys. There was a map missing with regards to the completed stations for the DYFS. The maps showing CPUE of sole and plaice for the BTS are identical and the deviation for the BTS is not commented.

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No major issues identified, some codification inconsistencies and some failures of collecting certain variables were observed.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No data collection on aquaculture.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No issues.

11. Data transmission issues

8 data transmission issues were raised with regards to the Belgian fleet economics which all were assessed unsatisfactory by the EWG.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

The Covid 19 pandemic situation had an impact on the numbers of trips for commercial sampling at sea. From March until April 2020, a number of commercial vessels stopped fishing. Pilot study for some species extended to end of 2021. Some eel undersampling occurred due to COVID. Sampling on incidental bycatch was affected by COVID. For the socio-economic for the processing industry Belgium mentioned issues with regards to the response rate in 2020 due to COVID and some other limitations.

Member State: BGR Bulgaria

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 WP

The EWG 21-09 evaluated the overall AR as 'Yes' what is >90% of achievements from Work Plan. "Mostly" was rated only module 5A.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

The overall performance and compliance was good without any major issue. Some species were oversampled in surveys and in commercial fishery to get better results in stock assessment.

3. Recreational Fisheries

Not applicable. A pilot study was planned for 2020 but postponed to 2021 due to COVID restrictions.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Not applicable.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No major issues.

6. Surveys at sea

The overall performance and compliance was good without any major issue.

7. Fishing activity variable

The overall performance and compliance was good without any major issue.

8. Fleet socio-economic

The overall performance and compliance was good without any major issue.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

The overall performance and compliance was good without any major issue.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

The overall performance and compliance was good without any major issue.

11. Data transmission issues

No issues.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

A pilot study was planned for 2020 but postponed to 2021 due to COVID restrictions.

Member State: CYP Cyprus

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

The EWG evaluated the overall Annual Report as 'Yes' what is >90% of achievements from Work Plan.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

Not applicable.

3. Recreational Fisheries

Not applicable.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Not applicable.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

Not applicable.

6. Surveys at sea

Ideally, MS should not have combined at-sea and onshore schemes in a single scheme because i) these are implicitly different sampling schemes, protocols, and designs, and

ii) it is difficult to comment on deviations and justifications when these schemes are mixed. However, this seems to be one of those cases where sampling schemes only work in combination. MS should analyse this possibility for future submissions of the WP.

7. Fishing activity variable

Not applicable.

8. Fleet socio-economic

The segment for inactive vessels 18-< 24 m reported in WP was not listed in the AR table, the reason is unclear.
MS is adviced not to erase any information (lines) that is provided in the WP. In this case, MS could report zero population in the AR.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

Not applicable.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

Not applicable.

11. Data transmission issues

Not applicable.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

In text box 1 C MS states, that COVID-19 affects trawl sampling. In table 1 C the majority of deviation is from surveys.

Member State: CZE Czech Republic

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP
The EWG was not able to evaluate the overall performance for Czech Republic because it is a landlocked country and most sections are not applicable for the MS.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks
Not applicable.

3. Recreational Fisheries
Not applicable.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water
Concerning the reporting, Czech Republic did not copy variables (methods, units, planned numbers, and frequencies) from WP to AR Table 1E. EWG suggests to fill in Table 1E according to AR guidelines.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems
Not applicable.

6. Surveys at sea
Not applicable.

7. Fishing activity variable
Not applicable.

8. Fleet socio-economic

Not applicable.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

Concerning the reporting, Czech Republic decided to pool all aquaculture companies within one "all species" polyculture segment. EWG suggests to consider segmentation as defined in Table 9 of EUMAP. In addition, text in the WP box is changed compared to NWP approved. EWG recommends MS to follow the guidelines for future WP and AR submissions.

Concerning the execution, Czech Republic planned a sample rate of 20%, but achieved results are below 10%, mostly due to low response rate. It seems that Czech Republic reported 2017 and 2018 data in AR 2020, and that data collection scheme was changed for 3 indicators compared to WP. In general, EWG suggests to explain the changed data collection scheme and to follow the guidelines for future WP and AR submissions.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

Not applicable.

11. Data transmission issues

Not applicable.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

No eel data collection was performed due to COVID pandemic, but MS performed preparations for future eel management plans.

Member State: DEU Germany

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

Germany's overall performance and compliance was rated "Mostly". Compliance for most of the modules was "Yes", while "Mostly" was rated for three modules (i.e. 1E, 1F, 1G-H).

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the execution of the sampling onboard.

Empty cells in the sampling protocol column (1A-1C), it is unclear whether this is due to missing value or because of no sampling protocol. In future AR MS should include sampling protocol description in the relevant column

Due to the absence of planned minimum number of individuals for the Baltic, North Sea and North-Western waters (ICES areas Vb (only Union waters), VI and VII) regions, the deviations cannot be evaluated properly. In future AR, MS should include sampling protocol description in the relevant column.

Unsampled strata in table or text box on fisheries (Table 4A, Text Box 4A, Table 4C) are not listed. MS should follow guidelines and list unsampled strata in next WP and AR.

