

STECF: Guidelines for STECF Expert Working Group (EWG) Chairs

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1. COMMISSION DECISION ESTABLISHING THE STECF AND STECF RULES OF PROCEDURE

Chairs should familiarise themselves with the provisions of 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

(<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016D0226%2801%29&rid=1>).

Chairs should familiarise themselves with the STECF Rules of procedure (<https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/about-stecf>).

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE/REQUESTS FROM THE COMMISSION

Chairs should review the Terms of Reference (ToRs) in advance of EWGs to check in particular whether they are clear, unambiguous and whether the work requested is feasible. If necessary, clarification should be sought from the DG MARE focal point for the STECF / DG MARE EWG coordinator.

3. AGENDA AND FORESEEN TASKS

Chairs should draft and circulate the agenda of the EWG and the planned tasks of the experts, after having coordinated with to EWG participants at least 5 working days ahead of the meeting.

4. ROLES OF THE JRC IN RELATION TO STECF AND EWGs

STECF Secretariat: planning of EWG; coordination; front office; web site; collecting, checking, and publishing declarations (if authorized by expert); final editing and publishing of reports. – Commission role

JRC Data Collection team: servicing data calls issued by DG MARE in support to the STECF EWGs. – Commission role

JRC experts/Chairs: attending STECF EWG and Plenary meetings participate in an independent capacity in exactly the same way as invited experts (provide declarations of interest as any other expert). – non Commission role

5. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – STAND-ALONE DOCUMENT

The EWG shall compile an executive summary on the work carried out in the group, in a **separate WORD document** entitled “Executive summary of the EWG xx-xx”.

This executive summary should provide:

- a short description of the policy context

- a concise overview of work undertaken by the EWG;
- a summary of the main findings in relation to each of the ToRs;
- draft conclusions/ recommendations/advice ***preferably as bullets***.

The executive summary should also indicate whether the EWG was able to adequately address each ToR. If any of the ToRs are considered not to have been adequately addressed, the reasons why should be explicitly stated.

The executive summary should be a “**stand alone**” document, so that as far as possible, the reader is able to gain an understanding what has been achieved by the EWG and its main findings.

The executive summary shall be considered as the draft basis for the STECF comments, observations and advice on the activity of the EWG.

The maximum length of the executive summary should be 3 pages.

Further guidance for the drafting of the executive summary:

- *The main target audience for the executive summary are the policy colleagues in the Commission (i.e. DG MARE), but it is also read by the EU Council, European Parliament, Member States’ authorities, industry, ACs, NGOs, etc..*
- *Picture a Commissioner or Director-General having 10 mins to read the executive summary only before discussing the topic at a meeting. They will want very concise description of the main policy-relevant outcomes and not the details of how the EWG came to your results/conclusions (they will trust that the STECF experts do this correctly).*
- *The executive summary should "tell a story," i.e. have a clear and relevant narrative on its own,*
- *Do not be overly technical. The language used should enable a non-specialist reader to understand what the EWG achieved and to want to read the executive summary/report (e.g. do not overly use technical terms or acronyms and, if used, define these in the Overview section; make references to the report so that information can be found easily).*
- *When drafting, Chairs should follow the “Keep It Short and Simple” and “Less is More” approaches and put themselves in the shoes of the reader.*
- *Use (question) sub-headings to break up the text.*

- The **policy context** description should reply to the following questions: What broader and then specific EU (ongoing) policy/political/legislative issue does the report address?
- What does the report add (added value) to previous advice provided by the STECF?
- *The **Conclusions** section of the executive summary should point out to the judgments or decisions reached after deliberation in the EWG, over the observations made. All **conclusions of the EWG** should be “stand alone” and copied from the relevant section of the EWG report.*
- *Chairs should be mindful of the **distinctions between advice/advise and recommend/recommendations** given below.*

Advice

Take care when using the words advice and advise. It is perhaps easiest to distinguish between them as follows:

- **Advice** is an opinion about what could or should be done about a situation or problem. **Advice** is a noun
- To **Advise** is to communicate information. **Advise** is a verb.

