

**Report of the
Regional Coordination Group
Large Pelagics
(RCG LP)
Annual Meeting
2018**

Heraklion (Greece)

26-28 June 2018

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1. Introduction

1.1. General

The Regional Coordination Group Large Pelagics (RCG LP) was established in June 2017 and held its first annual meeting as Regional Coordination Group in Heraklion (Greece) between 26-28 June 2018. Participants included scientist, experts and/or National Correspondents from Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal and Spain as well as DG MARE (Commission) and ICES/SCRDBES (Steering Committee of the Regional Database & Estimation System) representatives.

The meeting was chaired by Pedro Lino and Jon Ruiz. All sessional work was carried out by the whole group.

RCG LP thanks the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research and to our host George Tserpes, for arranging the meeting location at the Meeting Room of Hotel Capsis Astoria in Heraklion, the excellent facilities offered were much appreciated. RCG LP wishes to thank ICES for hosting and organizing the SharePoint and participation in the meeting.

1.2. Terms of Reference

1. Adoption of Agenda.
2. Brief Review progress since 2017 RCM's and 2017 Liaison meeting
3. Brief Review of pertinent points related to regional cooperation from expert groups
4. Revision of data transmission failures based on end user feedback
5. Current and future data needs
6. Databases
7. Observer coverage
8. Evolution of RCMs toward RCGs including new groups and needs
9. Cost sharing and agreements
10. Research at sea surveys
11. Any other business

2. Executive Summary

The RCG LP met in Heraklion between the 26-28 June 2018 to review the progress of inter-sessional work since 2017, discuss and agree on outcomes and plan the work for 2018/2019 around the key areas of regional coordination in fisheries data collection: governance; regional sampling plans, identifying end-user needs and data quality.

Participants included scientist, experts and/or National Correspondents from Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal and Spain as well as DG MARE (Commission) and ICES representatives.

The meeting dealt with topics such as; data transmission failures to tuna RFMOs, regional data base, priorities in terms of data needs, feasibility for the collection of biological variables and future structure of the RCG LP.

The Group agreed to test several cases assess the appropriateness of using the ICES RDBES as a tool and storage point for Large Pelagics data.

Observer coverage according to the tuna RFMOs requirements was assessed and discussed.

Further discussion was carried out on possibilities for the detailed structure of the RCG and areas of cooperation.

3. Brief Review of progress since 2017 RCM's and 2017 Liaison meeting

The 14th Liaison meeting (October 2017) considered all recommendations made in 2017 by the RCGs and PGECON. RCG LP presented four recommendations, and all of them were endorsed by the LM.

RCG LP 2018 reviewed the progress of these four recommendations to identify the next steps that should be followed.

RCG LP recommendations during the 2017 meeting, and RCG LP 2018 comments:

- RCM LP 2017 recommended that the RCM LP should be an RCG independent from RCG Med/BS, and ideally should hold its meetings in the second quarter every year to avoid periods of heavy workload.

RCG LP 2018 comments: This recommendation can be considered adopted, since during 2018 the RCG-LP has met for the first time independently. This group do not refer to a specific region, as the regulation says, but 'all regions', and deals with specific LP stocks and end users (ICCAT/IOTC) instead of specific region.

- The RCM LP 2017 recommended that pending a review of the EU MAP, major shark species subject to assessment in tuna RFMOs, and that are in Table 1D of the EU MAP, should be subject to appropriate sampling even if they are not included in table 1C. This supposes sampling of *Isurus oxyrinchus* and *Lamna nasus* in tuna RFMO areas (excluding Mediterranean).

RCM LP 2018 comments: The group considers that this recommendation should be considered in terms of checking if relevant MS have listed these species for sampling. This recommendation has been also supported by the STECF 56th Plenary meeting report (PLEN-17-03), which reads as follows:

Shortfin mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*):

STECF considers that it is justified to include this species in Table 1C of the EU MAP. Although it is taken as bycatch in the EU longline fleet targeting swordfish/blue shark, it is an important commercial species which is being assessed both in ICCAT, IOTC, WCPFC and IATTC. STECF notes that sampling requirements in ICCAT/IOTC are similar to target species being assessed: nominal catches (Task I), catch and effort and size data (Task II), discard information (from observers) plus biological information (age/maturity/reproduction). ICCAT/IOTC sampling strata is month and by 5°*5° square for the longline fleet. The shortfin mako ICCAT management recommendation 14-06 requests to collect fishery statistics (Task I & II) for this species. STECF further notes that in the Mediterranean Sea, the retention of shortfin mako is forbidden by the Barcelona Convention and GFCM. Thus, tuna and tuna-like fisheries cannot retain this species on board, but observers are also estimating/collecting size information.

Porbeagle shark (*Lamna nasus*):

STECF considers that it could also be justified to include this species in Table 1C of the EU MAP because it is being assessed in ICCAT/IOTC/Pacific. These groups are requesting to collect fishery statistics data to improve the stock assessment. STECF notes that this species is forbidden to be retained on board for fleets fishing in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans. Information on catch/effort, size & sex is mostly collected through observers. Biological sampling, however, is affected by the listing of this species in the CITES Appendix II, which restricts the entrance of biological material from High Seas to national ports (landing sites). Only when biological samples are collected within EU waters, these could be transported within the EU. STECF acknowledges that the RCG LP also made a recommendation/request to the Commission to clarify this point of biological sampling.

STECF is aware that the ICCAT recommendation 15-06 requires to promptly release porbeagle sharks alive but also to collect fishery statistics (task I and II) for this species.

STECF considers that the EWG 17-13 will take this recommendation into account in terms of checking if relevant MS have listed these species for sampling.

- The RCM LP 2017 recommended a clarification of the compatibility of shark sampling activities with CITES provisions. For sharks listed in CITES, now it is not possible to transport samples even of dead fish. Thus, it is not possible to collect biological samples (vertebrates, etc.) of this species. In terms of the EU legislation it is possible to take samples from POR (if they are collected by observers and the specimens are already dead when captured). However, now that they are in CITES, it is not possible to transport them between international waters and EU waters. So, EU can collect samples for specimens that are accidentally captured (and already dead) inside the EU EEZ. But this is very little, as EU cannot sample in international waters where we need to get those samples as well.

RCM LP 2018 comments: First reply by DG MARE on this issue did not provide operational solutions. The RCG_LP Chair made a commitment to contact CITES to explain the problem, and to agree on the best solution to bring samples from vessels operating in non-community waters. This is, to ask for exception for scientific Shark (e.g. porbeagle shark) sampling.

- RCM LP 2017 recommended to establish in 2018 a workshop for exploring the possibility to launch a permanent group for temperate tuna as a complement of the existing tropical tuna group. This proposal is based on the methodological Working Group (T3-tropical Tuna Treatment) already in place for purse seiners targeting tropical tuna. The group discussed if a similar initiative for the longline fishery would complement T3 meeting and would improve the data collection, harmonization and task sharing regarding longline fisheries. Both would prepare the work for the RCG LP

RCM LP 2018 comments: Besides the RCG-LP 2017, this recommendation has been also supported by the meeting between RFMO scientists and DG MARE, held in Brussels in March 2018. However, this workshop has not been conducted. RCM LP 2018 continues to believe that the creation of this group will be beneficial. In addition, the possibility of launching similar coordination groups for the rest of the fisheries is discussed. This point is revisited in section 8, Evolution of RCMs toward RCGs, since this groups would be part of the future structure of the RCG-LP.

4. Brief Review of pertinent points related to regional cooperation from expert groups

Meeting of scientist involved in tuna RFMO

Meeting of scientist involved in tuna RFMOs was held in Brussels in 15-16 March 2018. The overarching objective of the meeting was to improve the coordination of UE scientist working in different aspects of tuna fisheries, from those involved in data collection through EU MAP to final end-users participating in the stock assessment of the tuna RFMOs.

The specific objective was to address issues of common interest for tuna scientist, particularly about data collections issues, methodological issues and common issues

discussed at RFMO level. This meeting identified several of the issues of interest for the RCM LP. Main conclusions of this group related to the RCG-LP are listed below.

- The group supported the four recommendations made by the RCG-LP 2017 (see section 3 for details)
- Coordination between scientists involved in data collection and scientists involved in stock assessment should be improved. This should be considered when designing the future structure of Regional Coordination Group for Large Pelagic species (RCG LP).
- After the analysis of problems regarding data transmission failures based on RFMO feedback, it was agreed that the RCM 2018 (June, Greece) should clarify issues related to data not collected, collected and not transmitted, and data that is not sent correctly.
- The Group identified the urgent need of reinstalling sampling teams in Seychelles and Abidjan to monitor and sample the activity of the purse seine fleet of EU-Spain in both oceans.
- The group recognized that the submission of Task I data of bycatch species and discards should be associated with the level of observer coverage.
- The provision of Task I and Task II statistics of the Spanish longline fleet should be improved with the integration of information of bycatch species. Currently, only statistics related to swordfish and main shark species are being provided.
- EU scientists involved in Mediterranean longline fisheries should work coordinately in the elaboration of a data recovery plan of catch and effort for Mediterranean swordfish.

Following the discussion on the points presented above, the group agreed the following actions:

- Improve communication between stock assessment scientists and data collection scientists: requirements and gaps from stock assessment; quality indicators from data collection
- Involve stock assessment scientists during the design of planned data collection
- Write to CITES about exception for scientific Shark sampling POR
- Workshop coordination of age reading for bluefin tuna (ask ICCAT to make new edition of course? Last one in 2011)
- RECOLAPE project (MARE/2016/22 “Strengthening regional cooperation in the area of fisheries data collection, Annex III “Biological data collection for fisheries on highly migratory species”) will make a workshop for swordfish spine reading using online platform Smart dot from ICES

5. Revision of data transmission failures based on end user feedback

The group evaluated failures in data transmission observed last year in relation to tuna RFMOs, and the comments done by the affected MS. The list of failures was provided by the COM, based on the feedback received from RFMOs. 21 data deficiencies were evaluated, all of them related to IOTC data transmission failures. No deficiencies were reported from the rest of the tuna RFMOs (ICCAT/IATTC/WCPFC). The outcomes of the discussion were transmitted to the Commission in order to help discussions in STECF EWG 18-10 (Evaluation of DCF 2017 Annual Reports), which was happening simultaneously and should evaluate all data failures transmitted by end users. Some of the issues in Annex 3 could not be resolved or commented because no representative from the EU Member state was present and the details of the issue were not sufficient for the Group to give recommendations. Detailed list of failures and RCM LP comments are provided in Annex 3. In general terms, for tropical purse seiners, main failures were related with the lack of bycatch information, mainly on sharks. Additionally, total number of FADs was not always provided. For longline, there is a need to increase observer coverage in some fleets, also need to improve report size frequency and catch and effort.

