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Through the whole report it is suggested that wording "spatial closure" is replaced by "fisheries closure".

Indeed, it would make more sense given the tested designs are time-area closures.

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2 paragraph: it would be needed to spell out precisely the setting for 1b as it is done for 2b.

Indeed, it will be clearer.

3 paragraph: Spatial displacement and dynamic displacement – please explain the difference and the context it is used.

DISPLACE has two levels of resolution for simulating the catches depending on the available input data. When the individual catches are known (as it was for the Danish fleet) then the displacement account for the choices of individual fishing vessels actively looking at the remaining opportunities in fishing grounds. When the total catches per month are the only known data (as it was the case for vessels below 12 m and for all other fleets than the Danish fleet in this specific case), these catches are displaced evenly between the remaining areas with presence of cod and during the same month. This aspect is also described in § 2.5 and we edited it further to inform the reader.

4 paragraph – the model was not supposed to explain the problems of the cod stocks. These problems were not supposed to be accounted for in the model. It is enough that some of the assumptions like poor cod condition and slow growth etc. is used in the assessment. Please redraft with specific focus on changing the word "somehow speculative".

At this stage the model is indeed not trying to explain the problem but to assess to which extend the suggested varying fishing closures designs suggested to the STECF evaluation will contribute to a cod stock replenishment on both sides of the Baltic. I therefore set the initial conditions of the simulations to a situation that is closed to the reality as much as possible, a reality for which we have some scientific evidences available (poor cod condition, slow growth, etc.). It is my opinion as an appointed independent expert and because it is supported by the present evaluation that the fisheries management is not the sufficient dimension to account for when trying to solve the Baltic cod declining trend without considering other broader ecosystem issues. Therefore, provided that the model is not set to capture these effects in the

present evaluation, I believe I should inform the reader about this important limitation.

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Paragraph 2.3: would be good to know why such a specific approach has been taken to replace the Cod plan of 2007. Why this approach did not follow the new Baltic multiannual management plan?

In 2012, ICES decided to give advice on TACs based on the FMSY approach, no longer following the 2007 LTMP. Now the new Baltic multiannual management plan come into force. Still the model is conditioned on the 2012 situation provided that the constraints described in §§2.3-2.4 is making very speculative to start from more recent unknown situations where there is no clear estimates of the cod stock status. Based on my expert judgment I therefore have deliberately chosen to provide recommendations based on relative terms starting from a half way situation between more the most accurate stock estimates (2012) and the most recent TACs figures (2016).

Paragraph 2.3: "the landing obligation is not considered to be fully implemented." This consideration could be very questionable especially that this is, I suppose, valid throughout the future 5 years that the projections were carried out. Please explain further what are the reasons to consider like that.

This consideration will anyway not change much the outcome of the simulations concerning the stock status while making worse the economic loss: the present simulations predict that the catches of undersized fish will increase, and if counted against the TACs as under the landing obligation regime, this will also decrease the earning the fisheries are making out of the cod stock given the TAC will be made out of smaller fish. Smaller fish are also not counting for much in term of weight and it is not really expected the TAC will be exhausted sooner because of this. We edited the Discussion section to inform the reader about that.

The landing obligation has not been explicitly considered and the text is making this aspect clear enough. This is because some experts believe that the landings obligation might take several years before being applied in practice which goes beyond the horizon of the present evaluation.

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Table, column spatial closure: few rows refer to the vessels LOA>15 m. Is the sign > understood as the length larger than 15m? or smaller? If it is larger how it

corresponds to the EU request to assess the derogation by vessels up to 15 m? The same in the column Dynamic displacement.

We believe there is no mistake here, also seen in the Annex, in the Table it is written for example "ICES SD 22, 23, 24 if vessel LOA >15m ; over 20m deep within ICES SD 22, 23, 24 otherwise" meaning the fishing closure occurs for vessels larger than 15 m in the entire SD 222324 zone while for vessels <15m the fishing closure occurs in areas *deeper* than 20m within the SD 222324. The confusion might come from expressing the reciprocal statement of what is actually expressed in Tor2.

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Heading of 3.1. ToR a: the title does not correspond to scenarios. Is it 1a or 2a or both?

Yes Tor a implicitly means it is about 1a and 2a to first assess the a component of the Tor.

Paragraph 2: explain the interaction between the closure for western cod and increased discards for eastern cod due to the minimum landing size and eventual decreased SSB of eastern cod. Is it really meant discards or catches below the minimum landing size? I think there is a contradiction between two sentences of this paragraph: how can the SSB of eastern cod be lowered in the case of EU landing obligation is fully enforced.

If the fleet continues fishing then the catches will be made out of smaller fish, even if the landing obligation applies, therefore greatly impairing the stock and potential from growing fish. I believe the landing obligation will not prevent the fleet to continue fishing in an attempt to get the larger few remaining fish, also given the small fish is expected not to count much into the TACs which might further not be possible to exhaust anyway given the poor cod stock status.

Paragraph 3 last sentence: the words used "therefore not retained on board" is a speculation, therefore please consider redrafting.

Yes this might be removed.

Paragraph 4: the word "preconized" – difficult to understand the meaning of it in a given context - please consider redrafting.

Yes a more neutral wording such as “deducted by” could replace this. Beside this the simulated TACs correspond to the ones set out of the ICES advice, which automatically set the TACs under the FMSY management, i.e. not the final TACs decided later in the EU process.