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-

Evaluation of Work Plans & Data  
Transmission failures  
(STECF-18-18)

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#### Abstract

Commission Decision of 25 February 2016 setting up a Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries, C(2016) 1084, OJ C 74, 26.2.2016, p. 4–10. The Commission may consult the group on any matter relating to marine and fisheries biology, fishing gear technology, fisheries economics, fisheries governance, ecosystem effects of fisheries, aquaculture or similar disciplines. This report deals with the evaluation of DCF National Work Plan amendments for 2019, Data Transmission issues, procedures for the submission and evaluation of Annual Reports and the revision of the EU Multi-annual programme for data collection (EU-MAP). The report was reviewed by the STECF at its 59<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting held in Brussels, Belgium from 12-16 November 2018.

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## **SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COMMITTEE FOR FISHERIES (STECF) - Evaluation of Work Plans & Data Transmission failures (STECF-18-18)**

### **Request to the STECF**

The STECF is requested to review the report of the STECF Expert Working Group meeting, evaluate the findings and make any appropriate comments and recommendations.

### **STECF observations**

The EWG 18-18 met in Bremerhaven from 5 to 9 November 2018 to evaluate national Work Plan (WP) amendments submitted by Member States for 2019. A number of ToRs were subsequently added for the EWG. The EWG was asked to further evaluate Data Transmission issues (DT issues) flagged in 2018 and to elaborate on potential improvements to the current processes for the evaluation of DT issues. The EWG 18-18 was further asked to work on the revision of the Annual Report (AR) evaluation template and AR submission guidance, to brainstorm on the revision of the Union Multi-annual Programme for Data Collection (EU-MAP) and to evaluate the resubmitted 2017 AR of Romania, Czech Republic and Slovakia. STECF notes that this was a substantial increase in the work-load compared to the original agenda.

Since the meeting took place the week before STECF PLEN 18-03, the EWG report was not yet available to PLEN 18-03. The following STECF opinion and recommendations are consequently based on the presentation of outcomes from the EWG 18-18 meeting made by the chairperson and subsequent discussion among members during the STECF plenary meeting 18-03.

#### *Evaluation of Member States' amendments of Work Plans*

STECF notes that the EWG-18-18 was provided with the WP tables and text of 16 Member States, documents explaining the amendments to the WPs and access to supporting information, such as relevant EWG reports (from EWG 16-16, 17-04, 17-07 and 17-17), ad-hoc expert reports on WP evaluation criteria, relevant ICES reports and the latest Liaison Meeting report.

STECF observes that in order to be consistent with the evaluation of WPs carried out in the previous years, the same evaluation criteria and procedures were used this year for evaluation.

STECF observes that for 6 Member States, the amendments were found satisfactory by the EWG. The remaining 10 MS were contacted by the Commission during the EWG with the aim to solve the issues raised by the EWG before the end of the meeting. For 5 of these, the issues could be solved. For the remaining 5, there were still outstanding (although mostly minor) issues at the end of the EWG.

STECF notes that Member States undertook significant efforts to address previous STECF concerns and to adapt their Work Plans to e.g. changes in fleet structures or to new end-users data needs. Several of the shortcomings identified in the evaluation process were of a more formal nature, such as for instance incomplete descriptions, inconsistencies between tables etc. Most of these issues could be solved during the EWG by correspondence between DG MARE and the Member States.

STECF further notes that the EWG 18-18 developed a template for future submissions of Work Plan amendments to be sent by the Commission to Member States, requesting (i) a table listing the WP changes, clearly identifying where changes occur, supported by a justification, (ii) a Word document with tracked changes as well as Excel tables with changes marked in red, and (iii) 'clean' versions of the revised WP where changes should be accepted / removed. This would significantly facilitate the work of the EWG and reduce the otherwise time consuming process of locating the changes before the review process could be initiated.

#### *Annual Report guidance and evaluation*

Two new templates have been introduced in 2018: a draft template for the AR itself (including a guidance document), and a template for its evaluation. The first template was used by Member States before submission of the 2018 ARs in May 2018. This AR template including guidance for submission was afterwards published in August 2018 (Commission Implementing Decision (EU)

2018/1283). The second template for the evaluation of ARs was used by EWG 18-10 in June 2018 for the first time.

The EWG 18-18 was asked to review this AR evaluation template. Additionally, since the AR template including guidance for submission has already been published, the EWG was also asked to further develop a non-legal 'Questions & Answers' document initiated by the Commission for the submission of the Annual Reports. STECF notes that the 'Questions & Answers' document provide more user-friendly guidance to Member States with regard to submission of ARs. Moreover, the AR evaluation sheet was amended to ensure an efficient STECF evaluation procedure.

#### *Romanian, Czech and Slovakian 2017 Annual Reports*

STECF observes that the Romanian, Czech and Slovakian 2017 AR were re-submitted to the Commission after EWG 18-10 in June and the EWG 18-18 was asked to re-evaluate these ARs. STECF notes that the ARs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia were both submitted for the first time in 2018 (reference year 2017). The AR of the Czech Republic addresses only economic data collection in aquaculture, whilst the AR of Slovakia addresses only economic data collection in both aquaculture and processing industry. The evaluation of these ARs by EWG 18-18 concluded that the AR of the Czech Republic was satisfactory, and that only very minor issues remain to be addressed for Slovakia. Conversely, STECF notes that EWG 18-18 considered that issues remain with the Romanian AR, and that the Romanian WP will have to be re-submitted to allow efficient comparisons with the AR.

#### *Improvement in the evaluation of Data Transmission issues*

STECF notes that PLEN 18-02, when reviewing the EWG 18-10 report, pointed out that the evaluation of Data Transmission issues (DT issues) made significant progress in the last years, but still requires work, predominantly on the end-users side but also during the evaluation.

