



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
 DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES
 FISHERIES POLICY MEDITERRANEAN AND BLACK SEA

Brussels,
 MARE/D1/D(2018)

**TO THE ATTENTION OF THE NATIONAL CORRESPONDENTS OF BULGARIA, CROATIA,
 CYPRUS, FRANCE, GREECE, ITALY, MALTA, ROMANIA, SLOVENIA, AND SPAIN**

Subject: 2018 Official call for data on landings, discards, length and age compositions, fishing effort, biological parameters, trawl and hydro acoustic surveys in the Mediterranean and in the Black Sea.

Dear Sir/Madam,

The European Union is expected to establish multi-annual plans for relevant Mediterranean fisheries catching demersal and small pelagic species, in particular, in areas totally or partially beyond the territorial waters of Member States (Council Regulation (EC) N° 1380/2013¹). Moreover, the promotion of improved scientific advice on the status of the main stocks in the Black Sea and on the fisheries exploiting these stocks is of outmost importance for the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy in this particular region.

The scientific basis of these plans and the status of the different stocks shall come from an analysis carried out by scientists of EU Member States both at EU and national level as well as within the Scientific Advisory Committee of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM-SAC).

With a view to further support the scientific community in the Mediterranean and in the Black Sea, the European Commission has given mandate to its Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) to adopt an operational work-programme in order to update the knowledge on the status of the exploited demersal and small pelagic stocks. One of the main tasks within this work-programme is to evaluate the exploitation levels with respect to their biological and economic productivity and the sustainability of the exploited stocks. It is intended to achieve this task by using both trawl and echo surveys as well as commercial landings/discards and fishing effort data as collected through the Union Framework for Data Collection and adopted national Work Plans (Regulation (EU) of the European Parliament and of the Council N° 1004/2017²,

¹ Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC ([OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22](#)).

² Regulation (EU) of the European Parliament and of the Council No 1004/2017 of 17 May 2017 on the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the common fisheries policy and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 199/2008 (Recast).

Commission Decision 1251/2016³, Commission Decision 1701/2016⁴), as well as other suitable scientific information collected through national and community funded studies and research projects, as well as regional projects such as CopeMed, MedSudMed, Adriamed or EastMed (see specific mandate to STECF in ANNEX 1).

Since the launching of the STECF activities in 2008, thirty-four EWGs (<http://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/medbs>) have already taken place, which have contributed to further analyze the available information and provide light on the biological state of the main Mediterranean and Black Sea stocks.

In 2018, the three STECF-EWGs and its scientists from all EU Mediterranean and Black Sea countries are expected to continue carrying out joint assessments, using different methods and data sources, on several stocks of important demersal and small pelagic species. The full list of species for which STECF is expected to carry out assessments and whose data must be uploaded as provided in ANNEX 2, Appendix 1.7.

Following a similar approach as that implemented in previous years, the European Commission herewith asks Member States to provide, as soon as possible and **not later than**:

- **3rd July 2018 (midday)**, fisheries and surveys (only MEDITS) data in support of the forthcoming STECF EWG 18-12⁵ and EWG 18-16⁶ on Mediterranean stock assessments (parts I and II). This request shall apply to all Member States, with the exception of Bulgaria and Romania. Requested data are in detail:
 - **Fisheries data** (catches, landings, discards, and fishing effort) shall be submitted in accordance to Appendix 1 and 2 of ANNEX 2 and for the **year 2017**;
 - **Biological data** (Maturity ogives at Length, Maturity ogives at Age, Growth parameters, Sex ratio at length, Sex ratio at age, Age length key) shall be submitted in accordance with Appendix 3 of ANNEX 2 and for the **full time series (i.e. 2002-2017)**;
 - **MEDITS scientific survey data** shall be submitted in accordance with Appendix 4.1 of ANNEX 2 and for the **year 2017**;
 - **MEDIAS scientific survey data** shall be submitted in accordance with Appendix 4.2 of ANNEX 2 and for the **full time series (i.e. 2002-2017)**

³ Commission Decision of [12 July 2016 \(2016/1251/EU\)](#): Adopting a multiannual Union programme for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors for the period 2017-2019 (notified under document C(2016) 4329).

⁴ Commission Implementing Decision of 19 August 2016 (2016/1701/EU): Laying down rules on the format for the submission of work plans for data collection in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors (notified under document C(2016) 5304).

⁵ <https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/ewg1812>

⁶ <https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/ewg1816>

- **17st August 2018 (midday)**, fisheries and surveys data in support of the STECF-EWG 18-13⁷ on Black Sea assessments. This request shall only apply to Bulgaria and Romania. Requested data are in detail:
 - **Fisheries data** (catches, landings, discards, and fishing effort) shall be submitted in accordance to Appendix 1 and 2 of ANNEX 2 and for the **year 2017**;
 - **Biological data** (Maturity ogives at Length, Maturity ogives at Age, Growth parameters, Sex ratio at length, Sex ratio at age, Age length key) shall be submitted in accordance with Appendix 3 of ANNEX 2 and for the **full time series**;
 - **Scientific survey data** shall be submitted in accordance with Appendix 4.2 of ANNEX 2 and for the **year 2017**