6. Current and future data needs

RCG LP will invite to the next annual meeting representatives from ICCAT and IOTC, but also, if possible IATTC and WCPFC for next meeting. The end-users should clarify and provide in advance a list of annual request.

At this point the group continued working on the description of the available data and priority needs in the ICCAT and IOTC framework. Figure 1 below shows data needs in the ICCAT and IOTC framework (available data and gaps). The empty cells (without color or letter) could not be completed due to lack of knowledge of the participants.

	available to the RFMO or stock assessment
	Partially available
	non available
P	non available & priority (P: Key variable for stock assessment or stocks under Recovery Plan)
B	blank: not a priority for the SC
	Not relevant

			Mandatory RFMO					Non Mandatory RFMO				
			Non DCF			DCF						Other
			T1NC	T2CE	FAD data	T2SF	T1Discards	Matur	Fec	L-W	Ages	Stock of origin
ICCAT MED	ALB	LL					B					
		PS	B	B		B	B					
	BFT	LL					B					
		PS					B	P	P			
		TRAP					B					
ICCAT ATL	SWO	LL					P	P			P	
	ALB	LL					B					
		Trawl					B					
		Tro					B					
		BB					B					
	BFT	BB					B					P
		TRAP					B					
	SKJ	BB					B	P	B		B	
		PS										
	YFT	LL										
		PS							B		P	
		BB					B					
	BET	PS										
		LL						P	B	P	P	
		BB					B					
	Sharks	PS										
		LL										
	BIL	PS				B	B					
		LL										
	SWO	PS	B	B		B	B					
		LL										
IOTC	ALB	LL-FR										
	SKJ	PS									B	
	YFT	LL									P	
		PS										
	BET	PS									P	
		LL										
	Sharks	PS										
		LL										
	BIL	PS										
		LL										
	SWO	PS	B	B		B	B					
		LL										

Figure 1. Data needs in the ICCAT and IOTC framework (available data and gaps).

7. Databases

ICES representative made a presentation of the ICES Regional Data Base and Estimation System (RDBES) which is a web-based information system for commercial fisheries data; landings, effort and sampling data. Its development started in March 2017 and should be finished in the summer 2019. The system is conceived with a view to use design based sampling and statistical estimations /raising of data including also for Age-Length Keys.

The expected advantages of using the RDBES should be:

- Support the Regional Coordination Groups with ~~harmonised~~harmonized data for coordination
- Higher data quality by using common quality checks across all countries' data
- The ability to automatically deliver data for different data calls

- The benefit of only updating one system, instead of all countries national data submission programs, when there are changes in data calls
- If estimations are done for large pelagic fish in the RDBES, then the RDBES ensure that the methods used are transparent and documented
- Document data submissions to the RDBES
- The data handling is as efficient and easy as possible
- From a cost benefit point of view, it is beneficial to develop and maintain of one system compared with many similar systems

The focus for the development of the RDBES is to be able to support the RCGs, which participate in specifying their needs and for now the focus is on the commercial species. But that mean that members of the RCG LP could come forward and specify what the RCG LP need in terms of data and functionality.

Questions and answers for the RBDES this year:

The RCG LP asked if the source code behind the RDBES is open source?

The answer is yes.

The RCG LP asked if it was possible to automatically create output for end users from the RDBES to e.g. ICCAT?

The answer is yes, this is one of the ideas behind the RDBES to make it easy to use the data in the RDBES for data call, but it requires funding, because the data for each data call have to be developed.

The RCG LP asked if the RDBES can be prepared for annual changes in file format required by the different RFMOs?

The answer is yes, it is just need to agree on a deadline for new changes, so there is time to develop them, and again funding is required.

Development of web systems and databases are time consuming and demand highly qualified experts, therefore funding of the development of the RDBES is an important issue.

The way forward:

To move forward in the process where the RCG LP would like to use the RDBES for their data, it was agreed to have a person for each important and representative stock to check if the data for that specific stock could be inserted into the current RDBES data model. If it is not possible the responsible person should identify what change is needed to be able to insert the stock data into the RDBES data model if needed in connection with the ICES Secretariat's Data Centre, e.g. add new codes or add a few fields on existing tables or add new tables. In the following table the persons responsible for the stocks are listed:

Stock	Gear	Area	MS fishing	Persons
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Tropical tuna	PS	Atlantic	ES, FR	Mathieu Depetris and Jon Ruiz
Swordfish	Longline	MED	CY	Ioannis Thasitis
Tuna	Cages			Josip Maleš
Blue fin tuna				(Norbert billet to ask colleague)
Swordfish	Longline	Atlantic		Pedro Lino

In October ICES Secretariat will contact the group of persons and follow up on the progress. The persons responsible for the stocks should have finalized their comparison and suggestions of the RDBES data model at the 26th November, so hopefully the co-chairs Pedro Lino and/or Jon Ruiz can be presented the outcome at the Steering Committee of the RDB/RDBES the 4th Dec. 2018. It is suggested that at least one person from the RCG LP is attending the SCRDBES and discuss the way forward.

8. Observer coverage

An Observer Coverage by *metier* was prepared and is presented in Annex 4

Some of the major Large Pelagic harvesting EU Members (fisheries) were not represented so the Table was filled as possible.

Compliance vs scientific observers: the "compliance observer effect" and the need to keep quite distinct the role of compliance and scientific observers were discussed. Notwithstanding the effort done in clarifying the respective roles (e.g. ICCAT Recs: 16-01-TT (§38 & §39); 16-05-SWO; 16-14 observers; 14-04 BFT; CFP DCF scientific observers; CFP Control compliance observers) in practice no regulation forces an EU Member state to assure these two ideally independent roles could be assigned to the same person or that scientific data collected by compliance observer could be consider as "valid" scientific data.

The discussion on the "compliance observer effect" touched also upon the need for updating the data on the technical interactions between different Mediterranean longline fisheries (*metiers*) targeting BFT, SWO and ALB and having reciprocal by-catches of BFT, SWO and ALB. Comments were also done on the unlikelihood that the data collected and the behavior of the fishermen as well as the fishing operation are similar when a compliance observer vs a purely scientific observer is onboard.

The majority of the Group agrees that the separation of roles is essential to guarantee the quality of the scientific data.

9. Evolution of RCMs toward RCGs including new groups and needs

- Discussion about Rules of Procedure

There is currently a draft document where the RCG-LP Rules of Procedure (ROP) are established (Annex 5). This document is not yet officially adopted, although it has already been reviewed by a large part of the MS involved in LP fisheries. RCG-LP chair will circulate it to all NCs until the end of October and final approval is expected by the end of the year.

- Organization of the future RCG LP's groups and subgroups

A document describing a proposal of the future structure of the RCG-LP, as well as synergies with other regions (RCGs) was presented during the meeting. This document is part of the Work Package 1 within the project MARE/2016/22: "Strengthening regional cooperation in the area of fisheries data collection, Annex III Biological data collection for fisheries on highly migratory species" (acronym RECOLAPE). It proposes a series of prerequisites necessary for the correct establishment and operation of the RCG-LP. It is expected that this proposal will foster the implementation of large pelagic RCG, so that RCG can become fully operational, and not get entangled into long discussions that can take several meetings/ years. This proposal considers the holding of two preparatory meetings or stages prior to the RCG-LP main meeting. Far too many meetings (subgroups) can hinder the participation of LP experts, thus preparatory meetings are not new meetings at all, the aim is to integrate existing ones under the umbrella of the future RCG-LP. The first stage would have the purpose to identify data gaps and prioritize LP data needs, including tuna RFMO data requirements and data transmission. Second stage will be much more gear/stock specific. This second stage would design RSP by coordinating dockside/onboard sampling for the different stocks. Finally, the main RCG meeting (third stage) will evaluate the outputs from the previous two stages, and it would be where the final decisions of greater importance and approval of regional sampling plan should be made. With respect to the first stage, identification of data needs, DG MARE is already organizing a meeting with a similar goal, where DG MARE desk officers dealing with RFMOs and EU scientists participating in RFMO activities are involved. Thus, considering this meeting as part of the RCG-LP could be advantageous, instead of organizing a new one. Once data gaps are identified and data needs/priorities are established, in a second stage, data collection shall be coordinated among MS. Ideally this coordination should be done in methodological groups dealing with specific fisheries. The proposal includes four parallel subgroups based on stocks/gears.

- a) Tropical Tuna Treatment (T3): Focus on Purse Seine fleet and YFT/SKJ/BET
- b) Focus on Longline Fisheries outside MED
- c) MED LP fisheries: Focus on LL.
- d) Bluefin tuna sampling

In addition to the two stages mentioned above, this proposal mentions that it is necessary to hold a main RCG-LP meeting, where decisions are made based on the output from the previous stages (RSP approval, etc.). It is not necessary, in this case, such a technical profile of the participants, but they must have the capacity to make decisions.

On the other hand, synergies among RCGs are also described in the document. The main common fields identified for cooperation among the RCGs are the ones related with the design of the regional sampling plans based on statistically sound sampling designs and data management, which includes the archiving of data and the processes of quality assurance and quality control (i.e. development of guidelines to evaluate the quality of the data, development of common software tools in R etc.).

Once the above document was presented, main discussion was around second stage on data analysis and Regional sampling design, and the optimum number of parallel subgroups within this stage. It was not a clear consensus among RCG-LP participants on the approach to select different subgroups: focus on areas (Med & NA), gears or species; with any of them, there would always be some stock out of place. Finally, it was agreed that bluefin tuna sampling should be treated as a specific group, which of course would include the complete stock (Med and NA). Furthermore, groups are dynamic, and future work will ensure a better refinement of the structure. Thus, all RCG-LP 2018 participants agreed with the proposal developed under RECOLAPE project for the future structure of the group (detailed proposal is included as Annex 6). However, it is important to mention that no National Correspondents (NC) participated during this meeting. To prevent this lack of NC from becoming a problem, the representatives of the RECOLAPE project consortium explained that a consultation process on project outputs is planned, which will be done through NCs.