3. Recreational Fisheries

Recreational survey is called "DMAP" in 1D, but "recreational survey" in 5A. In future AR, MS should follow guidelines respective to survey IDs. Regarding Baltic and North Sea regions limited information is given in Text box 1D, detailed documentation from the

pilot study which includes full documentation of methods is given in Weltersbach et al. 2021. MS should describe sampling design in Text Box 1D.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Eel F: some surveys undersampled (4 out of 10) in 2020 due to limited availability of eel in commercial fisheries; parts of sampling to be completed in 2021. Eel I: 1 out of 2 surveys were not carried out, e.g. larvae survey in Sargasso was cancelled due to COVID19.

Laboratory work was hampered due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, this caused delays in sample processing and analysis and hampered the progress of spawner quality and environmental DNA analyses. Due to travel restrictions, sampling of commercial eel fisheries was temporarily not possible. Collection of Eel biological parameters both for fisheries dependent or independent parameters that was not completed will continue in 2021. The larval survey in the Sargasso Sea that was cancelled due to COVID-19 is scheduled for 2023.

Unique Survey IDs missing. MS to follow guidelines respective to survey IDs in future AR.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

Resubmission has explained deviations in achieved number of PSU between Tables 1F and 4A. Sampling was affected by COVID_19 pandemic. 2 Pilot studies are conducted and are both still ongoing. In the future, pilot studies should be numbered in the WP (e.g. 2a, 2b etc.). Table 1H only makes reference to "biological data". MS should provide information on Data type in the future.

Data collection from Table 1F, Incidental by-catch, is not listed. In future submission, MS to include all types of data reported in the WP.

6. Surveys at sea

Only minor deviations due to vessel breakdown and COVID_19 pandemic impacts. The indication (greying) of the text added in connection with AR has been removed, which makes it less easy to read. MS should not remove the greying for AR input in the textbox in future submissions.

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues identified.

8. Fleet socio-economic

The planned sampling has not been achieved in all cases and no explanation is provided for low response rate.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No issues identified.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No issues identified.

11. Data transmission issues

Fleet economics Data Call: 3 issues on data coverage were identified, 1 medium and 2 low, all of which were assessed as satisfactory.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

COVID-19 pandemic impacted the sampling programme as regards the biological samplings, because fisheries temporarily shut down and sampling suffered of restrictions caused by limitations for placing observers onboard of fishing vessels.

Regarding the activities related to Recreational fisheries and Diadromous data collection (1D-1E) one survey was cancelled (larval survey in the spawning area of the European eel; Sargasso Sea), collection of fisheries samples was also affected, because work-related travel was restricted or prohibited, and some laboratory work on biological variables was not completed due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Sampling activities regarding incidental by catches were affected by COVID_19 pandemic.

Member state: DNK Denmark

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

Overall Denmark provided a very good annual report. Only a few minor issues were raised during the AR evaluation. However, some data transmission issues related to the fleet economics data call, were encountered.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No major issues

3. Recreational Fisheries

The module related to anadromous and catadromous data collection in fresh water is overall ok. Only for pilot study 1, the available results obtained and conclusions drawn were only "partly" presented in the resubmitted WP or AR, but it should be noted that the justification for this was linked to the pandemic: "no results are obtained yet due to the missing sampling (No on-site sampling has been carried out for the private boats in 2020 and only a few on the charterboats, because of the COVID-19 situation)".

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

The module related to anadromous and catadromous data collection in fresh water is overall ok. However Table 1E was only partly consistent with the AR guidelines. Denmark is requested to take into account the EWG comments: "MS to correct sampling period (There is nothing for 2021). MS to add unique sampling scheme / survey ID. MS also to provide information on survey methodology for salmon and eel data collection in English.

In future WP submission, add salmon fisheries dependant rows (even if no fisheries exist)."

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No major issues

6. Surveys at sea

No major issues

7. Fishing activity variable

No major issues

8. Fleet socio-economic

No major issues

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No major issues

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No major issues

11. Data transmission issues

Three Data Transmission issues were listed for Denmark. All three DT issues were related to the Fleet economics data call. After the evaluation by EWG 21 09, two out of the three cases were still judged unsatisfactory. Denmark should take all appropriate steps to solve the issues.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Due to covid-19 there has been large deviations in the achieved sampling program compared to the planned. Denmark was closed down in 2 larger periods from March-June and again from mid-November to end of December 2020. In these periods it was not possible to have any observers at sea and the human consumption harbour sampling was also closed down.

On-site sampling of recreational fishing has been limited due to COVID

Due to covid-19, NS MEGS survey was not conducted (postponed until 2021) and no participation in IBWSS survey.

As far as the socioeconomic data collection on fisheries is concerned, the MS mentioned that low response rates have been achieved due to adverse circumstances. However, MS does not explicitly state if these circumstances related to COVID-19.