Following the discussions at PLEN 18-02, the DTMT platform (Data Transmission Monitoring Tool, <https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/dcf/compliance>) for reporting DT issues by end-users was further developed and a guidance document for end-users was drafted. The document was used as background for the discussion at the EWG 18-18.

STECF notes that for the first time and in line with STECF suggestions aiming at 'real-time' monitoring of DT issues, DT issues from 2018 data calls, and evaluated by several STECF EWGs, were uploaded on the DTMT platform to be assessed during the same year. STECF notes, however, that the EWG 18-18 faced a lack of time to go through all the DT issues in detail and focused instead on the improvement of procedures for the evaluation of DT issues.

In order to ensure that the evaluation of the DT issues are carried out in a timely manner, the EWG 18-18 had proposed to evaluate the DT issues identified during the 1st half of the year during the November EWG meeting and the issues identified during the 2nd half of the year during the June EWG meeting. STECF suggests an alternative option, where the DT issues identified between November (year Y) and June (Year Y+1) be dealt with in the EWG on evaluation of ARs in June (Y+1) and between July (Y+1) and November (Y+1) be dealt with in the EWG on evaluation of WPs in November (Y+1). This has the advantage that ARs evaluated in June and the fleet economic data call issues relate to the same data collection year.

#### *EU-MAP revision*

STECF observes that the current EU-MAP was published in 2016 and implemented for 2017-2019. Various fora (including for instance RCGs, PGECON, end-users) have recommended amendments. An ad-hoc contract was awarded by DG MARE to collate these recommendations, and the results of this contract work were presented to the EWG. The EWG 18-18 formulated questions for the consultation of RCGs and PGECON regarding the need to revise text and tables of the EU-MAP. STECF supports this process.

#### **STECF conclusions**

The following STECF conclusions are based on the outcomes of the EWG 18-18 presented by the chairperson during the STECF PLEN 18-03 and a preliminary draft of the EWG report; the final EWG report was not yet available at the time of writing.

STECF reiterates its previous conclusion from PLEN 18-02 that the most important element in evaluating Member States' performance is whether the data has been transmitted and is of sufficient use to the end-users. It is therefore of paramount importance that end users are entering DT issues in the DTMT tool in a coherent manner and that these are being evaluated in a timely and objective manner.

STECF notes that some progress to improve the current evaluation process of DT issues, WPs and ARs have been made through the drafting of guidance document for end-users for reporting DT issues and by improving the evaluation template for ARs and 'Questions and Answers' document regarding ARs, during the EWG. Also, STECF notes that a meeting is planned to discuss DT issues as regards the Mediterranean and Black Sea, in January 2019. However, STECF notes that further improvements as described below, are needed to ensure an efficient and objective evaluation process.

With regard to DT issues, STECF concludes that the guidance document for end-users drafted by JRC is a step forward and will provide useful guidance to end-users on how to use the DTMT tool as well as how to rank DT issues. STECF suggests that the guidance document should be further developed during the next STECF EWG on evaluation of ARs in 2019. At the same time, the DTMT itself needs to be reviewed and subsequently amended by the JRC developers to provide a tool that meets the requirements of all parties concerned with data transmission issues.

STECF further reiterates its advice from PLEN 18-02 that the step of consultation between end users and Member States before reporting the DT issue in the DTMT is currently not fully efficient for all data calls, as seen from the high number of DT issues reported in some of those. Increased consultation between Member States and end users after the completion of the working group and before the reporting of data failures should help decrease the high number of issues considered 'unsatisfactory' which are then flagged to DG MARE. STECF concludes that a scoping meeting of key stakeholders from all regions and including members from STECF plenary, RCGs, DG MARE, JRC and Member States is needed to discuss how to improve the current process of assessing the DT issues. Alternatively, the Liaison meeting or DG MARE DCF coordination meetings with national correspondents could be used as a platform to start the discussions.

As regards the evaluation of ARs, WPs and DT issues, STECF reiterates its conclusion from PLEN 18-02 that there is a need to adopt a more consistent and less subjective approach to evaluating ARs, WPs and DT issues and suggests that in addition to the existing guidelines for evaluators, a separate stand-alone document containing a comprehensive list of assessment criteria for both ARs and DT issues should be prepared ahead of the 2019 evaluation of Member States ARs. Such a document is intended to be a tool to enhance efficiency and objectivity and not to have any legal status. STECF notes that an ad-hoc contract of experts in the field could possibly address this issue.

STECF notes that the terms of reference for the EWGs dealing with the evaluation of WPs and ARs have increased continuously over time which has resulted in less time for experts to assess the AR, WPs and DT issues as well as for ensuring consistency in the assessment results by plenary discussions. For this reason, STECF concludes that additional ToRs for these meetings should be minimised as far as possible so that more time can be given to the evaluation.

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## **REPORT TO THE STECF**

### **EXPERT WORKING GROUP ON Evaluation of Work Plans & Data Transmission failures (EWG-18-18)**

**Bremerhaven, Germany,  
5-9 November 2018**

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

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The STECF Expert Working Group (EWG) 18-18 met in Bremerhaven, Germany, from 5 to 9 November 2018, (i) to evaluate amendments in Member States' (MS) national Work Plans (WPs) under the Data Collection Framework (DCF) for the year 2019, (ii) to discuss improvements for the guidance of MS with regard to the submission of DCF Annual Reports (ARs), improvements for the evaluation of ARs and Data Transmission issues, and (iii) discuss the revision of the EU Multi-annual Programme for Data Collection (EU-MAP).

The work was conducted by 24 independent experts (see the list of participants in section 7). The Terms of Reference are presented below and the agenda is included in Annex 1.