10. Cost sharing and agreements

No issues were discussed regarding cost sharing or agreements between Member States.

11. Research at sea surveys

EC DG-MARE representative provided an overview on the ongoing process aiming to evaluate the list of mandatory research surveys at sea as currently identified under the DCF (Table 10 of the EU MAP, Regulation (EU) 2017/1004). He presented the draft outputs of the STECF-EWG 18-04 (to be evaluated by the STECF Plenary in July) and the rationale underpinning the proposed method for the identification of the most relevant research surveys at sea to be included in the new EU MAP.

The new method consists of a binary decision system based on some criteria (e.g. international coordinated surveys; surveys designated to inform management decisions; data quality, end-users needs, etc.); a spreadsheet including the binary decision support tool (DST) together with the stocks and surveys databases has been prepared to allow the different RCGs and other stakeholders to explore and comment as adequate the method.

If considered adequate by the STECF, and pending comments also by the RCGs, then the method will be used in 1st Q 2019 by an STECF-EWG for the actual revision of the scientific

surveys; a specific roadmap indicating the role that RCGs have to play was presented (e.g. ensure that the necessary data to run the DST are in the databases, etc).

The RCGs, as well as MSs, are in a position to propose new surveys in view of the forthcoming evaluation of surveys.

The RCGLP was recalled that the scientific surveys included in the EU-MAP are compulsory for the MS(s) that thus have to carry out the survey; the latter have however the possibility to include national research surveys at sea in their DCF work-plan that can be supported through the EMFF though not mandatory at EU level (link between the DCF work plan and EMFF).

The picture of national surveys for large pelagic stocks seems fragmented.

The current EU-MAP does not envisage dedicated scientific surveys at sea for large pelagic stock.

The RCGLP shall therefore evaluate whether existing surveys, carried out either by RFMOs (e.g. ICCAT GBYP, etc.) or at national level, cover the existing needs or whether a possible inclusion of scientific surveys for large pelagic stocks under the DCF would give added value and is something to be pursued.

The RCGLP was also informed on the ongoing reflections on how coping with the constraints due to forthcoming expiration of the current EU-MAP, by end of 2019, and the need of ensuring enough time for the preparation, consultation and formal adoption of the new EU-MAP (Com. Delegated and Implementing Acts implying also scrutiny by the EU Council and EU Parliament).

Regarding research surveys at sea, no survey was proposed to be candidate to be included under the EU MAP.

12. Any other business

In 2019 the annual meeting will be held in Madrid, Spain at the IEO headquarters during the third week of May (between 13-17 May).

13. Recommendations

In line with previous RCMs, the RCG LP considers that the number of recommendations should be limited and focused.

The RCG LP recommends:

<i>RCG LP Bluefin tuna age data</i>	
RCG LP 2018 Recommendation	Promote within ICCAT regular workshops for Bluefin Tuna age reading and calibration
Justification	ICCAT has a panel of experts handling Bluefin Tuna (BFT) preparation and reading of hard structures (spines and otoliths). If DG MARE requests that each MS collects age data from BFT it would make sense to have the methods coordinated at the EU level but in agreement with current state-of-the-art.
Follow-up actions needed	Contact ICCAT Secretariat
Responsible persons for follow-up actions	DG MARE, RCG-LP
Time frame (Deadline)	Before 31 December 2019

14. Annexes

Annex 1 – Participants

List of participants

Name	Country	email	Institution	Participation*
Josip Maleš	Croatia	males@izor.hr	IZOR	b
Ioannis Thasitis	Cyprus	ithasitis@dfmr.moa.gov.cy	DFMR	b
Franco Biagi	EU	Franco.Biagi@ec.europa.eu	DG MARE	other
Mathieu Depetris	France	mathieu.depetris@ird.fr	IRD	other
Norbert Billet	France	norbert.billet@ifremer.fr	IFREMER	other
George Tserpes	Greece	gtserpes@hcmr.gr	HCMR	b
Henrik Kjems-Nielsen	ICES	henrikkn@ices.dk	ICES	other
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Jūrandā Savukynienė	Lithuania	Juranda.Savukyniene@zum.lt	Fisheries Department	nc
Jūratė Andriukaitienė	Lithuania	Jurate.Andriukaitiene@zuv.lt	FS	b
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* biologist (b), national correspondent (nc) or other

Agenda for the Regional Coordination Group Large Pelagics (RCM-LP) 2018

Tuesday, 26th June

09:00 Adoption of Agenda and Report format

10:00 Brief Review progress since 2017 RCM's and 2017 Liaison meeting (13th report)

- The RCM LP should be a RCM independent from RCM Med/BS and ideally should hold its meetings in the second quarter every year to avoid periods of heavy workload.

- Involvement of MS that include LP in their work plans should be promoted by DG MARE

- Pending a review of the EU MAP, major shark species subject to assessment in tRFMOs and that are in Table 1D of the EU MAP should be subject to appropriate sampling even if they are not included in table 1C.

- Establish in 2018 a workshop for exploring the possibility to launch a permanent group for temperate tuna as a complement of the existing tropical tuna group.

- Clarify the compatibility of shark sampling activities with CITES provisions.

11:00 Brief Review of pertinent points related to regional cooperation from expert groups

- Annual meeting of RFMOs in EU

- Tropical Tuna Treatment (T3)

- Revision of resolutions approved in ICCAT and IOTC

- Meeting of the RDB Steering committee (Henrik?)

- STECF Reports

- Reminder to review Observer coverage by Country and métier

Lunch break

14:00 Revision of data transmission failures based on end user feedback

- Table DT 2018

- Table ICCAT and IOTC data gaps

- Review missing data by EU country (Data used during stock assessment but that are not officially submitted to the RFMO)

Wednesday 27th June

9:00 Current and future data needs

Including overview of large pelagics recreational fisheries monitoring status by MS

10:00 Databases

Current status and information from RDB steering committee (Henrik)

Lunch break

14:00 Observer coverage

16:00 Evolution of RCMs toward RCGs including new groups and needs.

Organize future RCG LP and subgroups (presentation of the RECOLAPE project)

Adoption of Rules of Procedure for the Large Pelagics Regional Coordination Group

Thursday 28th June

9:00 Cost sharing and agreements

Any identified issues??

10:00 Research at sea surveys

EWG 18-04 Preparation for the evaluation of the list of mandatory research surveys