Socioeconomic data collection on aquaculture and fish processing have not been affected by COVID 19

Member State: ESP Spain

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

Spain 's overall performance and compliance was rated "Mostly". Compliance for most of the modules was "Yes", while "Mostly" was rated for five modules (ie 1E, 1F, 1G-H, 3A and 5A) which means that there is still room for improvement in the future.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

Administrative problems and the covid-19 pandemic affected the execution of at sea/ on shore sampling programs. However, MS put effort to compensate by carrying out sampling mainly in the last two quarters of the year. Some minor issues that should be corrected in future submissions are: all bilateral agreements should be listed in tables 1C/7C, all sampling schemes should be included in Tab. 5A and to be consistent with Tables 4A,1D,1E.

3. Recreational Fisheries

For Mediterranean and Black Sea Region, the description of the sampling design is missing. No issues for the other regions.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

COVID 19 restrictions and external reasons (river flow) affected the execution of sampling programs.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

Pilot studies have been postponed to 2021 due to COVID 19.

6. Surveys at sea

The execution of surveys was affected by COVID-19. As a result, five surveys were cancelled (PLATUXA 1st. Part, PLATUXA 2nd part, IBWSS, Sardine, Anchovy, Horse Mackerel Acoustic survey and ISUNEPCA-TV), Sardine DEPM (Triennial) was cancelled and postponed to 2021 and the Spanish MEDITS survey was partially cancelled (coverage of 50%). An issue has been reported regarding the result map for 1q IBTS survey in Text Box 1G mentioned as obtained during the 2019 survey. There are no other specific references to the survey period (text box nor tables).

7. Fishing activity variable

The Member State has performed properly and no major issue has been reported. The only issue that has been reported was that in AR data accessibility under CR, MS indicated "Y, under request" (in column "P"), which is not according to the guidelines and MS should correct that in future submissions of AR.

8. Fleet socio-economic

Issues regarding reporting were detected. MS added many lines, some for newly introduced segments, but many others for segments which were not part of the NWP and have no vessels. The Member State should follow the proper segmentation and to justify any deviations from the NWP in the future submissions.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

The Member State has performed properly and no issue has been reported.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

The Member State has performed properly and no issue has been reported.

11. Data transmission issues

Fleet economics Data Call: 166 issues on data coverage were identified, from which 163 were assessed as unsatisfactory and 3 – as satisfactory.

Med and BS Data Call: 24 issues on data quality and coverage were identified. Follow up needed on 13 to clarify data for MEDITS Tables TB, TC and landings length. Two issues were assessed as unsatisfactory and the rest nine – as satisfactory.

FDI Data Call: 8 issues were identified. Follow up needed on 6 issues related to data quality for fishing days, fishing technique, gear type, vessel length and hours at sea and two issues were assessed as unsatisfactory.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Impacted by Covid-19, especially problems to the implementation of the sampling program in other areas were caused by the decision of the countries bordering Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans to close their borders for almost the entire year 2020 due to Covid-19. Pilot studies were postponed to 2021. Due to covid-19, five surveys were cancelled (PLATUXA 1st. Part, PLATUXA 2nd. Part, IBWSS, Sardine, Anchovy, Horse Mackerel Acoustic survey, ISUNEPCA-TV), Sardine DEPM (Triennial) canceled and postponed to 2021; Spanish MEDITS survey was partially cancelled (coverage of 50%).

Member State: EE Estonia

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

The overall performance and compliance for Estonia was classified as „Mostly". One recurring issue has been identified.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No major issues identified in sampling achievement. MS does not present any relevant action to minimise deviations.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No major issues identified.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Sampling volume was lower than planned due to low abundance of eels or cessation of commercial fishery.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

6. Surveys at sea

No major issues identified. Some oversampling occurred.

7. Fishing activity variable

Recurring issue with unsampled strata not being listed. In one case 50% of planned number of PSUs achieved.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No major issues identified.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

Not applicable.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

Not applicable.

11. Data transmission issues

MS explanation on data transmission deficiency was assessed by STECF as satisfactory.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Sampling of incidental by-catch affected by Covid-19. Travel restrictions resulted in deviations in fishing activity variables collection.

Member State: FIN Finland

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

The performance was very good and overall performance of the AR 2020 was assessed as compliance class Yes.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No issues.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No major issues. MS is asked to provide proper description of sampling design and quality assurance in future submissions. Also, inconsistencies between Tables 1D and 5A should be addressed.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No major issues. Inconsistencies between Tables 1E and 5A should be addressed.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No issues.

6. Surveys at sea

No issues.

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No issues.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No issues.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No issues.

11. Data transmission issues

5 data transmission issues were reported for Finland. The EWG 21-09 assessed all the issues as satisfactory.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

No issues.

Member State: FRA France

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

The overall performance of the AR 2020 was assessed as compliance class Mostly.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

1A-C Clearer explanations of non COVID-19 deviations are needed

4A_C The guidelines have not been followed in completion of the Tables and there are inconsistencies in some comments between the Text Box and Tables

5A Ms to give explanations/corrections on the comments relating to salmon.

Mismatch observed between some information provided in the excel file and the information provided in the textbox

3. Recreational Fisheries

No issues

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

There was under-sampling of both eels and salmon – some of which was due to COVID-19

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

Under-sampling mainly due to COVID-19

6. Surveys at sea

Minor issues with the survey text

Some data sources are missing

Some surveys reduced or cancelled due to COVID-19

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No major issues identified, some codification and editing inconsistencies and some failures of collecting certain variables were observed (issue of empty cells).