## 1.1 Terms of Reference for EWG-18-18

The aim of this EWG was:

1. To evaluate the amended national Work Plans (WP) submitted by Member States and the regional Work Plans submitted by RCMs/RCGs respectively, by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2018, in terms of conformity, scientific relevance of the data and quality of the methods and procedures.
2. To schedule the Annual Report template and on data transmission failure reporting, building on the outcomes of previous STECF work.
3. To preliminarily assess the outcomes of a contract on the state of play of the EU-MAP and of potential recommendations for revision since the entry into force of the 2017-2019 EU-MAP.

### *Background*

#### 1. WP amendments

The Work Plan describes the planning of data collection on a national or regional level. Under the EMFF, the MS Operational Programmes must be supplemented by a Work Plan for data collection (Reg. 508/2014, Article 21)<sup>1</sup>, which has replaced the National Programme. The deadline for submission of Work Plans to COM is 31<sup>st</sup> October of the year preceding the application in a specified format<sup>2</sup>. The evaluation criteria for the Work Plans were discussed for the first time in 2016 in relevant DCF groups (Regional Coordination Meetings, Liaison Meeting) and compiled by a number of ad-hoc contracts. In addition, the COM compiled the general principles to be followed during the evaluation. A first evaluation of Work Plans (2017-2019) took place in November 2016 during EWG 16-16 ([Evaluation of DCF National work plans and regional plans for 2017](#)). The evaluation of Work Plan revisions for 2018 took place in November 2017 during EWG 17-13 ([Evaluation of DCF National work plans amendments for 2018/19](#)), following resubmission of 2017-2019 Work Plans by 17 Member States.

#### 2. Annual Reports and Data Transmission Failures

The new Annual Report template has been developed by EWG 17-17 ([Compilation of the new DCF AR template](#)) and finalised in the technical meeting of February 2018. This year was the first time that the new AR evaluation template was used by STECF EWG 18-10 ([Evaluation of Annual Reports 2017](#)).

In view of ensuring a coherent evaluation of the 2018 Annual Reports, the evaluation template should be revised and further clarification of the Guidance for the submission of the Annual Reports should be provided.

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

<sup>2</sup> Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2016/1701 of 19.8.2016 laying down rules on the format for the submission of work plans for data collection in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors

The current procedure on the evaluation of data transmission failures does not provide for a timely improvement of data collection. It currently takes longer than one year to finalize the cycle. For the first time and as a pilot exercise, DT failures from 2018 data calls, and evaluated by several STECF EWG, are being uploaded on the online compliance platform to be assessed during the same year.

### 3. Future EU-MAP

The EU-MAP<sup>3</sup> is the legal basis for data collection in the above mentioned sectors for the period 2017-2019. The EU-MAP provides for details on collection by Member States of biological, environmental and socio-economic data, the list of surveys at sea and the thresholds for data collection. The current EU-MAP is based on the previous legal framework<sup>4</sup> on the data collection legislation and was limited to a 3-year period. The, so called, RECAST<sup>5</sup>, which is the Data Collection Framework Regulation in force, establishes a multiannual plan for data collection.

In order to prepare the review of the EU-MAP after 2019, consultations with experts (STECF, RCGs, PGECON, MSs and other stakeholders) should start on the basis of a contract whose results should be presented in the EWG 18-18. The final report issued from the contract should provide an overall mapping and ranking of recommendations on EU-MAP revision since EWG 16-01 ([Evaluation of Proposals to Revise DCF National Programmes for 2016](#)) or since the entry into force of the 2017-2019 EU-MAP as well as a listing of most important points for revision.

#### *Specific tasks for the EWG*

##### 1. WP amendments

Experts are invited to evaluate the amendments submitted by Member States on their Work Plans and/or the regional Work Plans for 2019, in accordance with Article 10 of Regulation (EU) No 2017/1004<sup>6</sup>, taking into account:

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

Taking into consideration that not all MS will re-submit their national Work Plans and in order to be consistent with the evaluation carried out the 2 previous years, the same evaluation criteria and procedure will be used for this year's evaluation (see below). The EWG should produce the following:

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

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

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<sup>3</sup> Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2016/1251 on the multiannual Union plan for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. OJ L 207, 1.8.2016, p. 113

<sup>4</sup> Council Regulation (EU) No 199/2008 of 25 February 2008 concerning the establishment of a Community framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the common fisheries policy. OJ L60, 5.3.2008. p.1

<sup>5</sup> European Parliament and Council Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 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. OJ L 157, 20.6.2017, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Regulation (EU) No 2017/1004 of the European Parliament and of the Council 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

The evaluation will be based on the evaluation criteria used by the STECF EWG 17-13. The EWG should pay particular attention that the submitted Work Plans address the issues raised by STECF EWGs 16-16 and 17-13 and COM assessment grids during last year's evaluation.

## 2. Annual Reports and Data Transmission Failures

Based on the outcomes of STECF EWG 18-10 ([Evaluation of Annual Reports](#)), this EWG is invited to align the new Annual Report template, the Guidance for the submission of the Annual Reports and the template for the evaluation of Annual Reports.

With regard to data transmission issues, based on conclusions of EWG 18-10, to establish a final classification of the data transmission issues, the treatment of each of the data transmission issues for the possible cases and draft a guidance document for the use of end users, STECF and the COM.

To do a pilot evaluation of data transmission failures from this year (real time) to cross check against the implementation (Annual reports evaluated in June 2018).

## 3. Future EU-MAP

On the EU-MAP revision:

- Experts should have a first discussion on the outcomes of the contract, by analysing its results, providing further input on the issued recommendations and proposed solutions for new data or data which should be collected differently under a revised EU-MAP.
- Provide a summary of conclusions following this analysis and update where relevant the contract final output (recommendations, lists of consultation for RCGs etc)

Shortly before the EWG meeting, as **additional ToRs**, the EWG was asked to re-evaluate the Annual Reports 2017 of Romania, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as these could not be evaluated by the EWG 18-10 due to missing information.