Discussion of campaigns relevant for large pelagics to be included in the EU map

Overlapping between EU map and tRFMOs

11:00 Next venue

12:00 Any other issues

13:00 Draft report

Including agreed list of recommendations for the liaison meeting

Annex 3 – Reviewed IOTC Data Transmission failures clarified

3220	2017	United Kingdom	IOTC	IOTC	by-catch - longline (swordfish)	UK failed to report data on interaction between seabird and turtles	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	The situation for IOTC observer reporting for the UK was set out in some detail in response to queries on compliance for 2016 (see below). The issue of whether the UK had a derogation from reporting was not satisfactorily resolved however in 2017 it was made a condition of vessel licensing for vessels prosecuting IOTC waters that they had to have an observer on board and to make the reports requested. The first reporting from work in 2017 was made in 2018. Comments for 2018 Compliance "We acknowledge that the UK did not provide the IOTC with observer data, however this is commensurate with the content of our approved National Programme. We also understand that Article 20 of Regulation (EC) No. 1936/2008 refers to Member States' obligations to RFMOs but we have assumed that if those obligations relate to data collected under the DCF as defined by Commission Decision 93/201/EEU and as agreed within the National Programme of a MS and (i) that the derogation referred to in the UK's National Programme is applicable here.	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	UK claims to be collecting data since 2017. The lack of 2016 data was a misinterpretation of the DCF rules. If UK is collecting data as mentioned then the problem is solved.
3221	2017	United Kingdom	IOTC	IOTC	size frequency for sharks - longline (swordfish)	UK failed to report data	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN		[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	UK claims to be collecting data since 2017. The lack of 2016 data was a misinterpretation of the DCF rules. If UK is collecting data as mentioned then the problem is solved.
3222	2017	United Kingdom	IOTC	IOTC	size frequency for IOTC species - longline (swordfish)	UK failed to report data	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN		[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	UK claims to be collecting data since 2017. The lack of 2016 data was a misinterpretation of the DCF rules. If UK is collecting data as mentioned then the problem is solved.
3223	2017	Spain	IOTC	IOTC	by-catch - purse seine fleet	Spain failed to report data on observer trip reports only	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	Spain submitted by-catch data related to 2016 in the ICCAT ST09 template alongside the observers report because our scientists didn't find an appropriate template provided by IOTC. We will provide this data for 2017 as soon as they are ready. They are going to be based on observer reports. Regarding turtle data, we are also working on the processing data we will provide as soon as possible. They are provided for previous years.	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	By-catch was sent as raw data, not related to the fleet level due to a lack of a robust ageing method.
3234	2017	Spain	IOTC	IOTC	number of activities of supply vessels for IOTC species - purse seine fleet	Spain failed to provide data on supply vessels' information by IOTC standard (missing grid information)	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	As requested by the resolution 1502, para 6, Spain reported IOTC supply vessels data to the Commission last May 23rd, 2018. This data includes grid information by month, as well as daily effort based on FAD topologies filed in its supply vessels.	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	Based on the MS comment the problem seems to be solved with data sent later.
3235	2017	Spain	IOTC	IOTC	catch and effort data for sharks - Longline(swordfish)	Spain failed to report data	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	Spain not only complied with the minimum coverage of observers on board longline vessels in the IOTC area in 2017, but also overtake it by reaching 11.64% coverage. It was reached thanks to the 1st annual observer program onboard longliners of the General Secretariat for Fisheries, in addition to the observer programme of the Spanish Oceanography Institute. Spain is working in the same observer program in 2018 in order to continue increasing the observers data on board longliners. All in all, Spain is going to improve catch and effort data for sharks in 2017. The Spanish oceanography institute is in charge of the data processing so we expect to collect missing information regarding not only sharks but also non-targeted species. The previous years we already sent all data we have available.	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	Spanish representatives confirm that the data was transmitted in time. This data was also transmitted to IOTC via the EU Scientific Report in November 2017. If the data was not correctly received, then this could be an issue with the format used.
3236	2017	Spain	IOTC	IOTC	catch and effort and size frequency data for sharks - purse seine fleet	Spain failed to report data	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	There were observers onboard spanish purse seiners in 2017 during 376 days and 14 trips in 9 vessels where they observed 392 sets.	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	Spanish representatives confirm that the by-catch was sent as raw data, not related to the fleet level due to a lack of a robust ageing method.
3237	2017	Spain	IOTC	IOTC	catch and effort data for IOTC species - Longline(swordfish)	Spain provided partial data (for swordfish only)	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	Spain not only complied with the minimum coverage of observers on board longline vessels in the IOTC area in 2017, but also overtake it by reaching 11.64% coverage. It was reached thanks to the 1st annual observer program onboard longliners of the General Secretariat for Fisheries, in addition to the observer programme of the Spanish Oceanography Institute. Spain is working in the same observer program in 2018 in order to continue increasing the observers data on board longliners. All in all, Spain is going to improve catch and effort data for sharks in 2017. The Spanish oceanography institute is in charge of the data processing so we expect to collect missing information regarding not only sharks but also non-targeted species. The previous years we already sent all data we have available.	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	Spanish representatives confirm that the data was transmitted in time. This data was also transmitted to IOTC via the EU Scientific Report in November 2017. If the data was not correctly received, then this could be an issue with the format used.
3238	2017	Portugal	IOTC	IOTC	by-catch data - longline(swordfish)	Portugal to clarify the issue of by-catch data being reported only from observer trips	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	All market sampling in the region is not included in the Portuguese Work Plan, only sampling at sea is included.	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	Portuguese representative informs that no additional data is collected. There is no on-part sampling in IOTC area. Remote teams can be hired if the DCF budget is foreseen.
3239	2017	Italy	IOTC	IOTC	by-catch information for turtles and other species - purse seine fishing	Italy reported partial information	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	On the 17th of May 2017, Italy forwarded to DG MARE the "National Report for the Scientific Committee of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)". By Catch information by species are not on page 22 to page 40. This report includes all the element requested by IOTC. It is available on demand	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	According to the MS comments the data were transmitted in time to DG MARE. This data was also transmitted to IOTC via the EU Scientific Report in November 2017. If the data was not correctly received, then this could be an issue with the format used. MS to clarify with IOTC if in addition to the Report, another file format is required.
3240	2017	Italy	IOTC	IOTC	total catches data for sharks - purse seine fishing	Italy reported partial information for total catches of sharks	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	On the 17th of May 2017, Italy forwarded to DG MARE the "National Report for the Scientific Committee of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)". The report includes shark catches. This report includes all the element requested by IOTC. It is available on demand. In addition on November 2017 complete IOTC reporting of statistics have been sent by the Italian administration to DG MARE (FISHERIES-ORF@ec.europa.eu)	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	According to the MS comments the data were transmitted in time to DG MARE. This data was also transmitted to IOTC via the EU Scientific Report in November 2017. If the data was not correctly received, then this could be an issue with the format used. MS to clarify with IOTC if in addition to the Report, another file format is required.
3241	2017	Italy	IOTC	IOTC	catch and effort and size frequency data for sharks - purse seine fishing	Italy failed to report data	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	On the 17th of May 2017, Italy forwarded to DG MARE the "National Report for the Scientific Committee of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)". The report includes shark catches. This report includes all the element requested by IOTC. It is available on demand. In addition on November 2017 complete IOTC reporting of statistics have been sent by the Italian administration to DG MARE (FISHERIES-ORF@ec.europa.eu)	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	According to the MS comments the data were transmitted in time to DG MARE. This data was also transmitted to IOTC via the EU Scientific Report in November 2017. If the data was not correctly received, then this could be an issue with the format used. MS to clarify with IOTC if in addition to the Report, another file format is required.
3242	2017	Italy	IOTC	IOTC	size frequency data and total number of FAD set by gear for IOTC species - purse seine fishing	Italy failed to report data	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	Size frequency data are not collected according by adopted Italian National Program and Work Plan. We would like to consider that only 1 Italian vessel is operating in IOTC fishery. In addition on November 2017 complete IOTC reporting of statistics have been sent by the Italian administration to DG MARE (FISHERIES-ORF@ec.europa.eu)	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	MS will explore the opportunity to collaborate with French administration (which is currently already sampling the same meter) to solve the problem.
3243	2017	Italy	IOTC	IOTC	catch and effort information for IOTC species - purse seine fishing	Italy failed to report data on effort	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	On November 2017 complete IOTC reporting of statistics have been sent by the Italian administration to DG MARE (FISHERIES-ORF@ec.europa.eu). All catch and effort were included for the only 1 vessel operating in this fishery	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	According to the MS comments the data were transmitted in time to DG MARE. This data was also transmitted to IOTC via the EU Scientific Report in November 2017. If the data was not correctly received, then this could be an issue with the format used. MS to clarify with IOTC if in addition to the Report, another file format is required.
3244	2017	France	IOTC	IOTC	by-catch (turtles) (Mayotte coastal fisheries)	France failed to report data	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	Even based on board observer program, no sea-turtle by-catch have been observed. The 2018 amendment of resolution 1606 on measures applicable in case of non-fulfillment of reporting obligations should help us to ease the fulfillment of reporting obligations.	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	Based on IOTC resolutions 1502 and 1606, MS must report Zero catches to IOTC. Even taking into consideration the 2018 amendment, previous and future Zero catches must be reported.
3245	2017	France	IOTC	IOTC	total catch, catch and effort, size frequency data for sharks (Mayotte coastal fisheries)	France failed to report data	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	The only available data on divers sharks come from the observing findings but the IOTC INC files cannot be completed. A new on-board observer program has started in the end of 2017. For 2018 data, France should be able to bring more information.	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	If MS is collecting data as mentioned then the problem is solved.
3246	2017	France	IOTC	IOTC	size frequency for IOTC species (Mayotte coastal fisheries)	France failed to report data	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	No data are available to estimate the size frequency for IOTC species in Mayotte coastal fisheries. A new on-board observer program has started in the end of 2017. For 2018 data, France should be able to bring more information.	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	If MS is collecting data as mentioned then the problem is solved.
3247	2017	France	IOTC	IOTC	by-catch (turtles)(Reunion coastal fisheries)	France failed to report data	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	Even based on board observer program, no sea-turtle by-catch have been observed. The 2018 amendment of resolution 1606 on measures applicable in case of non-fulfillment of reporting obligations should help us to ease the fulfillment of reporting obligations.	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	Based on IOTC resolutions 1502 and 1606, MS must report Zero catches to IOTC. Even taking into consideration the 2018 amendment, previous and future Zero catches must be reported.
3248	2017	France	IOTC	IOTC	size frequency data for sharks (Reunion coastal fisheries)	France failed to report data	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	Partial data are available to estimate the size frequency data for shark species in Reunion coastal fisheries. An effort will be made to improve the level of details about total catches, catch and effort data for sharks.	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	Sharks are not brought onboard so size is not registered. Fish are released alive.
3249	2017	France	IOTC	IOTC	total catches and catch and effort data for sharks (Reunion coastal fisheries)	France submitted partial information (has not reported data by species) catch and effort data reported for the total fleetline not by IOTC standard	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	Global data are available to estimate the total catch and catch and effort data for shark species for IOTC species in Reunion coastal fisheries. An effort will be made to improve the level of details about total catches, catch and effort data for sharks.	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	The lack of detail could be related to the reduced sampling coverage. France should make an effort to improve coverage either through self-sampling or contracting observers.
3240	2017	France	IOTC	IOTC	total catches and catch and effort data for sharks (Reunion coastal fisheries)	France submitted partial information for sharks (1 species (SMA); size frequency for shark species has also been reported from observer trips only	COVERAGE	UNKNOWN	Global data are available to estimate the total catch and catch and effort data for shark species for IOTC species in Reunion coastal fisheries. An effort will be made to improve the level of details about total catches, catch and effort data for sharks.	[NOT ASSESSED]	UNKNOWN	The lack of detail could be related to the reduced sampling coverage. France should make an effort to improve data collection through the implementation of a pilot Electronic Data Monitoring system.

Annex 4 – Observer coverage by Member State and Metier

Fishing activity category level 7 / national level

Large Pelagics		Required RFMO	ICCAT										IOTC				IATTC		WCPFC	
			CYP	ESP	FRA	GBR	GRC	IRL	HRV	ITA	MLT	PRT	ESP	FRA	ITA	PRT	ESP	PRT	ESP	PRT
FPN_LPF_0_0_0	Trap fishery targeting large pelagics			20%	NA									NA						
FPN_LPF_0_0_0 (BFT)	Trap fishery targeting bluefin tuna	100		100%	NA							100%		NA						
LHM_LPF_0_0_0 (BFT)	Bottom hand line targeting bluefin tuna				NA									NA						
LHP_LPF_0_0_0 (ALB)	Hand and pole line targeting albacore				0%				NA					NA						
LHP_LPF_0_0_0 (BFT)	Hand and pole line targeting bluefin tuna			2%	1%				10%					NA						
LHP_LPF_0_0_0 (TROP)	Hand and pole line targeting tropical tunas				0%							50%		NA						
LLD_LPF_0_0_0 (ALB)	Drifting longlines targeting albacore		2%	5%	5%		1%		NA					NA						
LLD_LPF_0_0_0 (BFT)	Drifting longlines targeting bluefin tuna	20	5%	5%	9%		1%		33%					NA						
LLD_LPF_0_0_0 (SWO)	Drifting longlines targeting swordfish		5%	12%			5%		2,10%			2.9%/4.3%	12%	17%		9%	4,60%		21%	
LTL_LPF_0_0_0 (ALB)	Trolling lines targeting albacore			<1%	0									NA						
OTM_LPF_>=70_0_0 (ALB)	Midwater trawl targeting albacore				0									NA						
PS_LPF_0_0_0 (BFT)	Purse seine targeting bluefin tuna	100		100%	NA									NA						
PS_LPF_0_0_0 (TROP) *	Purse seine targeting tropical tunas			100%	80%								100%	14%			100%		100%	
PS_LPF_14_0_0 (BFT)	Purse seine targeting bluefin tuna				NA				100%					NA						
PTM_LPF_>=55_0_0 (ALB)	Pelagic pair trawl targeting albacore (mesh size >=55)													NA						
PTM_LPF_>=70_0_0 (ALB)	Pelagic pair trawl targeting albacore (mesh size >=70)				4%									NA						
PTM_LPF_0_0_0 (ALB)	Pelagic pair trawl targeting albacore				0									NA						
PTM_LPF_100-119_0_0 (ALB)	Pelagic pair trawl targeting albacore (mesh size 100-119)				0									NA						

Annex 5 – Proposed Rules of Procedure

Rules of Procedure for the Large Pelagic Regional Coordination Group

1. Scope

1.1. These Rules of Procedure are valid for the Regional Coordination Group (RCG) for Large Pelagic stocks in all regions in the framework of the Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, a management and use of data in fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the Common Fisheries Policy and repealing Council regulation (EC) No 199/2008 (recast).

