STECF
EXPERT WORKING GROUP EWG 25-11

concerning the fishing effort and catch regime for demersal fisheries in western Mediterranean Sea

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Background:

This Expert Working Group (EWG) builds on preliminary work conducted in STECF EWG in previous years and during discussions in STECF PLEN 25-01 and 25-02. The idea is to facilitate the reading and interpretation of the STECF EWG results, including the socio-economic outputs, as well as get closer to an ICES-like type of advice. Therefore, experts are invited to use the template tables provided in Annex below to standardize as well as facilitate the comparison and readability of the models' outputs.

Since 1 January 2025, the transitional phase of the West Med EU multiannual management plan (EU Regulation 2019/1022, the "MAP") to achieve Fmsy has ended, and the MAP has entered its long-term and permanent implementation phase. As per Articles 21 of the MAP, Article 4 and Article 6(1) shall apply from 1 January 2025. Article 4 details how the Fmsy ranges operate, and the flexibilities given in the context of mixed fisheries while accounting for the safeguards outlined in Article 6.

In 2024, preliminary work was conducted prior to EWG 24-12 on (i) Fmsy ranges computation and (ii) on financial supporting fleet measures. For the former, STECF was requested to develop a methodology for computing Fmsy ranges for stocks with Fmsy or with Fmsy proxies in EWG 24-02. Such methodology has been evaluated by STECF PLEN 24-02, discussed during EWG 24-12 and completed during EWG 25-09. For the latter, the improved estimates of the current fleet profitability, based on the work done in three ad-hoc contracts on financial supporting measure stemming from EWG 24-01, were discussed during EWG 24-12. In 2025, complementary work will be conducted in October to evaluate management scenarios with SMART model in Italian waters.

Data and results from those works should be accounted in the analyses following comments from previous STECF plenaries (PLEN 24-02, 24-03, 25-01 and 25-02) and EWGs (e.g. EWG 24-12, EWG 25-09). To be noted, like in 2023 and 2024, the EWG report would be reviewed during the November STECF Plenary (PLEN 25-03) with an early publication after Plenary.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The objectives of the TORs are to build fishing effort scenarios, coupled with catch limits and other complementary management measures, that will ensure achieving and maintaining MSY for all Western Mediterranean demersal target stocks in the permanent phase of the West Med MAP, i.e. in the new context of using the Fmsy ranges developed by EWG 24-02 and those updated in EWG 25-09. The EWG 25-11 is requested to:

TOR 1. Based on data available, including the work of the FDI EWG in September 2025, compile and provide complete sets of annual data on fishing effort for all demersal fishing gear from 2015 to 2024. This should be described in terms of fishing days, days at sea, GT*days, fishing hours and nominal effort by Member State, GSA, vessel lengths[1] (4 fleet segments: < 12m, 12m to 18m, 18m to 24m and > 24m) and, where possible, by fishing gear.

TOR 2. a. Update the F-E analyses for Effort Management Units 1 and 2, as well as by GSA when relevant, with the most recent socio-economic and biological data and the most recent stock assessments' results. Time allowing, provide a summary of statistically significant F-E ratio estimates and discuss a way forward.

b. Building on 2024 STECF ad-hoc contracts (for France, Italy and Spain), complete the work started by EWG 24-12 to estimate and discuss the measures to support the fleet and the consequences of fuel costs changes in 2022-2024 as well as in the current year for the different types of vessel sizes and fishing gear, with the most updated (quantitative) available data and (qualitative) expert knowledge.

TOR 3. a. In continuity of STECF EWG 25-09[2], complete the calculations of partial fishing mortality per fishing gear, age class and GSA for demersal stocks under the West Med MAP. This would provide estimates for the effort reduction per Member State corresponding to the reduction in fishing mortality advised by STECF EWG 25-09[3] and use it as the level of reduction used by this STECF EWG (25-11) to drive the fishing effort scenarios for each Member State fleets and achieve Fmsy for the most vulnerable stock in both Effort Management Units (EMU) 1 and 2.

b. Develop effort and catch management scenarios for all demersal fishing gear (e.g. bottom trawls, nets, longlines) in EMU1 and EMU2. Scenarios should account for the management measures adopted since 2020 in the context of the West Med MAP, including measures associated with the compensation mechanism. The scenarios aim at identifying and evaluating the best levels of management measures, e.g. effort and catch limits, to ensure that the stocks concerned shall be within the Fmsy ranges (or F levels from EWG 24-02, EWG 24-10 and EWG 25-09). Scenarios should follow the new legal provisions stemming from the West Med MAP, notably the use of Fmsy ranges (Art 4 and 6 of the MAP) following Table 1. Requested management scenarios, including the compensation mechanism implemented up till 2025, are

[1] See ToR 6.5 in STECF PLEN 21-03 pages 120-121 and Annex pages 155-167.