## 1.2 Structure of the report

Sections 2-6 present the results produced by the STECF-EWG 18-18. Section 2 contains a description of the Work Plan evaluation process of the EWG (ToR 1). In section 3, the EWG results regarding the improvement of guidance for the submission of Annual Reports are given and the revision of the evaluation sheets for Annual Reports is described (ToR 2, first part). Section 4 reports on ways forward with regard to guidance for data end-users in terms of Data Transmission issues (ToR 2, second part). Section 5 focuses on recommendations for the revision of the EU-MAP (ToR 3), while section 6 provides a description of the re-evaluation of the Romanian, Czech and Slovakian Annual Report 2017 (additional ToR).



## 2 EVALUATION OF MEMBER STATES' AMENDMENTS OF WORK PLANS FOR 2019

### 2.1 Background information

To carry out the evaluation, the EWG was provided with the Work Plan (WP) tables and WP text (boxes) of all MS that submitted WP amendments, documents explaining the amendments, access to supporting information, such as relevant EWG reports (from EWG 16-16, 17-04, 17-13 and 18-10), a 'questions & answers' document to guide MS in the submission of Annual Reports, a guidance document on Data Transmission issues for end-users, an expert report on the revision of the EU-MAP and the files for the re-evaluation of the Romanian, Czech and Slovakian Annual Reports 2017.

For a full list of background documents, see Section 9.

### 2.2 Evaluation criteria, sheets and procedures

The EWG used the same evaluation criteria and evaluation sheets for the Work Plan (WP) amendments as the previous EWGs on WP evaluation (EWGs 16-16 and 17-13).

Overall, 16 MS submitted amended WPs. MS DCF National Correspondents were asked by DG MARE to be available during the EWG to answer eventual questions for clarification raised by the EWG. For 4 MS, the EWG found all necessary information to evaluate the amendments and concluded that there is no further action needed by the MS or follow-up needed by the MS or/and DG MARE. These were: Bulgaria, Hungary, Ireland and Latvia. The remaining 12 MS (Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom) were contacted by the Commission during the EWG with the aim to solve the issues bilaterally ('ping-pong') before the end of the EWG. For 7 of these, all issues could be clarified during the EWG. For the remaining 5 MS, however, some of the raised issues were still outstanding at the end of the EWG: The Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Lithuania and Malta.

### 2.3 Formation of sub-groups and task allocation

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

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

Sections	Sub-group	Expertise
Biological sampling of stocks and fisheries, by-catch and environmental impacts of fisheries (sections 1A, 1B, 1C and 1F; Pilot study 2; sections 4 and 5A)	1	Biologists
Recreational fisheries, anadromous & catadromous species (sections 1D and 1E; Pilot study 1); Data availability (section 6A)	2	Biologists
Research surveys at sea (sections 1G and 1H)	3	Biologists

Transversal data (section 2); economic & social data (sections 3A, 3B, 3C and 5B; Pilot studies 3 and 4); Data availability (section 6A); section 7	4	Economists
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## 2.4 Evaluation process

Upon request by DG MARE, 10 MS had announced to submit amended Work Plans (WPs) before the legal deadline (31 Oct). After the deadline, however, it became clear that 16 MS had submitted amendments. Therefore, the original agenda for the EWG 18-18 had to be changed and the WP evaluation was started directly after sub-group formation (section 2.3). The EWG work on ToR 3 (section 5) had to be conducted by a sub-set of experts in parallel to the WP evaluation, to be able to finish this work until the end of the meeting.

MS generally replied fast to the requests of the EWG for clarification, which helped to finalise most of the WP evaluation. DG MARE appreciated this effort very much, including those MS who asked for more time to address the EWG questions. This procedure allowed DG MARE to plan and conduct the acceptance of WP amendments during the EWG and thereafter efficiently.

### Biological sampling

The biological sampling of stocks and fisheries of 13 amended WPs for 2019 was reviewed by a subgroup of 6-10 experts (6 in the beginning and 10 after completion of ToR 3 during the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the meeting). The work was distributed between experts that worked in pairs, each reviewing three to five MS depending on the complexity of the amendments of the WP. Questions needing coordination were discussed within the subgroup and issues brought in plenary for full approval.

It was found that the amended WPs were mostly a follow-up of the STECF comments (EWG 17-13) and bilateral communication between the European Commission and the MS.

In relation to Table 1F, two MS had filled expected occurrences within the onshore sampling programmes for groups of vulnerable species (i.e. marine mammals, birds, reptiles) that was thought to be highly unlikely. This issue was addressed with the MS and solved during the meeting.

### Recreational fisheries and diadromous species

The sections for recreational fisheries (1D), diadromous species (1E) and pilot study 1 of the resubmitted work plans were reviewed by a subgroup of three experts. The number of experts was optimal for conducting this type of analysis. In most cases, the amendments were editorial or concerned minor updates of WP text or tables. Most of the MS replied to the questions of the EWG forwarded by DG MARE to the MS during the EWG. There were only minor issues, but precise clarification was essential to avoid inaccuracies in future AR evaluation.

Regarding pilot study 1, one issue was considered not acceptable regarding postponing the pilot study until 2021, as this exceeds the current legal EU-MAP time frame. Other issues were acceptable and apply to updates of dates, intermediate results or RCG recommendations.

### Research surveys at sea

The subgroup evaluating the modules related to surveys at sea (1G, 1H) worked on 10 amended Work Plans. The majority of the resubmissions were a result of the feedback by EWG 17-13, and in most cases, the amendments were editorial.

### Transversal, economic and social data

The subgroup evaluating the modules on transversal data (section 2) and economic and social data (sections 3 and 5B) worked on 14 amended Work Plans. After conducting a joint evaluation of an amended WP, the experts split into two sub-groups.