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No issues.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No data collection.

11. Data transmission issues

There were 15 DT issues relating to France (with 88% of the DTI identified referring to the Data Call "Fleet economics"), and the EWG assessments were as follows:

Satisfactory: 5

Not Assessed: 0

Unsatisfactory: 54

Follow up: 31

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

As with many MS the COVID -19 pandemic has impacted on the collection of samples at sea and onshore and also the pilot studies

Member state: GBR United Kingdom

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 WP

The United Kingdom received an overall evaluation of 'Mostly' (five Modules - 1A-1C, 1D, 1E, 1F and 4A-4C were evaluated as 'Mostly'; all other Modules were evaluated as 'Yes").

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

Several inconsistencies from the WP were identified (e.g., region names not in line with the guidelines, other time periods apart from 2020 in "Sampling year", Tables 1A and 1B do not match for a number of species due to differences in area/stock naming, large pelagics in the Indian Ocean are attached to ICES in table 1B and correctly to IOTC in 1C, etc.). With exception of eel and salmon, no sampling protocols were provided.

3. Recreational Fisheries

Regions are not listed separately.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Some eel and salmon under-sampling occurred due to COVID.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No major concerns have been raised by the EWG. Sampling affected by Covid-19.

6. Surveys at sea

No major concerns have been raised by the EWG, except that MS did not explain some deviations from the WP.

7. Fishing activity variable

There are deviations between NWP text and tables but are explained in the AR text.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No essential concerns have been raised by the EWG, however, in several cases low or null sampling rates were achieved as MS had to switch from face-to-face interviews to mail questionnaires due to Covid.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No essential concerns have been raised by the EWG. MS reports additional collection of certain variables.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

The member state should report social variables in table 3C even if data collection for these variables has not been implemented in 2019. Deviations from WP are reported and justified, with no action required.

11. Data transmission issues

Data sets for Incidental by-catch and for Research surveys at sea are missing. Otherwise, no major data transmission issues were observed.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Covid had a significant impact on fishing activities and commercial sampling. Due to covid-19, IBWSS was cancelled. Anglerfish survey and the Irish Sea Queen Scallops Survey were also cancelled. Low sample rates were achieved for the socio-economic data collection on fisheries as MS had to switch to mail questionnaires due to Covid-19.

Member State: GRC GREECE

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

The overall performance and compliance for Greece was classified as „Mostly" (Compliance class for most modules is "Yes", for three Modules, i.e. 1E, 1G-H, and 3C is "Mostly").

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No issues.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No issues.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Reporting issue: unique survey iD missing

Execution issue: due to administrative and COVID constraints, the project was not done for Western Greece and West Peloponnese resulting in diminished sampling.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No issues.

6. Surveys at sea

Reporting issues:

Tables 1G and 1H are in line with 1G, 1H from NWP, but not with the guidelines. Lines 6-9 from 1G and lines 11-12 from 1H tables should be deleted.

Surveys should be listed in single 1G Text Box, not in additional Text Box 1G.

No link to MEDIAS manual has been provided.

Execution issues:

MEDIAS targets not achieved, because survey was not carried out in GSA 20. COVID-19 situation hampered renting of suitable vessel.

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No issues.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No issues.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

In some cases, sample rate was not achieved due to low response rate. It is explained in table 3C that, due to covid lockdown measures, the number of achieved onsite interviews for filling in questionnaires was lower for 2020 and while the completed questionnaires received by mail or e-mail partly covered the difference, the greatly reduced staff availability in companies during lockdown periods led to lower achieved sample rate.

11. Data transmission issues

Greece had 77 DT issues (21 of low severity and 56 of medium severity). Only 3 of them have been assessed as "unsatisfactory" (one related to the aquaculture data call and two related to the fleet economic data call).

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Covid had an impact on the execution of several activities, in particular for the anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water, for the surveys at sea and for the socio-economic data collection for processing industry.

Member State: HRV Croatia

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

The overall performance and compliance for Croatia is "Yes". The report (both Tables and Texts) was very well structured and organized, while few minor issues appeared, mainly due to Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

There were no issues within this section regarding AR.

3. Recreational Fisheries

There were no issues within this section regarding AR. However, MS asked to clarify presence and feasibility and include mandatory highly migratory species in future submissions

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

There were no issues within this section regarding AR. The pilot study will be continued in the period 2020-2021.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

There were inconsistencies between Tables 1F and 4A. In addition, sampling was highly affected by Covid-19

6. Surveys at sea

The main issue here is that SoleMon sampling was not conducted due to COVID 19 situation and bad weather conditions.

7. Fishing activity variable

There were no issues within this section

8. Fleet socio-economic

MS successfully fill in Table 3A.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

There were no issues within this section

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

There were no issues within this section, apart from some cases of low response rates.