[2] Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) - Stock assessments in the Western Mediterranean Sea (STECF25-09). Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2025, Page xx Table 2, Column "Change in F" where Change in F is % change in F 2026 relative to 2024

[3] Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) - Stock assessments in the Western Mediterranean Sea (STECF25-09). Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2025, Page xx Table 2, Column "Change in F" where Change in F is % change in F 2026 relative to 2024

provided in Table 2 in Annex as well as the references to the legal texts adopted for the implementation of EU-level and national management measures in place since 2020.

c. For stocks below Bpa and Blim, the EWG should test the effects, measured in terms of reduction in F and in catch, of the conservation measures for the stocks listed in Table 1 and identified in Table 2 of Annex B.

TOR 4. a. On the basis of the simulated scenarios under TOR 3 a, b and c, STECF is requested to include a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic impacts of the proposed management scenarios, incorporating available data, including but not limited to data resulting from the 2024 ad-hoc contracts. The socio-economic indicators should consider the potential effects on gross profit margins, or GVAs and employment levels within the demersal fishing fleets, providing valuable insights for the overall socio-economic sustainability of the sector.

b. Based on the advice structure developed in 2021 (EWG 21-13) and the template tables for outputs (Tables 4.1-4.3 in Annex C), provide a synoptic overview of: (i) the source of data and methods, (ii) the management advice, (iii) the socio-economic indicators for the West Med MAP management scenarios developed under TOR 3. This overview should offer a clear and concise summary of the socio-economic implications of the proposed management measures, aiding in the assessment of the potential socio-economic impacts of the scenarios in the context of achieving and maintaining MSY in 2026 and after for demersal target stocks in the western Mediterranean. In particular, STECF is requested to interpret model outcomes and discuss the conservation impact on stocks of the different management measures, such as changes in selectivity, permanent closures, temporary closures and temporary cessations etc.

Annexes

A. References to most recent legal texts:

- Annex I of 2020[4], Annex III of 2021[5], Annex III of 2022 Fishing Opportunities[6], Annex III of 2023 Fishing Opportunities[7], Annex III of the 2024 Fishing Opportunities[8] and **Annex IV of the 2025 Fishing Opportunities**[9].

- **French** Ministerial Decree for closures below 800m ("Arrêté du 21 octobre 2024 portant fermeture de la zone comprise entre les bathymétries 800 et 1 000 mètres en mer Méditerranée pour les chalutiers battant pavillon français ") and for the compensation mechanism in 2025 (« Arrêté du 25 avril 2025 portant nouvelles zones de fermetures spatio-temporelles en mer Méditerranée pour certains navires battant pavillon français pour l'année 2025 »).

- **Spanish** Ministerial Decrees for 2025:
    - allocation of fishing opportunities: BOE-A-2025-2667 and BOE-A-2025-9620
    - implementation of 45/50mm: BOE-A-2025-6576
    - retrieval of 800m ban (that was adopted in 2024): BOE-A-2025-1716
    - implementation of flying doors: BOE-A-2025-15820

- **Italian** Ministerial Decrees for 2025:
    - D.D. 370916 del 7/8/2025 Misure di contenimento dello sforzo di pesca nelle GSA 8, 9, 10 e 11 - Annualità 2025
    - Istituzione di zone di chiusura temporanea e relative misure di gestione dell'attività di pesca nelle GSA 8, 9, 10 e 11

[4] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CONSIL:ST_10485_2020_INIT&qid=1655826077148&from=EN https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020R1485&qid=1655826077148&from=EN
[5] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R0090&qid=1655826077148&from=EN
[6] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022R0110&qid=1655826077148&from=EN
[7] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/AUTO/?uri=CELEX:32023R0195&qid=1688397098419&rid=1
[8] COUNCIL REGULATION (EU) 2024/259 of 10 January 2024 fixing for 2024 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks applicable in the Mediterranean and Black Seas
[9] COUNCIL REGULATION (EU) 2025/219 of 30 January 2025 fixing for 2025 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks applicable in the Mediterranean and Black Seas

B. Management scenarios

For each scenario, the models have to be run with the management measures adopted at EU and national level between 2020 and 2025, which from 2022 onwards include both effort, catch management measures, remedial measures and measures from the compensation mechanism.

Namely, for trawlers: 10% reduction of effort applied in 2020, 7,5% reduction of effort applied in Spain and France in 2021 (resp. 10% reduction in Italy in 2021), 6% reduction of effort applied in all 3 Member States in 2022, except for French and Spanish vessels active in GSA 7 in France where the reduction is of 4% from the compensation mechanism and, in 2023, 7% for Italy while 3,5% for 90% of the fleet from France and Spain from the compensation mechanism. For 2024, 9,5% effort reduction for trawlers and the compensation mechanism for the French and Spanish fleets (see Article 8 of the 2024 Fishing Opportunities Regulation). Finally, for 2025, the first year of the permanent phase of the MAP, the reductions in fishing effort for trawlers were calculated based on the most vulnerable stock (i.e. hake in EMU1 and hake in EMU2) and implemented based on the contributions of each Member State.