In some cases, the quality of MS's replies and changes implemented in the Work Plans were not precise and clear, making it extremely difficult to identify changes and to make comparisons. Some MS, such as France, only replied that they made changes, without specifying which table, column, or line was amended. Therefore, it would be advisable to produce a template for WP amendments in order to improve the effectiveness of the evaluation process (see section 2.6).

For some MS, an inconsistency between Tables 2A and Table 3A was observed. It was difficult for the EWG to check the correspondence between tables without a dedicated tool. A tool to check the consistency between the columns (segments, length classes, variables, etc.) and the corresponding information from the tables in the EU-MAP would be very useful.

## **2.5 Evaluation results**

The detailed evaluation results by MS are given in Annex 1.

## **2.6 Template for future submissions of Work Plan amendments**

The EWG 18-18 acknowledged the comprehensive preparation of the Member States' revised work plans. The EWG found it difficult to evaluate the Work Plan amendments, as no guidance was sent to the MS on how to document the amendments. Updates were received in different formats, varying from fully documented with information on all changes to just a list of the modified table/text. This meant that the EWG had to spend a considerable amount of time to locate the amendments before the evaluation could start. The EWG concluded that the overall evaluation of the revised Work Plans would be improved by the provision of a list of amendments and justifications, which should be provided by the MS with their updated submission. A template for future reporting on the WP amendments is provided in Annex 2.

Future updated Work Plans should include two versions of the text and tables, one with all changes highlighted and one version in a clean format.

### 3 GUIDANCE FOR SUBMISSION OF ANNUAL REPORTS

#### 3.1 Guidance for the submission of Annual Reports

##### 'Questions & answers' document

The EWG 18-18 revised a 'Questions & Answers' document provided by DG MARE, deleted confusion or unnecessary guidance text and added text for Table 1F. The revised guidance is given below.

Table/Section	Variable	Issue	Guidance
General		In case a MS submitted a revised version of the WP in October 2017, but this revision also included some information for 2017, will the evaluators consider only the 2017 version of the WP to assess the achievement against the WP and to check for any deviation? Or can they also check WP 2018-2019?	The MS should clearly highlight in the 'AR comments' column that evaluators should also check WP 2018-2019, where additional/different information is provided. The MS is encouraged to be as specific and factual as possible, when indicating the data it is referring to and the part of the WP that the evaluators need to check.
1F	Fish, Mammals, Birds, Reptiles, Others, (Y/N/NA)	There is an inconsistency between the header section of the AR and the instructions in the guidelines. In the AR, the statement is ' <i>has there been occurrences of by-catch?</i> '. In the guidelines, it states that recording marked by 'Y' can also include zero bycatch (no by-catch recorded), as long as the observer was looking for by-caught individuals.	STECF considers that this issue can be addressed during the revision of the EU MAP in the part relating to the format of the WP. One of the possible solutions can be to incorporate (a) dedicated column(s) to Table 4A and remove Table 1F from both the WP and the AR. As long as coding is not consistent, no overview of the effect of fisheries on bycatch species can be given (STECF 18-10).
2A, 3A, 3B, 3C	Segmentation/reference year.	In case of changes in the segmentation of fleet, processing industry or aquaculture between the WP reference year and the AR reference year how should that be indicated in the AR template? For example: In the year 2018, the segmentation changed. This means that the information presented in the AR of 2019 referring to the reference year 2018, will not correspond to the WP submitted in 2016.	If this arises provide a specific reference in the 'AR Comments' column. In this way evaluators can see where the discrepancies lie and if these can be explained.
Section 3	Social variables	Since the collection of social variables is only required every three years, what should be put in the cells of the years for which there is no such collection? Zeros in the cells or NA?	'NA' is sufficient for the years when the collection is not carried out.
Table 3A, 3B, 3C	variables	The WP was approved with all the economic and social variables grouped in the sample line (by techniques, species group, data source). The AR asks for frame population and achieved sampled number by variable. Should separate lines be inserted for each variable and segment, or should an	The MS should provide data by variable for each segment and highlight new rows in grey. It is advisable to submit a revised WP following the guidelines.

		overall average of the achieved sampling be provided?	
Text Box 5B	QAF	During PGECON meeting 2018, the following was discussed and highlighted: 'according to the guidelines, information requested under point 1 might be misinterpreted to imply that information should be supplied, whereas this is meant as background information for what follows in the Text Box.'	Point 1 of Text Box 5B is of explanatory nature rather than something which should be answered by MS as all the issues are already addressed in Section 3A-C and in subsequent points of Text Box 5B.

*Definitions to aid Member States with the submission of Annual Reports*

Under the current framework, only the CFP (Reg. 1380/2013), DCF (Reg. 2017/1004) and EU-MAP (Dec 2016/1251) contain sets of definitions which aid the understanding of the legislation by MS. These do not cover all aspects – they build on each other and only new definitions are included in the new DCF Regulation. The Implementing Decisions for the WP template (2016/1701) and AR template (2018/1283) currently have no separate chapters on Definitions at all.

It is apparent that as EU-MAP continues to adapt to current management needs, new definitions may be required to aid MS in understanding what is required in terms of legal obligations and content of the WPs and ARs. Reviewing the definitions already detailed by the various Regulations, it is useful to have definitions covering both basic and more complex terms.

To include all definitions in the new EU MAP would be a major task but in order to provide guidance for MS, it would be beneficial to have all definitions as a single source. Whether this is as an annex to the guidance notes or at a defined web source should be agreed.

**3.2 Revision of Annual Report evaluation template**

The EWG 18-18 revised the evaluation template that was used by the EWG 18-10 (Evaluation of Annual Reports 2017, June 2018) and aligned the questions therein with the recently published Annual Report template (Commission Implementing Decision 2018/1283). Some questions were found to be redundant or misleading and were deleted, other questions were re-formulated to improve clarity and/or language.