Recommend

Also be careful with recommend and recommendations. Because STECF is requested to advise or give advice to the Commission, recommendations in STECF reports are intended to advise on the best course of action or choice

- ***All recommendations of the EWG shall be compiled in the executive summary** and shall be considered draft advice/recommendations of the STECF. The EWG report to the STECF shall not contain any advice or recommendations.*
- *The EWG may make proposals or suggestions in response to requests from the Commission but any such proposals or suggestions should be worded so that they are directed to the STECF for consideration; e.g. “In its response to the Commission the EWG xx-xx requests that the STECF take into account the following proposals/suggestions.”*

6. EWG REPORT - FORMAT

An EWG report template will be provided by the STECF Secretariat, to which Chairs are asked to stick to as much as possible. Note that Reports of EWGs are **REPORTS TO THE STECF**” and have no official status until they have been reviewed by the STECF and published on the STECF website, as a Report of the STECF. Until the report is published on the STECF website, its distribution should be restricted to the Chair, EWG experts, STECF members, STECF secretariat, DG MARE STECF contact point and DG MARE EWG coordinator and should not be circulated more widely (e.g. to observers or other interested parties). When finalizing the report, Chairs should only accept substantive editorial comments from expert members of the EWG. Responsibility for the content of EWG reports lies exclusively with the EWG Chair and expert participants.

Note particularly that, as far as possible, the report content should be structured as follows:

- **Introduction**
 - May be drawn from the background information given in the ToRs and elaborated as appropriate. Chairs should strive to ensure the introduction is informative but as concise as possible.
- **1.1. Terms of Reference for EWG-XX-XX**
 - These should be the agreed ToRs as displayed on the meeting web pages on the STECF website.
- **Section 3 to Section N**
 - These are at the discretion of the EWG although wherever possible sections should correspond to the specific requests listed in the ToRs. Each section should include any conclusions that the EWG has drawn in relation to the findings reported in that section. For example if the section provides a response to a specific question, then the EWG should aim to conclude with the answer to that question. As far as possible, any conclusions should be stand-alone. Chairs should strive to ensure that the text is clear, concise and unambiguous.
- **Section N+1. EWG-XX-XX List of Participants**
 - include list of participants and contact details.
- **Section N+2. List of Background Documents**
 - include list of all background documents with unique numbering.

7. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCING

All background documents should be numbered with a unique reference number, according to the following convention:

“**EWG-XX-XX Doc. z**” where XX-XX is the EWG number and z is the unique number of the document.

Two examples of background documents are given below:

1. STECF EWG 11-01 Doc. 1 “Choice of Stock-Recruit model and equilibrium evaluations for Bay of Biscay sole.” E J Simmonds.
2. STECF EWG-11-01 –Doc. 5 “Bio-economic Impact Assessment sole Bay of Biscay management plan.”, Claire Macher, Mathieu Merzereaud, Michel Bertignac, Christelle Le Grand, Gérard Biais, and Olivier Guyader

In the text of the report, example 1 above would be referred to as STECF EWG 11-01 Doc. 1.

Documents are not to be appended to the report, but are made available via a link to the STECF website. The STECF Secretariat will provide the link. Documents provided to STECF as hard copies only should be scanned by the Secretariat and uploaded to the STECF website.

8. REPORT LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

The working language of the STECF and its EWGs is English and all EWG reports are to be drafted in English. Chairs and expert participants should strive to ensure that the language in the report is clear and unambiguous. All reports are published and made available to the public on the STECF website.

9. REFERENCING REPORTS

Reports published by the STECF should be referenced according to their appropriate citation. Information on how to reference the reports of the STECF and its predecessor, the STCF, are to be found at the bottom of the dedicated report section on the STECF website on <https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports>.

10. AD HOC CONTRACTS FOR CHAIRS AND DEADLINES FOR REPORTS

DG MARE offers standard ad hoc contracts (5 days) to support Chairs in ensuring preparatory work of the EWG and the drafting of the meeting report. On decision of the STECF bureau, EWGs can be co-chaired. Every co-chair is entitled to the full ad hoc contract (5 Days). All EWG reports should be finalised and uploaded by the Chair/co-chairs on a dedicated MARE STECF ftp (DG MARE provides the Chairs with the login information). The reports should also be delivered to the STECF Secretariat within 10

working days following the end of the meeting. Further time may be allocated to the EWG to finalise their report by agreement with the STECF Bureau*, but this is expected to occur only in exceptional circumstances, and on prior and timely request to DG MARE. Requests are to be addressed to the DG MARE focal point for the STECF (MARE-STEFCF@ec.europa.eu mailbox). Note that any contract extension is to be signed at director level so requests should arrive at the latest three working days before the report delivery date of the original contract.