For EWG 25-11, the percentages of reduction of trawlers effort given in the scenarios are calculated in reference to the previous year, i.e. the 2025 Fishing Opportunities Regulation. Comparatively, during the MAP transition period (2020-2024), all trawling effort reductions were applied to the baseline (which corresponds to the average value of FDI fishing effort by fleet between 2015 and 2017).

Scenarios should be run till 2030 in order to estimate the short- and mid-term impact of the management measures from a stock as well as a socio-economic perspective. However, the interpretation of the model outputs should focus on achieving and maintaining MSY as well as identifying the best combination of measures for this.

To be noted, in all scenarios, to account for closure areas the catchability is adjusted to reflect the closure areas adopted in French, Italian and Spanish national legislations, see list of most recent closures in Annex A to be compiled with closures adopted in previous years.

Finally and importantly, the compensation measures implemented in 2025 allowed trawling vessels to be rewarded with additional fishing days in exchange for changes in fishing practices (e.g. spatial closures, increase in selectivity). Similar use of the compensation measures is expected in 2026 and after.

Table 1 Criteria for the identification of the most vulnerable stock (Art. 2.3 of the MAP) and the use of Fmsy ranges level in line with Art 4 and 6 of the West Med MAP

West MED MAP Fmsy ranges provisions
EMU or Effort group code in EMU 1 or 2?
Which is the most vulnerable stock?
Effort may be set above the Fmsy range if all concerned stocks are above Bpa (Art 4(5))? *-If **NO** Fupper cannot be used* *-If **YES**, conditions a,b,c could apply in particular c ("in order to limit variations in maximum allowable fishing effort between consecutive years to not more than 20%.")*

Is the most vulnerable stock below Bpa (Art 6(1))?

*-If **YES** only reduced Flow – Fmsy can be used + remedial measures*

Is the most vulnerable stock below Blim (Art 6(2))?

*-If **YES** only reduced Flow – Fmsy can be used + remedial measures*

Table 2 Management Scenarios for FO2026

Scenario for 2026 and beyond	**Trawler effort levels to achieve Fmsy of most vulnerable stock**	**Compensation Mechanism for trawlers**	**Set nets (GNS&GTR) Catch Limit for HKE levels** **As well as** **Effort level (fishing days) LLS**	**Catch Limit level for ARS and ARA**	**Conservation Measures (Spatial)**	**Conservation Measures (Selectivity)**
SQ what happened in 2025	Same effort in 2026 as in FO2025	Same level of compensation in 2026 and beyond as in 2025	Levels of 2025	level of 2025	keep closure areas adopted until 2025 (see Annex A)	2025 implementation: Full ES fleet, 2 thirds of FR fleet
A Fmsy in 2026 and beyond from trawling effort reduction only	2026: level of reduction that secures **Fmsy in 2026** and beyond for all stocks (based on most vulnerable stock in each EMU)	**A1.** 2026: 50% of compensation gained in 2025 implementation and same for 2027 and onwards **A2.** Same level of compensation in 2026 and beyond as in 2025	Levels of 2025	Level of 2025	keep closure areas adopted until 2025 (see Annex A)	2025 implementation: Full ES fleet, 2 thirds of FR fleet
B temporary selectivity	2026: level of reduction that secures **Fmsy in 2026** and beyond for all stocks (based on most vulnerable stock in each EMU)	Same level of compensation in 2026 and 2027 as in 2025 and no more	Levels of 2025	Level of 2025	keep closure areas adopted until 2025 (see Annex A)	increase in selectivity with **mandatory** square mesh size of 45mm in coastal and 50mm in deep-water in codend for all trawlers in ES, FR & IT in 2026 but then