The revised AR evaluation template is provided in Annex 3.

#### **4 IMPROVEMENTS IN THE EVALUATION OF DATA TRANSMISSION**

The EWG 18-18 was originally requested to evaluate Data Transmission (DT) issues recently reported by end-users for 2018. Due to a lack of time, however, the EWG did not evaluate these issues in detail, but focused on the improvement of procedures around DT issues.

The EWG 18-18 reviewed a draft guidance document for end-users, provided by the JRC (Annex 4), to improve consistency across different end-users of scientific data with regard to expressing issues with the data they received from Member States. The EWG found this document very helpful and would suggest that end-users comment on its utility when expressing and categorizing DT issues. The EWG recommends that these comments are taken into consideration by the next EWG on the evaluation of DT issues.

As a further improvement, the EWG suggested that the DT issues of the first half of the year should be evaluated at the November meeting (EWG on WP amendments) and the DT issues of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the year should be evaluated at the June meeting (EWG on AR evaluation).

The EWG considered the process conducted by ICES, with regard to filtering the DT issues in a dialogue with the end-user groups and MS, very helpful and would suggest similar mechanisms/systems for other end-users. In the case of the STECF as an end-user, for example, an extended role of the chair of an STECF EWG that uses the data could be to filter the DT issues to only leave those that are considered DT failures. The EWG, however, considers the recently implemented process of conducting a data preparation meeting several weeks before the EWG using the data as very important. This procedure should be kept for all STECF EWGs using DCF data.

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REVISION OF THE EU-MAP

Based on the contract report on the state-of-play of the recommendations for the revision of the EU-MAP, the EWG extracted the main points:

### 5.1 Biological variables

**All biological variables to be collected and the protocols used should be coordinated at the marine region level based on end user needs. The bodies to ensure that this takes place are the RCGs in liaison with end-users.**

#### *Commercial fisheries*

- Biological data to be collected will depend on end-users needs, which will be prioritized at the RCG – this requires good engagement with the end-users. Tables will continually need updating as end-user requirements change with respect to management and assessment needs.

#### *By-catches*

- Most data on protected species collected under the EU-MAP cannot be used for the estimation of absolute numbers of by-catch, as they are not designed for this specific purpose.
- Where data collected during observer trips are not considered to provide sufficient data on incidental by-catch for end-user needs, other methodologies should be implemented by Member States to be coordinated at marine region level and be based on end-user needs.

#### *Small-scale fisheries (SSF)*

- This fleet (mostly < 12 m vessel length) has some exemptions under the Control Regulation (EU Reg. 1224/2009). There is no obligation to register the catch in the logbook, landing declaration or sales notes for vessels under 10 m. Furthermore, catch under 50 kg per species do not have to be registered in logbooks or sales notes. Also catch up to 30 kg/person sold directly for private consumption does not have to be registered in sales notes either. In the current Control Regulation proposal, however, there is an obligation to register all catches. The exemption from reporting catches of less than 50 kg in logbooks is removed for all categories of vessels.
- Data collection on biological data (length frequencies, PETS by-catch etc.) and methodologies to collect these data needs to be evaluated. Although available data are scarce, it seems that SSF can contribute significantly to the overall discard rate and amount of by-catch of particular inshore species, depending on gear type and management restrictions.
- When prioritizing data needs and depicting a regional sampling plan for SSF, the RCGs should take into account the following issues: Although SSF contributions to total landings are often lower compared to other size segments, underreporting of landings can give a biased view of this contribution. For this reason, SSF should be considered separately from the main commercial fisheries.

#### *Marine Recreational Fisheries (MRF)*

- More knowledge is needed to effectively manage MRF that can only be produced through scientific studies into key data gaps including (but not limited to): non-monetized benefits of MRF; methods for partitioning catches between recreational and commercial fisheries; and the impacts of post-release mortality.
- The species list in Table 3 needs to include all species where catches impact on assessments to ensure future multi-species surveys cover all important stocks.

#### *Anadromous and catadromous species*

- Evaluation and update the list of required variables for diadromous species is needed, given that the life stages differ to those for most marine fish.
- Before setting the rules of the new EU-MAP, it would be desirable to discuss extending sea trout sampling to all areas of their natural distribution.

#### *Research surveys at sea*

- This has been covered by RCG comments on EWG 18-04 in preparation for a survey review in 2019.

#### *Geographical units*

- The allocation of geographical units should be revised according to Annex 5.

## **5.2 Transversal variables**

Transversal data are mainly collected through the Control Regulation (EU Reg. 1224/2009). So far, the variable “fishing time” is still optional in the Control Regulation (CR). As this variable is requested by EU-MAP, it would be advisable to make this variable mandatory in the CR. Moreover, it is suggested to request data haul-by-haul (trawls) or fishing-activity-by-fishing-activity in the logbook.

Some inconsistencies have been observed by relevant bodies (e.g. RCG NS&EA 2018) concerning the declaration of métier-related information. This issue is supposed to be addressed by guidelines rather than by EU-MAP legislation.

VMS data have turned out to add considerable value to scientific work in the context of the EU-MAP. However, in some MS, a restrictive interpretation of Article 12 of the Control Regulation has been experienced, where accessibility of VMS data for scientific purposes is not explicitly mentioned. This issue is included in the proposal for the revised CR. Any effort should be made to have this aspect included in the final version.

The EWG 18-18 points out that in the proposal for the revised CR, transversal data are being declared as “personal data”. As personal data are to be stored no longer than five years, scientific analyses of historical data (= older than five years) could no longer be performed. It has to be assured that CR data will be available for scientific purposes without a temporal limitation.

## **5.3 Economic and social variables**

Taking into account the preparatory compilation of relevant recommendations for EU-MAP revision, the EWG 18-18 recommends to take into account two documents which were prepared by the PGECON chair: “Definition of socio economic variables described in EU MAP.xlsx” and “Methodologies for the socio-economic data described in EU MAP.docx” (Annexes 6 and 7). Both documents were recommended by STECF EWG 16-01.