11. Data transmission issues

All in all, 19 data issues of low severity detected. Most of them regard the "Fleet Economic data call" (13), while six and one issue regards the "Med and BS" and the "FDI" data call", respectively. In all but one cases, the STECF assessment was "Satisfactory".

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

According the AR, covid-19 has a significant impact in the following cases:
- fishing activities and commercial sampling.
- The SoleMon survey was not conducted
- The pilot study for eel postponed to 2021

Member State: HUN Hungary

1.Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

> The overall performance for the reporting and execution of Hungary was assessed as "Partly". In section 'socio-economic for aquaculture' were detected as no data collection implemented. For 'socio-economic for processing industry' no data collection caried out in 2020.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

> Not applicable.

3. Recreational Fisheries

> Not applicable.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

> Not applicable.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

> Not applicable.

6. Surveys at sea

> Not applicable.

7. Fishing activity variable

> Not applicable.

8. Fleet socio-economic

> Not applicable.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

Referring to Table 3B and Text Box 3 B, there was no data collection implemented. Member State should provide the data collection scheme, all deviations from Work Plan and planned date of the final data collection implementation.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No data collection has been carried out in 2020. Data collection planned every second year.

11. Data transmission issues

No data transmission issues were reported for Hungary

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Data of socio-economic for aquaculture collection has been postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Member State: IRL Ireland

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

The overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP is rated as good without any major issues. There were only some minor procedural deviations from reporting guidelines (own lines for stratum IDs, Fisheries dependent rows for diadromous even if fisheries are absent…). MS asked to follow guidelines more strictly.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No Major issues identified.

Sampling protocols for some species as well as bilateral agreement for IRL-SCO are missing.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No issues.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No major issues identified. Some undersampling due to COVID-19 constraints.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No major issues identified, some minor procedural deviations (MS to use own lines for each stratum ID). Additional biological data (stomach contents) missing.

6. Surveys at sea

No major issues identified. One survey cancelled due to COVID-19.

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No major issues identified, some codification inconsistencies and some missing variables were observed.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

Some issues identified regarding reporting of Socio-economic for aquaculture in Table and Textbox 3B. Some inconsistencies in response rates were observed, some explanations for deviations from workplans are missing.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No major issues were identified. Some minor flaws as response rates were too low and MS subsequently changed accepted NWP.

11. Data transmission issues

No major issues were identified.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

COVID has impacted some of the sampling, as surveys have been cancelled or restriction hampered protocols.

Member State: ITA ITALY

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

The EWG evaluated the overall Annual Report as 'Mostly' that is ITA's AR is 50%-90% of achievements from Work Plan. Compliance for most of the modules was "Yes", while "Mostly" was rated for four modules (ie 1A-C, 1F, 1G-H and 4A-4c).

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

In general, there are some inconsistencies in filling the relevant table for Mediterranean & Black Sea and MS needs to follow the guidelines of completing properly the table. In many cases of under-sampling no detailed comments on the deviation are presented in Table 1 C or in Text Box. Samplings have been affected by COVID 19. However, MS mitigated impact by alternative ways of samplings. There is contradictive information on Large pelagics species between Text box and table 1 C and the information provided about actions to avoid deviation was insufficient. MS needs to follow guidelines.

3. Recreational Fisheries

The Member State has performed well and no issue has been reported.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Not any important issues were identified just that the Table 1E is not 100 % consistent with submitted WP 2020 (changed water bodies). It is advised MS to follow the guidelines.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

There are significant inconsistencies in total number of PSU and achieved number of PSU between Tables 1F and 4A. MS explained that the sampling was affected by COVID 19. Another issue is that the type of data is not provided and MS is advised to follow the guidelines.

6. Surveys at sea

The execution of surveys was affected by COVID-19. As a result, MEDIAS was partially (30%) carried out in GSA 18, MEDITS was executed out of the official period in GSA 17 and DRES - areas GSA8 and GSA 18 were not covered.

7. Fishing activity variable

The Member State has performed well and no issue has been reported.

8. Fleet socio-economic

The Member State has performed well and no issue has been reported.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

The Member State has performed well and no issue has been reported.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

The Member State has performed well and no issue has been reported.

11. Data transmission issues

Aquaculture Data Call: 2 issues were identified, both of them were assessed as unsatisfactory.

Fleet economics Data Call: 16 issues were identified, from which 14 were assessed as satisfactory and 2 – as Follow up needed.

Med and BS Data Call: 39 issues were identified. Follow up needed on 21 issues, whereas the rest 18 issues were assessed as satisfactory.

FDI Data Call: No issues were identified.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

CODIV -19 pandemic has negative impact on data collection for MS. Sampling and surveys were the fields mostly negatively affected. However, activity and socioeconomic data collection on fisheries, aquaculture and fish processing have not been affected by COVID- 19. The areas affected are shown below:

1. Some of the Eel F stock related variables (2 out of 6) were slightly under sampled due to COVID-19
2. There are significant inconsistencies in total number of PSU and achieved number of PSU between Tables 1F and 4A. MS explained that the sampling was affected by COVID 19. Also, there were some administrative delays due to COVID-19.
3. The execution of surveys was affected by COVID-19. As a result, MEDIAS was partially (30%) carried out in GSA 18, MEDITS was executed out of the official period in GSA 17 and DRES - areas GSA8 and GSA 18 were not covered.