		compensation after				**changed back to 40mm for all as of 2027**
C Permanent selectivity	2026: level of reduction that secures **Fmsy in 2026** and beyond for all stocks (based on most vulnerable stock in each EMU)	Same level of compensation in 2026 and beyond as in 2025	Levels of 2025	Level of 2025	keep closure areas adopted until 2025 (see Annex A)	**Permanent** increase in selectivity with **mandatory** selectivity measures (e.g. square mesh size of 45mm in coastal and 50mm in deep-water, codend length, flying doors) for all trawlers in ES, FR & IT in **2026 and beyond**
D 12-month deep closures	2026: level of reduction that secures **Fmsy in 2026** and beyond for all stocks (based on most vulnerable stock in each EMU)	**D1.** 2026: 50% of compensation gained in 2025 implementation and same for 2027 and onwards **D2.** Same level of compensation in 2026 and beyond as in 2025	Levels of 2025	Level of 2025	closure areas adopted until 2025 (see Annex A) with in addition an increase of **12-month closure areas for trawlers to deeper waters** (depths depending on stocks biology)	2025 implementation: Full ES fleet, 2 thirds of FR fleet
E <u>5%</u> 12-month closures in waters between 200m and 500m	2026: level of reduction that secures **Fmsy in 2026** and beyond for all stocks (based on most vulnerable stock in each EMU)	**E1.** 2026: 50% of compensation gained in 2025 implementation and same for 2027 and onwards **E2.** Same level of compensation in 2026 and beyond as in 2025	Levels of 2025	Level of 2025	closure areas adopted until 2025 (see Annex A) with in addition an increase to <u>5% of the fishing grounds between 200m and 500m</u> closed for 12-month for trawlers	2025 implementation: Full ES fleet, 2 thirds of FR fleet

F catch limits	2026: level of reduction that secures **Fmsy in 2026** and beyond for all stocks (based on most vulnerable stock in each EMU)	Same level of compensation in 2026 and beyond as in 2025	25% reduction from 2024 level (starting from 2026 and then maintained)	2025: level of reduction that secures Fmsy in 2026 for ARA and ARS	keep closure areas adopted until 2025 (see Annex A)	2025 implementation: Full ES fleet, 2 thirds of FR fleet

Please note that for each scenario the closure areas adopted between 2020 and 2025 should be taken into account (see Annex A).

In addition, for each scenario, the number of <u>authorised</u> trawling vessels should be, as per the latest estimations, 656 for Italian trawlers, 47 for French trawlers and 588 for Spanish trawlers. For longliners, the number of vessels are: 921 for France, 4051 for Italy and 1431 for Spain. Simulations including number of vessels for Italy in 2026 should account for the foreseen level of Permanent Cessation planned for 2026 as in the Directoral Decree n. 319453 of 17 July 2024[10]

C. Templates of tables for outputs

1) <u>Biological outputs for all West Med stocks</u>

Table 4.1: Total catches by management scenarios for 2026 for single-stock advice (based on STECF 25-09 outputs) and scenarios:

Stock	Single-stock catch advice for 2026	Catches per scenario 2026 (in tons)					
		a	b	c	d	e	f
One line per stock							

Table 4.2: Fishing Mortality (F) by management scenarios for 2026 for single-stock advice (based on STECF 25-09 outputs) and scenarios:

10 https://www.politicheagricole.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeAttachment.php/L/IT/D/1%252F0%252Fc%252FD.0c8f1aeb19e25af95efd/P/BLOB%3AID%3D21868/E/pdf?mode=download

Stock	Single-stock advice F for 2026	F(2026) resulting from scenario					
		a	b	c	d	e	f
One line per stock							

Legend:

	F2026 < Fmsy
	Fmsy < F2026 < Fpa
	Fpa < F2026 < Flim
	F2026 > Flim

Table 4.3: Spawning stock biomass (SSB) by management scenarios for 2026 for single-stock advice (based on STECF 25-09 outputs) and scenarios:

Stock	Single-stock advice SSB for 2026	SSB(2026) resulting from scenario					
		a	b	c	d	e	f
One line per stock							

Legend:

	SSB2026 >Bpa
	SSB2026 > Blim Fpa
	Blim < SSB2026 < Bpa
	SSB2026 < Blim

2) <u>Socio-economic outputs for all West Med stocks</u>

As in previous years since 2022, the scenarios' socio-economic outputs should be summarized in a table with estimates in 2026 (short-term) and by 2030 (mid-term), for each fleet segment and each Member State the landings of the main stocks could be used to calculate the socio-economic indicators:

Table 5. Synthesis table for scenarios

Scenarios	MS	Estimated level of F for target species in 2026	Estimated level of F for target species in 2026, resp. 2030	Estimated % landings of target species change 2020-2026	Estimated % landings of target species change 2020-2026, resp. 2030	Estimated % variation of profitability (gross profit margin) 2025-2026 and 2020-2026	Estimated % variation of profitability (gross profit margin) 2025-2026 and 2020-2026	Estimated % variation of FTE on-board 2020-2026	Estimated % variation of FTE on-board 2020-2026, resp. 2030	Estimated % Gross profit margin 2020-2026, resp. 2030	Estimated % variation of FTE on-board 2020-2026, resp. 2030	Estimated Number of fleet segments in green (which cover costs and may be financially viable) in 2026, resp. 2030
A	ES											
	FR											
	IT											
B	ES											
	FR											
	IT											
C	ES											
	FR											
	IT											
D	ES											
	FR											

	I T											
E	**E S**											
	F R											
	I T											