1.2. These Rules of Procedure are established based on the Article 9(5) of the above-mentioned Regulation.

1.3. These Rules of Procedure are established **30th October 2018** by the Member States of the Regional Coordination Group coordinating their data collection activities in Large Pelagics fisheries.

2. Working language

2.1. The working language of the RCG is English.

3. Terms of Reference for the RCG

3.1. The RCG may agree the Terms of Reference for the RCG taking into account necessary contributions and information.

4. Meetings of the RCG

4.1. To perform its duties, the RCG shall hold one meeting annually unless agreed otherwise by the RCG. An annual meeting shall consist of plenary sessions and may include work in subgroups.

4.2. The RCG may hold additional meetings to the annual meeting. The duration, form, meeting venue, terms of reference and other relevant elements for such an additional meeting may be agreed at the RCG annual meeting or by correspondence initiated by the RCG Chairperson(s). The venue of the RCG annual meeting will rotate between Member States coordinating their LP data collection activities unless otherwise agreed by the RCG.

4.3. No later than one month before the annual or additional meeting, the Member State organizing the annual or additional meeting shall be responsible for providing

details of accommodation, travel and other organizational information relevant for the meeting.

4.4 Each Member State coordinating the data collection activities in the scope of the RCG LP appoints the participants to RCG meetings, and may choose the number of participants with due regard of the items on the agenda and decision to be taken by the RCG in the relevant meeting. The information of the nominations should be communicated to the chairperson(s) of the RCG.

4.5. Any Member State that carries data collection activities in Large Pelagics fisheries may nominate a national correspondent or an expert to participate in a RCG meeting.

4.6. Only nominated persons may participate in the RCG meetings.

5. The chairperson(s) responsibilities

5.1. The chairperson(s) of the RCG shall promote effective and productive work and working methods of the RCG. The chairperson(s), an institution or a person indicated by the chairperson shall be responsible for making the documents and information available later than one month in advance of the meeting in time and shall take all necessary action to that effect.

5.2. The chairperson(s) is responsible for preparing agendas for the RCG meetings.

5.3. The RCG chairperson(s) shall be responsible for disseminating all documents and other information related to the meeting.

6. Agenda and submission of documents

6.1. A draft agenda for the annual RCG meeting shall be made available no later than one month in advance of the meeting. A draft agenda shall be approved at the beginning of the meeting. The draft agenda will indicate on which day(s) during the meeting the discussion or decision on the draft regional plan is to be taken.

6.2. Other documents than the draft regional work plans for the RCG meetings shall be made available no later than three weeks in advance of the RCG meetings. Documents made available later than three weeks in advance of the RCG meetings, may be dealt with at the meeting in case of consent of all the national correspondents present at the RCG meeting.

7. RCG subgroups

7.1. To carry out its duties as set out in the Article 9 of the Regulation 2017/1004, the RCG may agree to establish permanent or temporary bodies, task groups, subgroups or other arrangements (hereafter called *subgroups*). The RCG will appoint the lead(s) and any other role(s) or working practices necessary and provide terms of reference. The RCG may give this mandate to the subgroup(s).

7.2. These subgroups will carry out their duties during and between the RCG meetings, as appropriate and as agreed by the RCG. The subgroup lead or a person nominated by the lead shall keep the RCG informed of the progress of such work and any issues arising at intervals agreed at the RCG.

7.3 When a subgroup is mandated to prepare a draft regional work plan in the sense of Article 9 of Regulation 2017/1004, relevant Member States shall send expert(s) with the necessary expertise related to that draft regional work plan to participate in the group's work. National correspondents and European Commission may participate in the group's work at all stages.

8. Draft regional work plans and RCG endorsement

8.1. Member States coordinating their data collection activities in the region will endeavour to agree on a draft regional work plan under Article 9 of Regulation 2017/1004, by consensus at the RCG annual meeting.

8.2. All relevant Member States shall ensure the participation of appropriate expert(s) in preparing draft regional work plans. The European Commission may participate at all stages.

8.3. Member States shall take all necessary steps to ensure that they are represented by a person mandated to take a decision on the draft regional work plan. When the RCG LP endorses, by consensus, the draft Regional Sampling Plan, it will be submitted to the Commission for approval.

8.4 A draft regional work plan, where a decision is expected to be made in accordance with the draft agenda of the RCG annual meeting, shall be circulated to the national correspondents one month in advance of the meeting. A draft regional work plan for a decision in the RCG annual meeting made available later than one month before the RCG annual meeting, may be considered and decided upon at that meeting in case of consent of all the national correspondents.

8.5. A decision on a draft regional work plan may, if necessary, for example when there is no consensus at the meeting, or a certain MMSS is not able to be present, be made by written procedure.

The chairperson of the RCG will coordinate the written procedure through National Correspondents. The procedure should be completed within an agreed timeframe.

8.6 The chairperson of the RCG shall notify the RCG of the decision within two weeks after the written procedure has ended.

8.7. In case the national correspondent is not able to participate for the meeting, he or she may send his or her vote directly by email to the RCG chair. If no vote has been received from one of the national correspondents, the vote will take place in a written procedure.

9. RCG recommendations

9.1. The RCG may give non-binding recommendations only. The aim of the recommendation is to orientate further work to be carried out on all issues related to the scope of the Regulation 2017/1004. The recommendations should provide, but are not limited to, clear and understandable stand-alone guidance, guidelines or best practices on the recommended work to be carried out, its justification and objectives, a foreseen time frame for fulfilment and to the extent possible, person(s) or institution(s) responsible for the follow up of such recommendation.

10. Cooperation between RCGs and the European Commission and other relevant bodies

9.1 RCGs and subgroup chairs shall endeavour to cross reference the ToRs of other relevant groups and subgroups from other Regions and Expert Groups.

9.2. The chairperson of the RCG and/or other person(s) mandated by the RCG may participate and represent the RCG in any coordination with other RCGs and the commission under Article 9(6) of Regulation 2017/1004, and will keep the RCG informed within an agreed time frame.

9.3. The chairperson of the RCG and/or other person(s) mandated by the RCG annual meeting may participate and represent RCG in other relevant regional bodies, arrangements or meetings and will keep the RCG informed within an agreed time frame.

11. Observers

11.1. In accordance with the Article 9(7) of the Regulation 2017/1004, RCG shall invite as observers relevant end users of scientific data, including appropriate scientific bodies as referred to in Article 26 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, regional fisheries management organizations, Advisory Councils and third countries, when necessary.

11.2. If an independent organisation or individual seeks to attend an RCG meeting as an observer, they must make a formal request to the RCG Chairperson(s) one month in advance, with justification. The RCG Chairperson(s) will consult members for a final decision. This formal request should contain at least, the following information to the chairperson(s) of the RCG at least one month in advance of the RCG meeting:

- The relevance of their participation from the Common Fisheries Policy and/or fisheries management point of view and
- Their data interest as accurately as possible relevant to that RCG and
- The scientific bodies/groups in their relevant institution or country conducting the scientific analyses based on the relevant data and
- The management body with a legal mandate for fisheries management within the CFP for which the scientific analysis based on the RCG data is conducted for and
- How, to whom and where the results of the scientific analysis referred above are intended to be made available and
- Organizational details and details of the representative to be nominated to participate
- Commitment to comply with the rules and conditions set by the RCG and any other information considered relevant by the potential observer.

11.3. The RCG shall decide by consensus prior to the annual meeting, at least two weeks prior, which observers shall be invited to attend RCG and subgroup meetings. Tuna RFMOs have a standing invitation to participate in all annual RCG LP meetings and may be invited to participate in RCG subgroup work.

11.4. After a written confirmation from the RCG chairperson(s), observers may attend the meeting. The attendance may be subject to conditions, for example – exclusion from particular discussions and presentations.

11.5. Observers are bound with the conditions referred above. If there are justified reasons to consider, that one or more of the conditions set by the RCG in the written confirmation or otherwise, are violated repeatedly or seriously by the observer, the necessity of the observer to attend or the conditions for the attendance may be re-evaluated. The observer/organization shall be informed of this, including the results of the re-evaluation, by a letter from the RCG chairperson(s) after consulting and in consent with the national correspondents of the RCG responding to the chairperson's consultation.

11.6. Observers may be invited to provide written contributions or presentations.

12. Election of the RCG chairperson(s)

12.2. One term for a chairperson covers the period of two years. The role will rotate between Member States coordinating their data collection activities in the same marine region unless otherwise agreed by the RCG

12.1. The Chairperson may be agreed by the MS present at the RCG annual meeting or elected by a simple majority.

12.3. RCG may decide to have co-chairperson(s). The same procedures and conditions as to the chairperson(s) elections apply.

13. Reporting from a RCG meeting

13.1. The chairperson(s) of the RCG or a person(s) appointed by the chairperson(s) shall be responsible for drawing up a report from a RCG meeting. The report shall contain, but is not limited to, recommendations from the RCG, the decisions taken, a summary of the RCG intersessional progress and RCG discussions, future work directions, the intended work to be carried out before the next meeting, the list of foreseeable RCG meetings and list of participants, their contact information, role and institution.

13.2. The draft report shall be uploaded to the shared platform for dissemination to all participants within two months of the RCG annual meeting. The final report will be published on the JRC website as appropriate.

14. Amending rules of procedure

14.1. These Rules of Procedure may be reviewed and amended at the RCG annual or additional meeting by consensus of all national correspondents or in a written procedure by all national correspondents replying within a set time limit of at least 1 month.

14.2. Any Member State of the RCG can request the review and amendment of the Rules of Procedure to be put on the agenda of the RCG meeting.

14.3. The list of Member States in point 1.3 may be amended in accordance with the paragraph 13.1. after a written request has been provided to the RCG chairperson(s) by a Member State not listed in the point 1.3.