Member State: LTU Lithuania

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2019 NWP

The overall performance and compliance for Lithuania was classified as „Mostly" (Compliance class for most modules is "Yes", for four Modules, i.e. 1F, 1G-H, 4A-C and 5A is "Mostly"). Like in the case of ARs 2017, 2018 and 2019 evaluations, it means that there is still a room for improvements in the future, particularly with regard to accurate reporting in line with the Guidance and Quality Assurance Framework.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

Some minor issues to be corrected in future submissions: unique sampling schemes' IDs shall be used in corresponding 1D and 5A Tables, data type (e.g. "stomach content") should be given in Table 1H, no editing and changes shall be made to values of the AR tables that came from the accepted WP (Table 4A), activity with no coverage are reported (information on unsampled strata should be provided in Table 4B or clarify in Text Box all strata are covered), inconsistency between tables 1C and 4A regarding consistency between both tables shall be avoided by correct checking before submissions. No improvements were reported regarding quality assurance framework (Table 5A and Text Box 5A).

3. Recreational Fisheries

No essential concerns have been raised by the EWG.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No essential concerns have been raised by the EWG. Recreational fisheries sampling to be included in table 1D.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No essential concerns have been raised by the EWG.

6. Surveys at sea

No major concerns have been raised by the EWG, except that MS did not explain some deviations from the WP

7. Fishing activity variable

No essential concerns have been raised by the EWG.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

Data collection and reporting on aquaculture section is not applicable for LTU.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

11. Data transmission issues

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

COVID-19 affected sampling and impacted possibility to place the observers on board in trips from foreign ports and collection of samples abroad.

Member State: LVA Latvia

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

The overall performance of the AR 2020 was assessed as compliance class Mostly.

Overall, the Latvia report was good. Although the pre-screener raised some issues, MS could resubmit the new required tables, and the significant issues were solved. The ones not solved were considered to be minor issues.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

Concerning Tables 1A-C, the issues were successfully addressed with the resubmission of the 2020 AR by Latvia.

For Tables 4A-C, there's only a remark for future AR submission Latvia to take EWG comments into account.

In the updated version of the AR Excel file, Table 5A was corrected, and the discrepancies were removed. So, no action is needed.

3. Recreational Fisheries

In Future submissions, Latvia should be consistent with National WP and respective Annual Reports – MS submitted the 2021 WP and not 2020 as it should.

Also, Latvia shall give information on the pilot study in the correct table in future submissions.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in freshwater

In Future submissions, Latvia should include salmon fisheries dependent rows (even if fisheries is not present, then provide information).

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

A more detailed explanation of the two sources (Table 4A and 1F) is required to assess future submissions.

Sampling was affected by COVID 19.

6. Surveys at sea

Some surveys were reduced or were not carried out due to the Covid – 19 global pandemic.

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues were raised.

8. Fleet socio-economic

Only one minor issue was raised, Latvia should check and amend the number of active vessels for the fleet segment 'drift and/or fixed netters'.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No issues were raised.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No issues were raised.

11. Data transmission issues

Only one data transmission issue was identified for Latvia related to aquaculture. The issue was classified as being of medium severity and have been resolved. So, it was highlighted as being satisfactory.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

As with almost all other MS, Latvia's Data Collection Programme was impacted by the Covid – 19 global pandemics. MS highlighted impacts in the following sections: Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems and the execution of surveys at sea.

Member State: MLT MALTA

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

The overall performance and compliance for Malta was classified as „Mostly" (Compliance class for most modules is "Yes", for four Modules, i.e. 1D, 1F, 3A and 3C is "Mostly").

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

Some minor issues should be corrected by MS in future NWP. Some inconsistencies are coming from the WP so, according to guidelines the MS couldn't correct them e.g "MS participating in sampling" NA instead of MLT in table 1C and 4A and NA MLT-CYP for OTB_DEF in table 4A.

In future AR MS should indicate the name of the region in the text box.

Also MS should take appropriate action to minimize deviations from the NWP in future.

EWG acknowledges the progress made in table 5A in proposing a webpage with an overview of the sampling methodology and quality assurance for biological variables.

3. Recreational Fisheries

In case of pilot studies, not only the information on the methodology but also the result (or the progress in case pilot study not finished) should be in the annual reports in future submissions

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Although it is understandable that a MS not provide any information in the case it has no fisheries, according to the guidelines, the tables should be filled and comments about the reasons for not sampling should be included (e.g. no fisheries) in tables or in text boxes.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

In future AR specific mention to "stomach content" in research should be given in table 1H.

6. Surveys at sea

MS should follow the guidelines during the next submission and include the survey' names in text boxes, which are missing in the current NWP.

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues have been raised by the EWG.

8. Fleet socio-economic

Type of data collection is Census for most segments for all variables and planned sample is 100% yet, this is not achieved for several economic variables. MS could consider adopting an alternative data collection scheme to increase achieved sampling and response rates.