Both the table of definitions and the compilation of methodologies incorporate all suggestions and amendments that have been made by different groups (e.g. STECF, PGECON).

Regarding the revision of EU-MAP Table 5A (Economic variables for the fleet), the variable "Long/short Debt" should be changed into "Gross debt".

According to that table of definitions, the following issues from Table 7 (Economic variables for the aquaculture sector) are still pending further clarification:

- "Other income"
- "Livestock used"

The Methodological Report provides specifications for procedures which have been applied for data collection and data processing. The Methodological Report is recommended to be submitted by MS accompanying Work Plans and Annual Reports. This methodological document also covers most of the requirements on quality assurance.

Both the table of definitions and the document on the methodological report are recommended to be made legally binding guidelines within the future EU-MAP. The documents are supposed to be a "living document", i.e. whenever amendments have been regarded necessary, the documents should be updated accordingly. Any changes to these documents should be approved by STECF.

Details on the collection of social variables are provided in the "Definition of socio economic variables" table (Annex 7) as well. So far, social data have not been delivered. As a consequence, no experience has been gained on the feasibility of collection or on the use of the data. A revision of the extent, the frequency or the resolution of social data to be collected is advisable once the data call on social variables has been evaluated.

The EWG 18-18 reiterates the recommendation issued by EWG 14-02: "... any future legislation on data collection should address economic and social data in separate sections in order to distinguish between the two fields."

For fish processing, there are a few aspects which should be further scrutinized during the EU-MAP revision. The EWG 17-16 recommended building future fish processing reports using Eurostat data as the main source of data and complemented by DCF data if available. The EWG 17-16 proposed to discuss the main differences across both datasets and discuss feasibility of potential improvements to the report (e.g. use of PRODCOM data, reporting and analysis by products/segments).

The Eurostat data sets do not completely match the EU-MAP requirements. Eurostat provides data only for companies with 10 or more employees and only for companies having declared primary activity under NACE code 10.20. Moreover, unpaid labour, raw material and employment by gender are not provided by Eurostat.

The reason why MS are using a different approach (specific survey for EU-MAP) is a different definition in the reference population. This (mis)match should be further analysed. Generally, it would be helpful to understand why these differences exist, clarifying if they are due to differences in the reference population or in definition of variables under EUROSTAT and DCF.

#### Socio-economic data collection on recreational fisheries

ICES WGRFS (2018) mentions the idea of a socio-economic data collection on recreational fisheries ("In designing an economic data collection programme, it is important to identify the end use of the data and then the methodology can be developed."). The EWG 18-18 states that this idea is too premature to further comment on it. Given the expected extra effort and costs imposed by such a programme, WGRFS should firstly detail the end user of such data, the required frequency, and the content. Moreover, a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of such a programme should be provided.

## **5.4 Questions for consultation with the Regional Coordination Groups**

Based on the observations above (section 5.1), the following questions were drafted by the EWG 18-18 for consultation with the RCGs:

#### Table 1A: Stocks in Union waters

- Addition of *Isurus oxyrinchus* and *Lamna nasus* in tuna RFMO areas as detailed in Table 1C is required
- Each stock should be a separate record
- Should Table 1A contain species priority as given in Table 1C?
- Should this requirement be given by the end-user in the first instance and then revised by the RCG responsible for those stocks, taking into account national Work Plan & regional Work Plan resources to optimise data collection? This would form the basis for the revision of EU MAP.
- As regional Work Plans override national WPs, Table 1A could be revised as necessary (species list and priority) during the lifetime of the EU MAP (and used by the relevant RCG) and the final updated table - with amendments - would become the basis for a revised EU MAP.

#### Table 1B: Stocks of outermost regions of the Union

- Table 1B needs to be revised to cover only species in outermost regions' EEZs not covered by ICCAT, IOTC, WECAF, CECAF, SIOFA etc.
- Has this already been identified by the RCG LDF or RGC LP? If not, do they possess the knowledge to revise the table (preferably at species level)? This would form the basis for the revision of EU MAP.
- Should Table 1B be included within Table 1A?

#### Table 1C: Stocks in marine regions under regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) and Sustainable Fishing Partnership Agreements (SFPAs)

- Should Tables 1A and 1C be combined in a revised EU MAP? Given that stocks in both tables have end-user defined sampling requirements, is it necessary to separate them?

#### Table 1D: Species to be monitored under protection programmes in the Union or under international obligations

- Is updating this table a pan-regional responsibility or an EU legislative responsibility?
- How do we reconcile species in Table 1D also appearing in Tables 1A-1C?
- Could this table be replaced by links to the legal obligations?

#### Table 1E: Freshwater Anadromous and Catadromous species

- Should diadromous species be removed from Table 1A and Table 1E be revised to include Marine Union Waters?
- Are there major RCG concerns relating to moving diadromous species out of Table 1A?
- Is the RCG Diadromous Sub-group best placed to revise Table 1E?

#### Table 2: Fishing activity (metier) by region

- Does Table 2 meet current needs or are some groupings missing? Currently, there is no code for glass eel fishing (Level 4).
- Would this require input by individual RCGs with a pan-regional review to ensure consistency?

#### Table 3: Species to be collected for recreational fisheries

- It would appear to be logical to group all species lists together. Should Table 3 be a subset of Table 1 (1F)?
- To ensure multi-species surveys, the species list in Table 3 needs to include all species where catches impact on assessments as mandatory.
- Should this be revised at MS, RCG or pan-regional level – or is WGRFS input required?

#### Table 4: Fishing activity variables

- What is included in this table will depend on the revision of the Control Regulation and would need to be reviewed in light of this.