Reports edited by the EWG Chair/co-chairs will then be formatted and final-edited by the STECF Secretariat (note: principal responsibility for report quality is with EWG/STECF) and published on the STECF web site as final pending publication number (ISBN, EUR, doi) number.

*The STECF Bureau is composed of the STECF Chair and Vice-Chairs, the DG MARE focal for STECF, and STECF secretariat – JRC (functional email address is: stecf-bureau@jrc.ec.europa.eu).

11. OBSERVERS AT EWGS

Chairs should point out to the protocol for observers at the start of the meeting (<https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/news>).

12. PRESENTATION OF EWG REPORTS TO STECF

The EWG Chair will normally be requested to present the EWG report to the STECF Plenary. If the Chair is not available, the STECF member(s) having attended the EWG or a nominated substitute would be requested to present the EWG results. The EWG report presentation normally takes place during the first 2 days of the STECF Plenary meeting (afternoon). The EWG Chair should plan for sufficient attendance to the STECF Plenary (2-3 days), in order to support the STECF in drafting its opinion.

13. EWGS ASSOCIATED WITH DCF DATA CALLS – DATA-HANDLING PROCEDURES AND REPORTING OF DATA ISSUES

Data calls to Member States feeding into STECF EWGs are issued by DG MARE and served by the JRC. Each data call has an official deadline for data submission by MS and according to DCF legislation, prime responsibility for data quality rests with the MS. After the deadline for submission of data under data calls and before the start of the relevant EWGs, JRC carries out further quality checks of submitted data and if necessary raises any issues with the relevant MS thereby providing an option for correction and resubmission. During an EWG meeting or between 2 EWGs dealing with the same topic (e.g. AER Fleet) further corrections and/or re-uploads of the data may be necessary.

Chairs and EWGs are therefore requested to take note and of and have to implement the data-handling procedures for STECF Expert Working Groups as agreed between STECF, DG MARE and JRC (STECF secretariat) in February 2015.

Note that Chairs and EWGs are obliged to report on data transmission issue in relation to the EWG and respective data call (see following section of the Chair guidelines).

Data-handling procedures for STECF Expert Working Groups (EWGs)