Some inconsistencies are coming from the WP, like empty cells for Planned Sample rate in table 3A, which hampered the evaluation in some segments

Also MS should implement a database as soon as possible and provide a link to the webpage where information on the methodologies used can be accessed by end users.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

The major issue is that MS needs to implement a database the sooner, as data is stored in excel sheets in an organized shared folder.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

The relevant corrections in formula in column N of table 3C need to be made in future submissions.

MS needs put effort to increase the response rates and to implement a database the sooner, as data is stored in excel sheets.

11. Data transmission issues

Malta had 16 DT issues for Fleet economics and MedBs data calls. 14 have been assessed as "satisfactory", 1 need to be followed up and 1 has been assessed as "unsatisfactory" (one related effort in MedBs data call).

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

In 2020 most of the deviations were caused by restrictions for placing observers onboard of fishing vessels due to the COVID-19 pandemic and affected to the collection of biological data.

Member State: NDL Netherland

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

The overall performance of the AR 2020 was assessed as compliance class Mostly.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

The covid-19 pandemic affected the execution of at sea/ on shore sampling programs in all the regions. Issues that should be corrected in future submissions are: merging of two regions for some indicators preventing appropriate evaluation, strict follow-up of the guidelines for filling the tables and internal consistencies between tables.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No issues.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No issues.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

Some minor issues to be resolved in the future and the programme was affected by COVID-19.

6. Surveys at sea

The execution of surveys was affected by COVID-19. As a result, NSMEGS was postponed to 2021, IBWSS was cancelled and DYFS and SNS were reduced. Otherwise, some issues related to following-up the guidelines needs to be addressed in the future, such as section numbering and link to completed station for all surveys.

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No issues and a commitment to make the methodological report publicly available in 2021.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No issues.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

Not applicable

11. Data transmission issues

6 data issues on fisheries economics were addressed to MS in 2020, all of them on coverage, low severity and reccurrent; EWG commented the response from MS to the issues raised by STECF and found 2 were satisfactory, 2 needed a follow-up and 2 were unsatisfactory.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

As with many MS the COVID -19 pandemic has impacted on the collection of samples at sea and onshore in all regions.

Member State: POL Poland

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

Overall, reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP was assessed as a 'Yes'. A few issues regarding follow-ups on the guidelines and STECF recommendations were raised.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

Some minor issues to be corrected in future Member State submissions. POL should make an effort in order to provide Table 1C with the 'planned number of individuals to be measured', analyse the possibility to separate at-sea and onshore sampling schemes, through correct checking before submission, sampling schemes naming consistency should be sought to ease the correspondence between tables 1D, 1E, 4A and table 5A and avoid cell formatting. Quality assurance framework well described in Text Box 5A with continuous improvements plans for the future.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

6. Surveys at sea

No major issues identified. Concerning the reporting MS should move section 6-9 into the relevant sections of the Text Box.

7. Fishing activity variable

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

Not applicable.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No major issues identified. Member State should be consistent regarding tables and text, and take action in the future to increase the response rate.

11. Data transmission issues

There were five DT issues regarding the Fleet economics data call, all of low severity and the assessment by the EWG is "satisfactory" in all cases.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Covid-19 strongly affected biological sampling as well as regarding placing observers on board.

Member State: PRT Portugal

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

Overall, the Portugal report was very good, all tables were completed and detailed text was provided in the relevant text boxes to explain any deviations. A number of issues were raised but these were considered to be minor issues.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

The biological modules were well reported by Portugal. Where deviations occurred, detailed explanations were provided in both the tables and the text boxes, and were generally as an impact of Covid.

Portugal is reminded to ensure that text is provided by Region in future reports.

Portugal improved the WP to correct errors/mistakes in the accepted WP according the guidelines.

3. Recreational Fisheries

Just some minor issues were raised. Portugal is asked to ensure that text on pilot studies are not included in Text Box 1D and information on sampling design should be included in Text Box 1D and also in Table 5A.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

One issue raised. Portugal did not report unique survey IDs in Table 5A, and asked to do so in future reports and to ensure that the same Survey ID is used for both Table 1E and 5A.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

Only minor issues were identified during the pre – screening, which were addressed by the MS reply and resubmission.

6. Surveys at sea

Some surveys were reduced or were not carried out due to the Covid – 19 global pandemic.

7. Fishing activity variable

Only one minor issue was raised, Portugal reported several variables per line in Table 2A and is reminded to report variables separately.