- **3rd April 2019 (midday)**, acoustic surveys data (MEDIAS) collected in 2018 in support of the stock assessment prioritization needed for the 2019 STECF-EWG on Mediterranean stock assessments, part I. This request shall apply to all Member States, with the exception of Bulgaria and Romania. Requested data are in detail
 - **MEDIAS scientific survey data** shall be submitted in accordance with Appendix 4.2 of ANNEX 2 and for the **year 2018**

The JRC Data Upload portlet will officially open for submissions on the **4th June 2018 for the Mediterranean call and 16th July 2018 for the Black Sea one.**

According to Data-handling procedure for STECF Expert Working Groups an **operational deadline will set on 10th August for Mediterranean data call and 31st August for the Black Sea one. The JRC Data Upload facilities will be open from 6th to 10th (midday) for the Mediterranean and from 27th to 31st (midday) for the Black Sea.**

Detailed information on the working procedures in respect to the deadlines can be traced in ANNEX 3 (*Data-handling procedure for STECF Expert Working Groups*)

Data have to respect the format provided in ANNEX 2 (Appendices from 1 to 4). It should be noted that Appendix.1.2 has been updated to comply only with the vessel length class coding as defined in EC 949/2008, in line with the Economic Data Call.

A new appendix (ANNEX 2 – Appendix 1.9) has been added to underlay need to provide landings and discards (if available) in weight by species both for métier selected and for métier not selected by the ranking system. A clarification is needed because of some discrepancies noted in the past in comparing total landing in weight between transversal data and biological ones.

⁷ <https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/ewg1813>

The EWG (17-07)⁸ suggests calling for the age length keys (ALK) for the stocks for which these are planned in the DCF adopted National Work Plans. STECF (PLEN-17-02)⁹ supports the request to include the information in future data calls. **According to the request a new template (namely ALK) was settled up and added to biological data files (Annex 2 – Appendix 3.6)**

Data issues identified in 2017 by the STECF-EWGs, scientists, as well as the JRC Data Collection Team can be traced on-line: (a) in an interactive way at the 'Coverage Reports' Website of the JRC Data Collection Team¹⁰ and; (b) in the STECF 17-10 Report¹¹. Given the importance of using the longest time series of fisheries information for a better scientific advice and understanding of the stock's population dynamic, Member States are highly recommended to go through the abovementioned coverage reports and identify their past data submission gaps or inconsistencies.

If MS decide to revise and resubmit the data time series, a justification must be requested to JRC Data Collection team to gain overwrite/append rights.

To improve data transmission and quality checking, in 2016 the JRC portlet has been changed along with the digital format of the files and the implementation of a file naming convention. Files will be requested as Comma Separated Values (.csv) and only one file for each table will be accepted at upload. Full details of the data transmission procedures are detailed in ANNEX 4.

Scientific experts will be invited to attend the forthcoming STECF EWGs and whenever considered advisable, and according to each national scientific coordination system, are expected to have with them the equivalent data sets, by GFCM-GSA concerned, just to overcome possible technical problems of data uploading by Member States. Any use of data different from those uploaded by Member States will be duly justified and recorded in the STECF EWG report.

The European Commission reminds Member States that according to Article 17 of Regulation (EU) of the European Parliament and of the Council No 1004/2017, Member States must make detailed and aggregated data available to end-users to support scientific analysis as a basis for fisheries management.

Member States shall take note of the new **Data Validation Tool** (provided by DG JRC and downloadable from <https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/dcf/dc/medbs>) and are encouraged to use it in order to avoid errors at upload time to the JRC portlet, to support the data submissions and enhance the data quality.

For further clarifications and guidance, you may contact:

⁸ Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Methodology for the Stock Assessments in the Mediterranean Sea (STECF-17-07). Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2017, ISBN 978-92-79-67479-2, doi:10.2760/106023, JRC107583

⁹ Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) –55th Plenary Meeting Report (PLEN-17-02); Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg; EUR 28359EN; doi:10.2760/53335

¹⁰ <https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/coverage/graphs-medbs>

¹¹ <https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/43805/1711451/STECF+17-10+-+Evaluation+of+DCF+AR+and+DT.pdf>

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Member States are requested to provide information collected under Regulation (EU) of the European Parliament and of the Council No 1004/2017, and Commission Decision 2016/1251/EC and 2016/1701/EU. In addition, we invite Member States to authorize the scientists to make use of all the necessary data as collected in research projects funded at national level only. In this context, we remind Member states their obligations under Article 4(3) of the Treaty of the European Union.

We expect that scientists, in order to complement what is collected under the EU Data Collection Framework Regulation, will make use of all data collected through the research projects and studies funded by the European Community.

We look forward to your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Veronika VEITS
Director

Encl.: Annex 1: Mandate to STECF; Annex 2: Data Call - Specifications; Annex 3: Data-handling procedure for STECF Expert Working Groups; Annex 4: Data Call Transmission Instructions

c.c.: *Fisheries Directors and Permanent Representations of Spain, France, Italy, Slovenia, Malta, Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia.*
DG MARE: Mses Laine V., Veits V., Roller E., Perez Perera A., Messrs Lamplmair F., Kloppenborg B., Paardekooper J., Daniel P., Galetti F., Mitolidis S., Maravelias C.
JRC: Messrs Martinsohn J., Doerner H., Mannini A., Pinto C.