Annex 6 – Proposal on the organizational structure of RCG-LP

FRAMEWORK CONTRACT – MARE/2016/22 “Strengthening regional cooperation in the area of fisheries data collection” Annex III “Biological data collection for fisheries on highly migratory species”

Project acronym: RECOLAPE

WP1 - Large Pelagic Regional Coordination group structure

Participating partners:

D.1.1 - Proposal on the organizational structure for the future RCG-LP



Deliverable coordinated by Jon Ruiz (AZTI)

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Executive summary

This deliverable is part of the Work Package 1 within the project MARE/2016/22: “Strengthening regional cooperation in the area of fisheries data collection, Annex III Biological data collection for fisheries on highly migratory species” (acronym RECOLAPE). It proposes a series of prerequisites necessary for the correct establishment and operation of the RCG-LP. It is expected that this proposal will foster the implementation of large pelagic RCG, so that RCG can become fully operational, and not get entangled into long discussions that can take several meetings/ years.

This proposal considers the holding of two preparatory meetings or stages prior to the RCG-LP main meeting (figure 1). Far too many meetings (subgroups) can hinder the participation of LP experts, thus preparatory meetings are not new meetings at all, the aim is to integrate existing ones under the umbrella of the future RCG-LP. The first stage would have the purpose to identify data gaps and prioritize LP data needs, including tuna RFMO data requirements and data transmission. Second stage will be much more gear/stock specific. This second stage would design RSP by coordinating dockside/onboard sampling for the different stocks. Finally, the main RCG meeting (third stage) will evaluate the outputs from the previous two stages, and it would be where the final decisions of greater importance and approval of regional sampling plan should be made.

With respect to the first stage, identification of data needs, DG MARE is already organizing a meeting with a similar goal, where DG MARE desk officers dealing with RFMOs and EU scientists participating in RFMO activities are involved. Thus, considering this meeting as part of the RCG-LP could be advantageous, instead of organizing a new one. Once data gaps are identified and data needs/priorities are established, in a second stage, data collection shall be coordinated among MS. Ideally this coordination should be done in methodological groups dealing with specific fisheries. The proposal includes four parallel subgroups based on stocks/gears.

- a) Tropical Tuna Treatment (T3): Focus on PS fleet and YFT/SKJ/BET
- b) Focus on Longline Fisheries outside MED
- c) MED LP fisheries: Focus on LL.
- d) Bluefin tuna sampling

In addition to the two stages mentioned above, it is necessary to hold a main RCG-LP meeting, where decisions are made based on the output from the previous stages (RSP approval, etc.). It is not necessary, in this case, such a technical profile of the participants, but they must have the capacity to make decisions.

On the other hand, synergies among RCGs, would be necessary and beneficial. The main common fields identified for cooperation among the RCGs are the ones related with the design of the regional sampling plans based on statistically sound sampling designs and data management, which includes the archiving of data and the processes of quality assurance and quality control (i.e. development of guidelines to evaluate the quality of the data, development of common software tools in R etc.).

1. Background

As provided for in Article 25 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013¹ and in the article 9 of the Recast European Regulation 1004/2017², Member States (MS) shall coordinate their data collection activities with other MSs in the same marine region. In order to facilitate this regional coordination, RCGs (Regional Coordination Groups) shall be established, with the aim at developing and implementing procedures and methods for collecting and processing data. RCGs shall draw up and agree on rules of procedures and its own organization. In this context, this document makes a proposal for the future structure of the RCG-LP (Large Pelagic) and propose optimal engage of this group among the various defined RCGs/regions.

Data collection on large pelagic fisheries outside the Mediterranean Sea was initially under the scope of RCM (Regional Coordination Meeting) Long Distance Fisheries (LDF), while Mediterranean LP fisheries were under the scope of the RCM Med&BS. However, as decided by [Liaison Meeting in 2013](#)³, a coordination group for LP covering areas of competence of RCM LDF, North Atlantic (NA), Mediterranean and Black Sea (Med&BS) and dealing with all large pelagic species and fisheries was created. This group has been initially associated with RCM-MED&BS in order to limit the number of meetings and allow Mediterranean experts on LP fisheries and stocks assessment to participate in RCM-LP subgroup while also participating in RCM-MED&BS. Between 2014 and 2017 the RCM MED&BS-LP was therefore a joint RCM with two co-chairs, one for MED&BS and one for LP.

However, as it is stated in the [RCM MED&BS-LP 2016](#) report, from the RCM-LP subgroup perspective, it was particularly unfortunate that the annual meeting of this group took place always in September very close to unavoidable ICCAT (International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas) scientific activities, resulting in the absence to the meeting of some LP data end user (ICCAT), many EU scientist participating in tuna RFMOs (Regional Fisheries Management Organizations) and Commission Unit dealing with RFMOs. RCM-LP believed that these absences should be avoided, as far as possible, in order to ensure that data needs from RFMOs are reflected in the National Programmes for data collection. In addition, from the RCM-LP subgroup

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 954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC.

² REGULATION (EU) 2017/1004 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL 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)

³ Report of the 10th Liaison Meeting. Meeting between the Chairs of the RCMs, the chair of ICES PGCCDBS, the chair of PGMED, the chair of the Regional Database Steering Committee, the ICES representative, the Chairs of STECF EWG's DC-MAP and PGECON and the European Commission

perspective, common topics between the two subgroups, RCM Med&BS and RCM-LP, were very limited. Thus, considering the specificities of these fisheries it seemed logic to have a specific thematic group (Large Pelagic Group). In 2017, LP and Med&BS experts had separated meetings, even if both subgroups were still members of the same RCG. At that time, the group agreed that the RCG-LP should be an RCG independent from Med&BS, and ideally should hold its meetings in the second quarter every year in order to avoid periods of heavy workload. This idea was presented, as an RCM-LP's recommendation, during the [14th Liaison Meeting](#)⁴. The new group will not be regional, but global, based in highly migratory species more than in a restricted geographic region; as the Regulation Recast 1004/2017 refers to coordination of activities in marine regions only (no reference to species or groups of species), RCG-LP set its region as 'all regions'. Thus, during 2018 the RCG-LP acted as an independent group, where all MSs involved on LP fisheries were invited: CYP, ESP, FRA, GBR, GRC, HRV, IRL, ITA, MLT and PRT.

In this context, this document proposes a series of prerequisites necessary for the correct establishment and operation of the RCG-LP. It is expected that this proposal will foster the implementation of large pelagic RCG, so that RCG can become fully operational, and not get entangled into long discussions that can take several meetings/ years. Additionally, in the last section, synergies with other RCMs/RCGs are explored, trying to identify points for possible Pan-regional (inter-RCG) cooperation.

2. Objective

This deliverable is part of the Work Package 1 within the project MARE/2016/22: "Strengthening regional cooperation in the area of fisheries data collection, Annex III Biological data collection for fisheries on highly migratory species" (acronym RECOLAPE). The overall objective of the project is to strength the regional cooperation in the area of biological data collection for fisheries on large pelagic fish. This purpose will be valuable to improve the coordination among European MS in the fisheries data collection field in support of stock assessment and fisheries advice. At the same time, this seeks to provide solutions to certain needs in terms of data collection identified by scientists involved in the stock assessment of tuna RFMOs and by expert groups like the RCG-LP.

To reach this purpose, the RECOLAPE project addresses several objectives:

- Facilitate the evolution of the RCM-LP towards the RCG-LP: the goal is to evolve from a single meeting to a continuous process that will have greater responsibilities in support of stock assessment and fisheries advice.

⁴ Report of the 14th Liaison Meeting. Meeting between the chairs of RCGs (and sub-group on Large Pelagics), PGECON, STECF meetings on DCF, SCRDB, key end users (ICES, RFMOs), JRC and the Commission.

- Design a RSP (Regional Sampling Plan) for large pelagic stocks: facilitating the transition from individual national work plans towards regional ones.
- Develop data collection strategy and tools regarding additional data (not yet collected on a routine basis) on FADs. Such additional data could be used in combination with traditional CPUE or for building alternative abundance indices.
- Test alternative data collection methods for those cases where traditional methods present data deficiencies, for example for data collected using Electronic Monitoring System (EMS).
- Facilitate cooperation among MS in order to improve and develop common data quality assessment procedures at national and regional levels.
- Identify points of consensus and/or disagreement that may arise during the coordination process among organizations dealing with large pelagic fisheries data collection. The idea is to identify a framework of rules and feedback to improve future coordination or expand it on other fisheries/species.

The present deliverable, D.1.1, deals with the future organization of the RCG-LP and proposes a future structure that allows this group to be fully operational. Additionally, in a second step, synergies of this group among the various defined RCGs/regions are explored, including mechanisms for coordination between them.

A first draft of this deliverable (D.1.1-*Proposal on the organizational structure for the future RCG-LP*) was presented during the annual meeting of the RCG-LP 2018, held in June in Heraklion (Greece). This document already considers all the comments made by the group.

3. Organization of the future RCG-LP's groups and subgroups

There is currently a draft document where the RCG-LP Rules of Procedure (ROP) are established. This document is not yet officially adopted, although it has already been reviewed by a large part of the MS involved in LP fisheries. Therefore, this section will not focus on these ROPs, but will make an operational proposal for the future RCG-LP:

The overall objective of the RCG-LP is to strengthen the regional cooperation in the area of biological data collection for fisheries on highly migratory species. In the current context where regional cooperation will evolve from a single meeting (RCM) to a continuous process that will have greater responsibilities (RCG), it is foreseen that this proposal will be valuable to improve the coordination among EU Member States in the fisheries data collection field in support of data transmission to tuna RFMOs, stock assessment and fisheries advice.

This proposal considers the holding of two preparatory meetings or stages prior to the RCG-LP main meeting (figure 1). Far too many meetings (subgroups) can hinder the participation of LP experts, thus preparatory meetings are not new meetings at all, the aim is to integrate existing ones under the umbrella of the future RCG-LP. The first stage would have the purpose to identify data gaps and prioritize LP data needs, including tuna RFMO data requirements and data transmission. Second stage will be much more gear/stock specific. This second stage would design RSP by coordinating dockside/onboard sampling for the different stocks. Finally, the main RCG meeting (third stage) will evaluate the outputs from the previous two stages, and it would be where the final decisions of greater importance and approval of regional sampling plan should be made.

With respect to the first stage, identification of data needs, DG MARE is already organizing a meeting with a similar goal, where DG MARE desk officers dealing with RFMOs and EU scientists participating in RFMO activities are involved. Thus, considering this meeting as part of the RCG-LP could be advantageous, instead of organizing a new one. The aim of this meeting will be to identify and prioritize LP data needs and to improve communications between EU scientist involved in data collection, scientist involved in stock assessment, DG MARE and the rest of the end user (tuna RFMOs).