8. Fleet socio-economic

The Achieved sample rate for Census were seen to be below 100% in several cases and Portugal is asked take action, to consider alternative data collections schemes to improve the sample rate.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No Issues raised.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

NA

11. Data transmission issues

22 data transmission issues were identified for Portugal related to fleet economics. All of these issues were classified as being of low severity, with 5 issues highlighted as recurring issues. 14 issues were consider not to have been resolved and were highlighted as being unsatisfactory.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

As with almost all other MS, Portugal's Data Collection Programme was impacted by the Covid – 19 global pandemic. Some of those impacts were as follows:

- 1A/1C: Sampling was largely affected by COVID19, with port/onshore/market sampling activities being limited during part of the year, due to lockdowns during the 2nd quarter 2020 and even 3rd and 4th quarter in some areas. At-sea/onshore sampling activities were suspended (during second, third and fourth trimester) due to the COVID19 pandemic.
- 1D/1E: Some eel surveys were under sampled due to COVID
- 1G/1H: Due to covid-19, ARQDAQO survey was canceled, Western IBTS 4Q survey was reduced (6%) and the Portuguese scientific crew did not participate in the FCGS as planned.
- 3A/3B/3C: Socioeconomic data collection on aquaculture and fish processing have not been affected by COVID 19

Member State: ROU Romania

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 WP

The MS performance was generally good, however some issues were identified, such as misunderstanding in Table 4A, inconsistencies between tables 1F and 4A.

A recurrent issue regards unsampled strata that are not are listed in Table 4A. Another recurrent issue regards reporting surveys at sea, where all surveys are reported in one text block. All surveys should be listed individually in each section.

There is also another recurring issue with methodologies available for end users, since no documentation is available for data capture and data processing, and that a publicly accessible web page should be available, which is the same comment raised in AR2019.

Finally, there are two data transmission issues considered as satisfactory.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

MS updated new version of Table 4A with U-V fulfilled except for one stratum. Misunderstanding of column P (MS put the planned number of PSUs instead of the requested "Total number of PSU in the sampling year"). A recurrent issue regards unsampled strata that are not are listed in Table 4A. EWG already encouraged MS to report strata with no coverage last year in future AR submissions or clarify in Text Box all activity is covered. Also, still no documentation is available for data capture.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No regular sampling, ongoing pilot study

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

NA

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No major issue, MS to ensure consistencies between tables 1F and 4A in future submissions and clarify which biological data are collected. There is an ongoing pilot study for 2020-2021.

6. Surveys at sea

There are some issues for this section, where all surveys are reported in one text block. All surveys should be listed individually in each section. This is a recurrent issue and MS is encouraged to follow the guidelines by splitting the text box into sections containing each survey for future submissions of AR. Also, there is no comment on reduced number of hauls and days at sea during BTSBS (IV quarter)

7. Fishing activity variable

No issue

8. Fleet socio-economic

No issue

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No issue

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No issue

11. Data transmission issues

There were two issues, regarding fleet economics. The first, regarding subsidies (income and investment) is a recurring issue that was replied by the MS and it is now considered as satisfactory. The second is about employment, the FTE national 2017 was not reported for all fleet segments, but since this an optional variable, it was evaluated also as satisfactory.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

No issue related with Covid-19 is reported

Member State: SVK Slovakia

1.Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

The planned pilot study 3 for 2020-2021 is going to initiate in September 2021. The   overall p

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

Not applicable.

3. Recreational Fisheries

Not applicable.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Not applicable.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

Not applicable.

6. Surveys at sea

Not applicable.

7. Fishing activity variable

Not applicable.

8. Fleet socio-economic

Not applicable.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

According to WP, MS planned a pilot study for 2020-2021 (24 months). However, the pilot is going to initiate in September 2021. MS should follow guidelines in future submissions

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

Not applicable.

11. Data transmission issues

No data transmission issues were reported for Slovakia

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Not applicable.

Member state: SVN Slovenia

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

The overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP was evaluated as Partly with major issues occurring in sections 1D, 1F and 5A.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No issues

3. Recreational Fisheries

MS did not provide text box 1D and no information provided on sampling design in 5A

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No issues

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

MS did not provide table 1F. Concerning Pilot study, data is still in progress and results are not presented in AR. MS indicates that sampling was affected by COVID19

6. Surveys at sea

No major issues. Concerning planned survey intensity, MS indicates that OTB_VOL days at sea were reduced and fish hauls undersampled due to COVID19.

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues

8. Fleet socio-economic

No issues

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No issues

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No issues

11. Data transmission issues

No major issues were observed for data transmission

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

 COVID19 had some impact on sampling

Member State: SWE Sweden

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2020 NWP

Sweden indicated a comprehensive and satisfactory execution of the 2020 work plan. Any drawbacks were basically due to COVID 19 impact.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

Overall performance is good. Some minor inconsistencies with regard to the guidelines and some explanations for the undersampling of certain strata are missing.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No issues.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No major issues identified, just some minor undersampling.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

Due to the way the report was structured the coverage by stratum could not be evaluated

6. Surveys at sea

Major issues were the cancelled participation in BIAS (SD 30 area) and ASH due to Covid-19. IBTS Q1 days at sea and hauls were reduced due to engine breakdown.

7. Fishing activity variable

No major issues identified, some codification inconsistencies were observed.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No major issues identified, some codification inconsistencies and some failures of collecting certain variables were observed.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No issues.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No issues.

11. Data transmission issues

No major data transmission issues were observed.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

The pandemic affected all sea-sampling programmes during Q2-Q4 and to some extent sampling programmes in harbours.

Due to covid-19, no participation in BIAS (SD 30 area) and ASH surveys was executed.

STECF

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

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