#### Table 5C: Geographical stratification by region

- Is the current stratification in Table 5C suitable for use for biological data aggregation?
- Given that assessment data are usually given at the stock level (which does not always match the management unit), what is the most appropriate level for reporting biological data collection in the national Work Plan / Annual Report that the RCGs require?

#### Table 10: Research surveys at sea

- This has been covered by RCG comments on the EWG 18-04 in preparation for an STECF survey review in 2019.

### **5.5 Questions for consultation with PGECON**

- Does the definition of population for economic data collection for the fleet require revision (in view of the Regulation on the fishing fleet register)?
- Should the definition for the population for fish processing industry be included in the revised EU-MAP?
- Should the definitions of populations for economic and social data collection be included in Chapter I (Definitions)?
- It should be considered if the current fleet segmentation (EU-MAP Table 5B) could be amended in a way that segments are defined through similar fisheries rather than dominant gear and length threshold.

- Should the segmentation on aquaculture and processing be included in the revised EU-MAP (currently included in the Guidance documents (Definitions/Methodologies of socio economic variables described in EU MAP 2018 consolidated))?
- Does the frequency for the social data collection appear appropriate (keep three years or more?)?
- How should the data collection on social variables indicated in Tables 6 and 11 be presented in EU-MAP (instead of pilot study)?
- Should the threshold on the social and economic data on aquaculture be kept or should it be revised?
- How should the reference on guidance documents on Definitions/Methodologies/Quality be integrated in the revised EU-MAP? In addition, currently there is no operational guidance on data validation and quality reporting except for the document on quality of socio economic variables described in EU-MAP. PGECON should discuss the applicability of this document and possibilities to further improve the quality assurance framework for economic and transversal data, taking into account the guidance document on 'Methodology of socio economic variables described in EU MAP 2018 consolidated' and the 'Handbook on statistical procedures' which will be available in 2019.
- Discuss possibilities for a database approach for WP sections 2A, 3A, 3B, 3C, 5B to improve reporting procedures?

#### Revision of Guidance documents (Definitions/Methodologies of socio economic variables)

Definitions for economic variables on aquaculture included in Table 7 should be checked. Pending the results of the PGECON workshop on social variables (Athens, 19-22 Nov 2018), the Guidance documents should be revised.

## **6 RE-EVALUATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORTS 2017 OF ROMANIA, THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA**

As the Annual Reports 2017 of Romania, the Czech Republic and Slovakia were resubmitted to DG MARE after EWG 18-10 in June, due to missing information, the EWG 18-18 evaluated the (re-) submitted text files and tables. The evaluation of the Romanian report focused on the biological parts, while for the Czech and Slovakian reports (since they are land-locked countries without marine fisheries), only the economic and social data collection in aquaculture (and the processing industry in the case of Slovakia) was relevant.

Overall, the Romanian report had several outstanding issues to be followed up by the Commission. The EWG 18-18 acknowledges the improvements the MS has implemented within their data collection over the past few years. The national Work Plan for Romania, however, does not follow the guidelines (Work Plan template, COM Impl. Dec. 2016/1701) in many areas, which impairs the Annual Report evaluation by STECF. As an amended Work Plan for 2019 was not submitted by Romania, it will remain very difficult to evaluate future Annual Reports. The EWG focused on the content of the AR but found it difficult to evaluate.

For the Czech Republic, the amendments submitted on the aquaculture data collection are acceptable and do not require further actions. The MS started a project called "Analysis of data collection for aquaculture in the CR" at the end of 2017, and therefore, no results were available in the 2017 AR. The aim of this project is the composition of a methodology of future data

collection and to obtain scientific preliminary data for the aquaculture sector on the territory of the Czech Republic, which will be used as a basis for the data collection itself.

The amendments submitted by Slovakia only left a few issues for the aquaculture and processing industry that have to be clarified by the MS and followed-up by the Commission and by the MS.

The evaluation results for all three MS are provided in Annex 8.

## 7 CONTACT DETAILS OF EWG 18-18 PARTICIPANTS

<sup>1</sup> - 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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## **8 LIST OF ELECTRONIC ANNEXES**

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

List of electronic annex documents:

EWG-18-18 – Annex 1 – Work Plan evaluation sheets by Member State (Excel file)

EWG-18-18 – Annex 2 – Template for future submissions of Work Plan amendments (Word file)

EWG-18-18 – Annex 3 – Revised Annual Report evaluation sheet (Excel file)

EWG-18-18 – Annex 4 – Guidance on the Data Transmission Monitoring Tool (DTMT) (Word file)

EWG-18-18 – Annex 5 – Overview of geographical units and allocation to regions (Excel file)

EWG-18-18 – Annex 6 - Methodologies for socio economic data described in EU MAP 2018 consolidated (Word file)

EWG-18-18 – Annex 7 - Definition of socio economic variables described in EU MAP 2018 consolidated (Excel file)

EWG-18-18 – Annex 8 – Annual Report 2017 evaluation sheets by MS for Romania, the Czech Republic and Slovakia

## **9 LIST OF BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Background documents are published on the meeting's web site on: <http://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/stecf/ewg1818>

List of background documents:

EWG-18-18 – Doc 1 - Declarations of invited and JRC experts (see also section 7 of this report – List of participants)

EWG-18-18 – Doc 2 - Recommendations for the revision of the Multiannual Union Programme for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors (EU-MAP), priority issues and outstanding questions (Document prepared under Contracts STECF no. 1835, 1836, 1837, 1838, 1839, 1840 and 1841 for the preparation of the STECF EWG 18-18 (5-9 Nov 2018), October 2018), 40 p.

EU MAP:

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

Work Plan template:

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

Annual Report template:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018D1283&from=EN>

Relevant STECF EWG reports (EWG 16-16, 17-04, 17-13, 18-10):

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## 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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