Once data gaps are identified and data needs/priorities are established, in a second stage, data collection shall be coordinated among MS. Ideally this coordination should be done in methodological groups dealing with specific fisheries. In this regard, France and Spain coordinate, since many years ago, their tropical tuna purse seine fisheries in an annual coordination meeting with participation of scientists from both countries through a data analysis Working Group (Tropical Tuna Treatment, T3). During this meeting, sampling methodological issues are discussed; tools and sampling protocols are shared, discussed and eventually revised. Regional sampling coordination and possible bilateral agreements are also discussed. Scientists from non-EU landing countries like Seychelles, Madagascar, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Ghana who participate in the data collection are also invited. Specific or common scientific contributions, as well as data calls, to tuna RFMOs (ICCAT/IOTC) are jointly elaborated.

The existing trend in coordination for the tropical tuna purse seine fisheries can be understood as an example towards the regional sampling scheme. Regarding the rest of the species and fleets, such regional coordination does not currently exist. Thus, expanding the scope, and organizing similar technical meetings to coordinate data collection on other LP stocks, in which matters such as data acquisition, sampling methodology, and sampling coordination issues are discussed, could be beneficial. In this regard, RCG-LP 2017 has already made, during the [14th Liaison Meeting](#), a recommendation to hold a workshop for exploring the possibility to launch a permanent group for longline fleets outside Mediterranean waters as a complement of the existing tropical tuna T3 group. In this scenario, where the longline and purse seine fisheries outside Mediterranean waters would have specific regional data collection groups, only the fleets operating in the Mediterranean, and fleets targeting temperate tunas (bluefin tuna and albacore) in the North Atlantic would remain out from the sampling coordination network. Thus, it makes sense the creation of such

specific groups with the aim of coordinating sampling of these fisheries; Mediterranean LP fisheries (focused in longline as it is the main gear), and a coordination group focused on bluefin tuna sampling (the unique stock which includes both Mediterranean and North Atlantic). Regarding north albacore, it is true that it is outside this coordination framework. However, main countries contributing to albacore landings in the north Atlantic, Spain and France, do not share same gear/metiers. Thus, there is not much room for dockside sampling coordination. Even if coordination of other biological sampling (e.g. maturity, ages) could be beneficial, and specific data analysis subgroup has not been considered necessary.

Figure 1 shows the diagram of the possible meeting for the future RCG-LP including three stages.

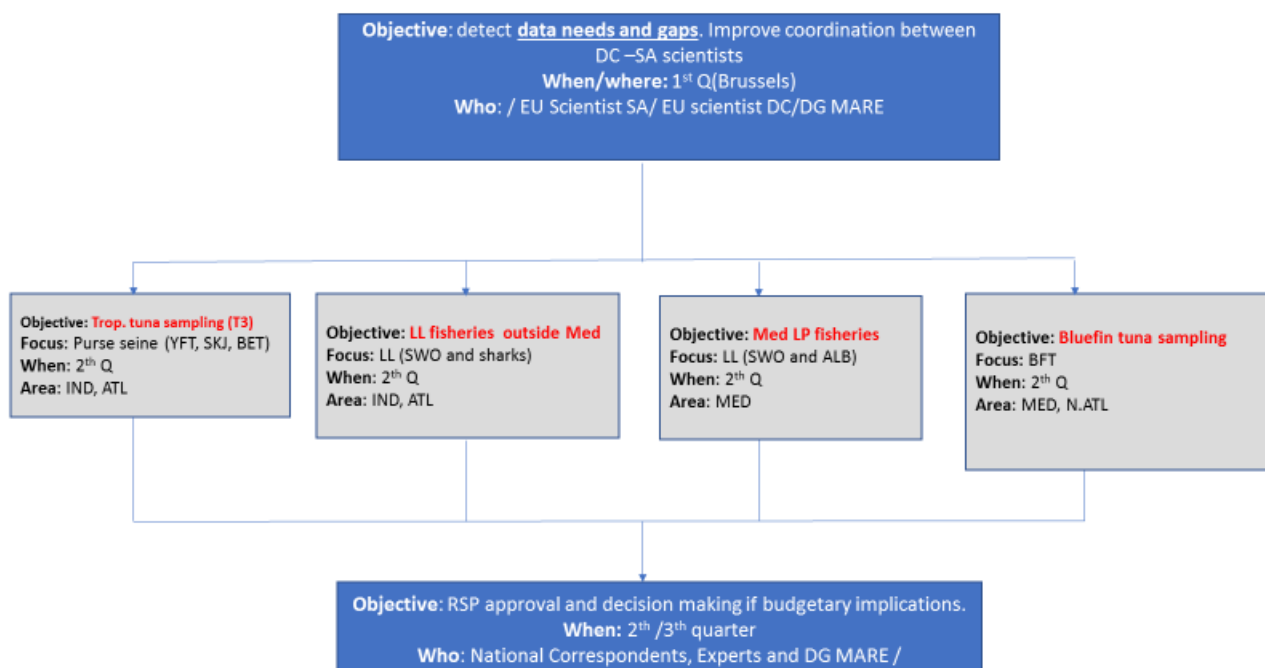


Figure1. Proposal for RCG-LP subgroups.

Bellow, details of each of these subgroups are provided ; identifying the main MS involved and the expertise that is needed.

3.1. Subgroup on data need and data gaps (stage 1):

The specific objective of this subgroup is to address issues of common interest for tuna scientist regarding data collections issues. Identify research priorities in terms of data collection, based on data gaps and data needs identified by the end users (stock assessment groups within the tuna RFMOs), and finally to improve coordination between data collection scientists and stock assessment scientists.

This same group would also be responsible of identifying needs outside the commercial fisheries sampling, such as proposing scientific surveys on highly migratory species, or the need to include new recreational fisheries in addition to those already included in table 3 under Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2016/1251⁵.

Since 2011, DG MARE has been organizing, early in the year, these types of meetings, with the overarching objective of improving the coordination between DG MARE and UE scientists working in different RFMOs. This is also a good opportunity for scientists and DG MARE Officers to exchange views on the achievements experienced at RFMOs level during the previous years and provide response to the priorities of the year in these fora. In case this existing meeting is used as part of the RCG-LP instead of creating a new group, the participation should not be by DG MARE invitation, and should be open, where each MS decides which experts participate.

Participants and expertise needed: Scientist participating in stock assessment and tuna RFMO species groups + scientists participating in data collection, including RCG meeting, DCF EWG and RFMO subgroups in data collection and statistics+ DG MARE.

Dates: First quarter every year.

Goal: Identify gaps and priorities in terms of data collection. Improve communication among scientists involved in data collection and stock assessment.

3.2. Subgroup on data analysis and Regional Sampling Design (stage 2):

The aim of this group should be the standardization and coordination of the sampling at fleet level, through the sharing of raw samples (e.g. length frequencies) collected by fleets, improving the estimates of specific annual catches and spatialized specific catches as indicated by the RFMOs. Thus, it is expected the participation of the institutes involved in the monitoring of these specific fleets, who should share and agreed on tools for data acquisition (including Data Base), data collection protocols (including codes), and data quality checks. Additionally, these groups could prepare tuna RFMO participation including data analysis and data calls. These goals have been set based on the tropical tuna T3 group experience and successful trajectory in data collection coordination. Number of parallel subgroups in this stage2 and stocks/gears allocation among subgroups has been based on the RCG – LP 2018 participants feedback. However, they should be dynamic and flexible groups, which may vary in the future, and where the group itself must decide on its operational aspects (e.g. inclusion of specific TORs (terms of reference), how often to meet or election of the Chair-person).

⁵ COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION (EU) 2016/1251 of 12 July 2016 adopting a multiannual Union programme for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors for the period 2017-2019

The proposal includes four parallel groups based on stocks/gears.

- a) Tropical Tuna Treatment (T3): Focus on PS fleet and YFT/SKJ/BET
- b) Focus on Longline Fisheries outside Mediterranean waters
- c) Mediterranean LP fisheries: Focus on longline.
- d) Bluefin tuna sampling

a) Tropical Tuna Treatment (T3)

French and Spanish fisheries research institutes (IRD and IEO) have developed some procedures to establish compatible databases aiming at compiling dockside sampling, observer and fishing dependent information. In particular, these research institutes have developed specific procedures to consolidate catches in tropical tuna purse seine fisheries by cross-checking information extracted from log-books (catch estimations and landing notes), sales notes, observer reports and sampling programmes. Additionally, methodologies, IT tools, as well as consolidated data are even shared with partner fisheries research institutes of coastal states.

This meeting is organized yearly between tropical tuna purse seine fishing countries (France, Spain, Seychelles, and some years ago Ghana and Mauritius) to produce consolidated Task 1 and Task 2 data for tuna targeted species (skipjack, yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna) as stipulated by ICCAT⁶ and IOTC⁷. The meeting allows to share all the raw samples of length frequencies collected by fleets to improve the estimates of specific annual catches and spatialized specific catches at the 1°x 1° month resolution (As indicated by the RFMOs). Additionally, bycatch sampling conducted by onboard observers is also coordinated.

Participants and expertise needed: Scientific institutes (Spain and France) and invited purse seine fishing Coastal States. Within these institutes, experts involved in port sampling, observers' programs and stock assessment.

Dates: Second quarter.

Goal: Design sampling plan and produce consolidated Task 1 and Task 2 data, for tropical tuna purse seiner fisheries.

⁶ ICCAT Rec [05-09] Recommendation by ICCAT on compliance with statistical reporting obligations.

⁷ Resolution 15/02 Mandatory Statistical Reporting Requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-contracting Parties (CPCs)

b) Coordination of the longline Fisheries outside Mediterranean waters

This subgroup would be responsible for coordinating longline fisheries sampling outside the Mediterranean waters in a way similar to the T3 group. Spain and Portugal (and France to a lesser extent) are the MS involved. Swordfish is the main target species, even if data collection on pelagic sharks and some other billfish should be also coordinated.

Participants and expertise needed: Scientific institutes (Spain, Portugal and France). Within these institutes, experts involved in observers' programs and stock assessment.