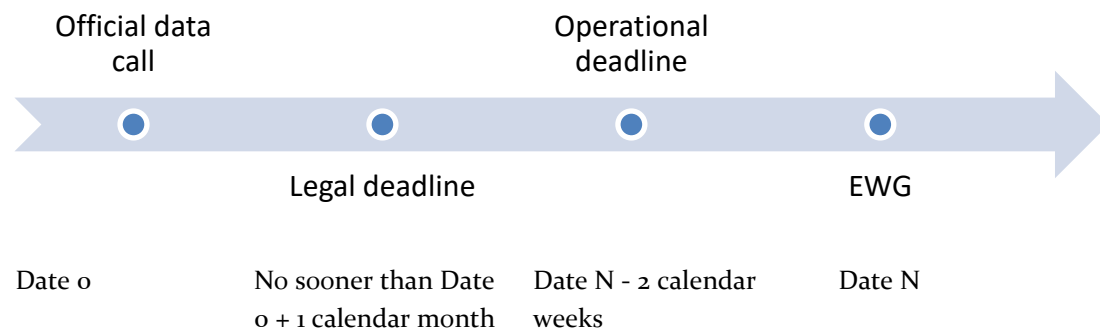
Working procedures

1. Official Data Call and Legal Deadline: The official data call shall be transmitted to Member States at least one calendar month before the legal deadline for submission of data specified in the data call, but as far in advance of the legal deadline as possible.
 2. STECF EWG meeting: The STECF EWG meeting associated with the data call should preferably be convened no earlier than one calendar month following the legal deadline. This is to ensure that sufficient time is available to allow data checks to be undertaken before the EWG takes place.
 3. Operational Deadline: In recognition of the fact that, based on past experience, data submitted by Member States in response to an official data call may sometimes contain errors and gaps, an operational deadline of two calendar weeks (two periods of seven consecutive calendar days) before the commencement of the STECF EWG meeting associated to the data call shall be established. Subsequent to the legal deadline and pending the outcome of data checks undertaken by the JRC or the Member States themselves, if necessary, Member States may upload amended or additional data up to the operational deadline.
 4. Subsequent to the operational deadline and during the associated STECF EWG meeting, Member States may only provide modifications to data previously uploaded upon request from the JRC or the STECF EWG.
 5. Following the closure of the STECF EWG meeting*, the JRC databases shall be considered final and no further uploads will be permitted. At that time, any missing or erroneous data will be noted in the STECF EWG and plenary reports.
 6. An official data call may contain requests for data that are mandatory under the provisions of Member States' approved National Programs. In addition, a data call may also request data over and above the provisions specified in the approved National Programs. It is desirable that Member States voluntarily provide such data in order that the ability of the STECF EWG to undertake its work is not compromised.
- *In cases where two or more STECF EWGs are associated to the data call (e.g. Annual fleet economic report) Member States may be requested to provide updates for up to two calendar weeks (two periods of seven consecutive calendar days) following the first EWG meeting.*

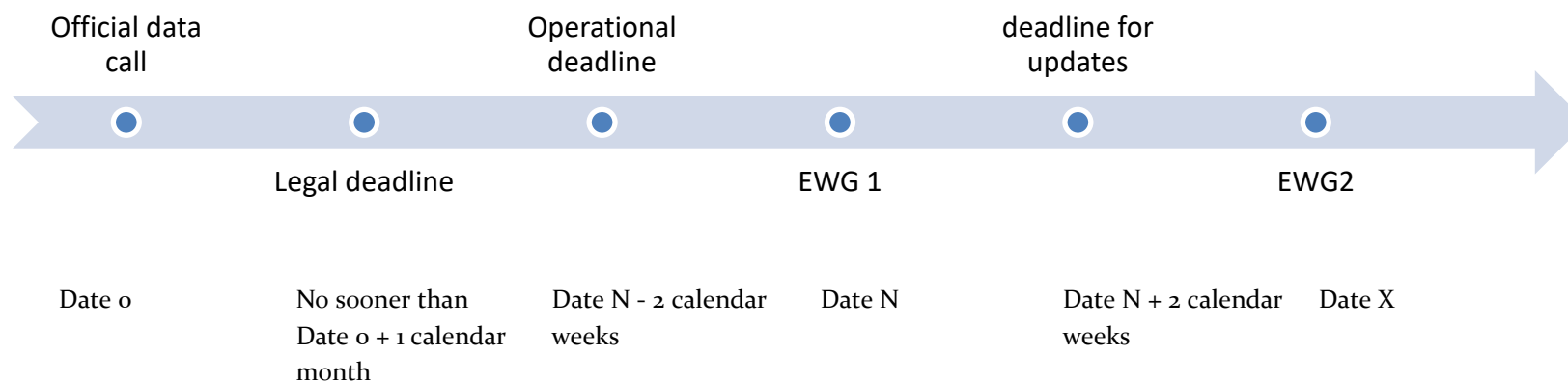
See also next page for graph of procedures.

Data-handling procedures for STECF Expert Working Groups – graph

In case of 1 EWG



In case of 2 EWGs



14. EWGS ASSOCIATED WITH DCF DATA CALLS – REPORTING DATA TRANSMISSION ISSUES

Chairs and experts attending the EWGs are requested to take note of the data transmission issues that become apparent during the EWG work. **It is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that any outstanding data issues, which were identified by the EWG are compiled and inserted in the data transmission monitoring tool (DTMT) available at <https://dcallnet.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/dcf/dtmt> before the EWG has disbanded.**

The STECF Secretariat will provide the EWG Chairs with the login credentials and the DTMT guidelines. The compilation of the data issues should follow the Guidelines of Data Transmission Monitoring Tool (DTMT).