Dates: Second quarter

Goal: Design sampling plan and produce consolidated Task 1 and Task 2 data, for longline fisheries targeting swordfish outside Mediterranean waters.

c) Coordination of the Mediterranean LP fisheries data collection

This coordination group would focus in logline fleets operating in the Mediterranean, as it is the main gear used for exploiting large pelagic species in the area. In terms of stocks, coordination would consider swordfish and albacore, that are the main target species further to bluefin tuna. Both stocks are heavily exploited and MS are among the main producers for both species, with a 70-80% contribution to the total Mediterranean landings, in the recent years. According to the latest ICCAT records these stocks are ranked among the most poor ones in terms of data availability (Figure 2). The primary goal of the coordination group will be to promote regional cooperation and identify standardized sampling procedures that would improve data collection from the given fisheries. In practical terms, the subgroup will consider harmonized sampling approaches in line with those developed by the T3 group.

Table #	Fishery	SCORE	Score type
1	ALB-N stock	 7.0	score3
2	ALB-S stock	 5.5	score3
3	ALB-M stock	 1.9	score3
4	BFT-E stock (ATE region)	 5.7	score3
5	BFT-E stock (MED region)	 3.2	score3
6	BFT-W stock	 7.9	score3
7	BET-A stock (AT + MD)	 6.7	score3
8	YFT-E region	 6.7	score3
9	YFT-W region	 4.3	score3
10	SKJ-E stock	 7.0	score3
11	SKJ-W stock	 4.7	score3
12	SWO-N stock	 7.6	score3
13	SWO-S stock	 6.5	score3
14	SWO-M stock	 3.8	score3
15	BUM-A stock (AT + MD)	 4.2	score2
16	WHM-A stock (AT + MD)	 4.8	score2
17	SAI-E stock	 2.9	score2
18	SAI-W stock	 3.6	score2
19	SPF-E stock	 2.4	score2
20	SPF-W stock	 3.3	score2
21	BSH-N region	 3.3	score2
22	BSH-S region	 3.7	score2
23	BSH-M region	 0.6	score2
24	POR-N region	 1.3	score2
25	POR-S region	 0.8	score2
26	SMA-N region	 2.5	score2
27	SMA-S region	 3.3	score2

Figure 2. ICCAT scorecard on fisheries data availability by stock based on information provided in ICCAT/SCRS 2018 plenary meeting (Document SCRS 08/2018)

Participants and expertise needed: Scientific institutes from MS exploiting swordfish and albacore stocks in the Mediterranean (practically all Mediterranean MS). Within these institutes, experts involved in sampling programs and stock assessment.

Dates: Second quarter

Goal: Design sampling plan and produce consolidated Task 1 and Task 2 data, for Mediterranean longline fisheries targeting swordfish and albacore.

d) Coordination of bluefin tuna fisheries data collection

The bluefin tuna may be the most complex case; it is captured both in the Mediterranean and Atlantic, and it is exploited by a great number of gears and MS. Figure 3 shows catches in 2016 by gear and flag. Thus, it makes sense to have a specific group.

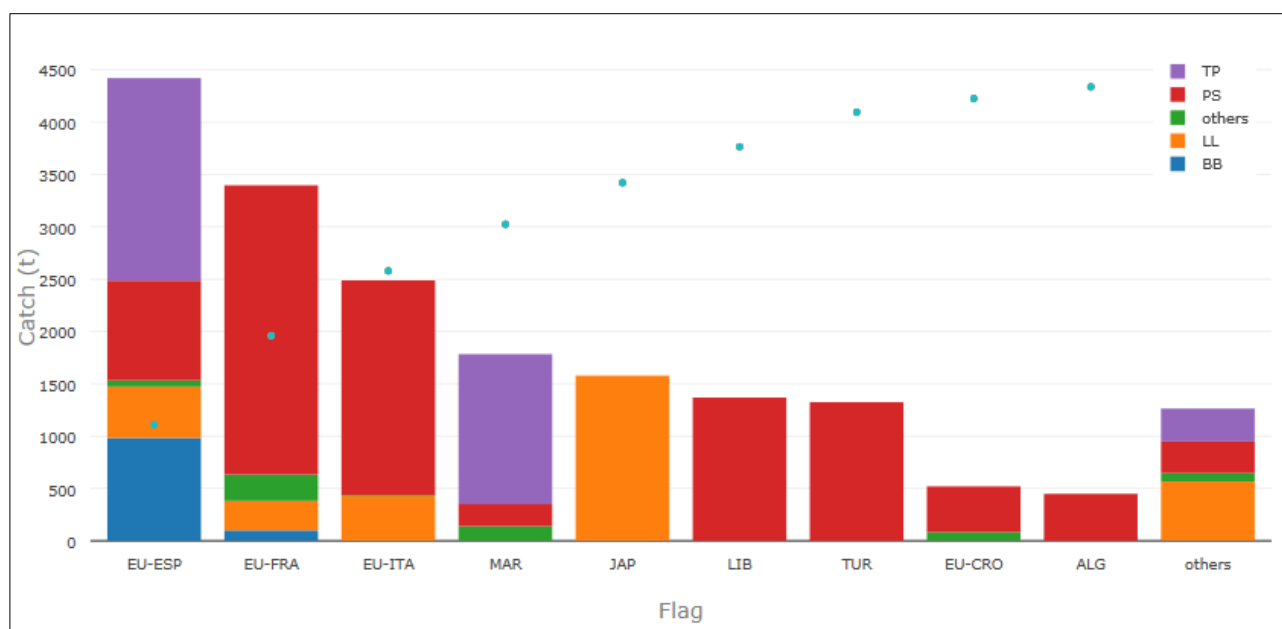


Figure 3. Bluefin tuna Task I reported values in 2016 by flag and gear.

Participants and expertise needed: Scientific institutes (Spain, France, Italy, Croatia, Malta and Portugal). Within these institutes, experts involved in port sampling, observers' programs and stock assessment.

Dates: Second quarter

Goal: Design sampling plan and produce consolidated Task 1 and Task 2 data, for bluefin tuna fisheries.

3.3. Main RCG-LP meeting (stage 3):

In addition to the two stages mentioned above, it is necessary to hold a main RCG-LP meeting, where decisions are made based on the output from the previous stages (RSP approval, etc.). It is not necessary, in this case, such a technical profile of the participants, but they must have the capacity to make decisions.

Participants and expertise needed: National Correspondent or designated representative + Scientist involved in DCF+ DG MARE.

Dates: Second quarter

Goal: Decision making (mainly if there are budget implications)

4. Synergies with other RCG

This section explores synergies with other RCGs where contractors have tried to identify which fields are of common interest among 'regions' (RCGs), and where mechanisms are proposed, if needed, for coordination between relevant RCGs. In general terms, these synergies among RCGs, would be necessary and beneficial.

The main common fields identified for cooperation among the RCGs are the ones related with the design of the regional sampling plans based on statistically sound sampling designs and data management, which includes the archiving of data and the processes of quality assurance and quality control (i.e. development of guidelines to evaluate the quality of the data, development of common software tools in R etc.).

It would not be specifically the design of the regional sampling plan for LP stocks (which as explained in the previous section, would be design and coordinated through specific gear/area related subgroups), but to be in contact with other regions to put in common tools to design a statistically sound sampling RSP, as well as tools to evaluate the quality of the data. DCF related groups convened by other end users as ICES (e. g. [PGDATA](#)⁸) could be a good example, where issues of common interest, and applicable to other areas/fisheries, are discussed. Ensuring appropriate dissemination and communication of the findings of these DCF related groups, would be beneficial.

This requires (Pan-regional) intersessional work among the different RCGs. This intersessional work will facilitate a cooperation on a supra regional level and develop the work that is needed to fulfil future coordination tasks in a broad sense.

For this purpose, the first stage would be the creation of specific Pan-regional subgroups for the common fields mentioned above (regional sampling plan subgroup and data management subgroup). Once the subgroups are created, it's the responsibility of the RCG-LP to identify the experts with the needed skills by region that will work together to these issues.

⁸ Planning Group of Data Needs for Assessments and Advice

4.1 Regional sampling plan Pan-regional subgroup

A regional sampling plan includes: agreed objectives based on end-users needs, an integrated regional sampling design, standardized sampling protocols, a common approach to quality assurance and regional tools for the management and dissemination of data.

The objectives based on end-users' needs will be case specific for each RCG and also the involvement and responsibility by MS. However, a core group of experts with the skills required under this Pan-regional subgroup would contribute in all questions regarding the sampling design and quality assurance issues.

To work efficiently, each RCG should be the responsible to identify which are the specific tasks to be covered by this Pan-regional subgroup and a responsible to lead these tasks. The assigned responsible will organize the meeting for this intersessional work (face to face meeting, skype etc.), the ToRs and finally provide the outputs to the RCGs. All this work requires important resources and it should be supported under the RCGs umbrella.

4.2 Data management Pan-regional subgroup

The overall objective of this Pan-regional subgroup should be to have a Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for a regional sampling plan that covers the whole process from sampling design to data transmission with common and agreed quality checks, data validation and quality indicators.

In previous MARE/2014/19 projects (fishPi⁹ and MED&BS¹⁰ projects), under WP4 and intersessionally between experts from both grants, a list of quality checks, together with code details, to be used on national and regional data sets were produced. Some of these quality checks are using the most advanced science in outlier detection. The quality checks were built on a specific exchange format and a data structure was also proposed.

As for the RSP Pan-regional subgroup, it's the responsibility of each of the RCGs to identify the experts with the needed skills by region that will work together to these issues.

The mechanism adopted for this intersessional work among the RCGs, would be the same that is mentioned for the other Pan-regional subgroups.

A key issue to work in these common fields is to have a regional database (RDB), with data stored in common formats, ensuring transparency and consistent standards for data processing and

⁹ The fishPi project – Regional co-operation in fisheries data collection

¹⁰ Agreement Number – MARE/2014/19 -SI2.705484 - Strengthening regional cooperation in the area of fisheries data collection in the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

dissemination. This is the current situation for the 3 northern RCGs (RCG NA, RCG NS&EA and RCG Baltic). RCG LP is working to adopt the same formats and structures to be able to upload to integrate data in the RDB. With this goal in mind, it's essential for RCG-LP to appoint a member representing Large Pelagic fisheries in the RDB Steering Committee.

In all this process of coordination and cooperation it's essential that MS take the compromise to allocate the necessary human resources needed for the work identified under these Pan-regional subgroups. The responsibility to assure the appointment of these experts under these sub-groups must fall under the RCGs.

