

Regional Coordination Group BALTIC

10-13 JUNE 2019

Copenhagen, Denmark



Regional Coordination Group
Baltic Sea Region

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Executive summary

This was the first interim year for the multi-annual Terms of References (ToRs) for the Regional Coordination Group Baltic. The group met 10-13 June in Copenhagen, Denmark. The overall aim for RCG Baltic is to review the status of current issues, achievements and developments of regional coordination and identify future needs in line with DCF requirements and the wider European environmental monitoring and management.

The setup of the RCG Baltic meeting was planned jointly with RCG North Atlantic and North Sea & Eastern Arctic (RCG NA NS&EA). In all, 6 ToRs were handled and this was the first year most of the work was carried out by designated intersessional subgroups (ISSG), starting dec 2018. 14 ISSGs were suggested 2018 (11 panregional, 1 Baltic, 2 NA). All groups were active during the period 2018-2019 and delivered results before the RCG Baltic technical meeting which was extremely valuable input for the RCG work. The main outcome from the ISSG work and the next steps were presented and discussed during the meeting. Also, outcome from the 6 WPs under FishPi 2 (MARE/2016/22) was presented and discussed in the RCG Baltic meeting. The aim of the project was to strengthen the regional cooperation in datacollection and the the outcome is of major importance for the development of RCG work. A lot of the findings are suggested to be implemented and/ or worked up further in some new suggested ISSGs. During the RCG meetings there were also a number of valuable presentation from ICES secretariat (benchmark info, ICES QAF, update on RDB/RDBES), from some ICES WG with connection to RCG work (eg WGRFS, WGBIOP), COM (update on revision of EU-MAP, outcome survey EWG).

In cases where next step in the work has financial implications and/or are of major importance, proposals for decisions were formulated and are presented in this report. The decisions are to be put forward to the decision meeting in September where all NCs will be represented.

The report consist of a main part (this document) and Part II. The main part of the report is reflecting the work done in all 6 ToRs in a short and concise way including recommendation and decisions. Part II is a compilation of ISSG reports, reflecting all work done during 2018-2019 (annex 1-12).

In all, 2 recommendations are put forward to end-users and 9 decisions are put forward to the NC decision meeting in September.

1 Administrative details

Regional Coordination Group name

Regional Coordination Group Baltic

Year of Appointment within the current cycle

1

Reporting year within the current cycle (1, 2 or 3)

1

Chair(s)

Maria Hansson, Sweden

Tapani Pakarinen, Finland

Meeting venue

Copenhagen, Denmark

Meeting dates

10-13 June 2019

2 Terms of Reference

- 1. Propose ways to improve the alignment between data collection and end-user needs (by region)**
 - Define end user needs and assess how they are met by current and future data collection.
 - Define and suggest mechanisms for communication and implementation of end user needs
 - Feedback from ICES end user groups and RCG feedback on their recommendation
 - Improve regional cooperation for small scale fisheries and assessing effects on the ecosystem
 - Formulate recommendation(s) for revision of EU-MAP to ensure that it is in line with end user needs
- 2. Implement and maintain data quality in data collection**
 - Assess the documentation of data quality procedures
 - Update on fisheries overview and sampling overview
 - Update on development of RDB and RDBES
 - Review the outcome of regional orientated projects and other groups
 - Develop strategy for implementation of electronic data capture (REM).
- 3. Review impact on management measures on data collection**
 - Assess Implication on the landing obligation.
- 4. Development and implementation of Regional Workplans**
 - Identify and propose the building blocks of regional workplan
 - Review and evaluate the outcome of regional orientated projects to identify template, content, actions to be incorporated in regional workplan.
 - Optimizing the use of surveys: efficiency, multi-purpose & task sharing Decisions and actions to be taken.
- 5. Propose ways to improve the regional coordination and feedback on regional issues**
 - Review and evaluate the outcome of regional orientated projects
 - Develop & adopt tools and working procedures for more effective regional cooperation and coordination.
- 6. Support of ToRs**
 - Promote publication on findings, likely in the form of peer-reviewed publication (e.g. CRR) that documents the development of methodologies in the field of regional coordination & data collection and the state of scientific knowledge on the topic at the end of the 3-year TOR period
 - Identify pilot studies. Decisions and actions to be taken.

3 Summary of Work plan RCGs 2019-2021

Year 1

End-user Needs: fine tune dialogue & assess additional needs

Review & improve feedback mechanism (benchmark, data call, SID)

Cont. review end user needs

Propose recommendations for EUMAP revision to address end user needs

Data Quality: procedures and documentation

Review/Develop documentation on inventory and quality of DCF data

Coordinate automation of data flows

Regional Sampling plans: review & progress

Review outcome of regional oriented projects (Demersal, Pelagic, bycatch), agree on next steps to develop operational proposals for regional sampling plans

Regional Work Plan: set up basic structure, test procedure

Agree on basic building blocks, develop structure and content, agree on 1st proposal for testing

Year 2

End-user Needs: fine tune dialogue & assess additional needs (cont.)

Cont. review end user feedback (Benchmark, SID, Data calls, Surveys)

Identify new and obsolete data parameters under new EUMAP

Data Quality: Transition to RDBES, electronic data capture

Finalise documentation on inventory and quality of DCF data and elements to be forwarded to regional work plan)

Agree on adoption of automated processes

First draft strategy on coordinated electronic data capture

Regional Sampling plans: review & progress

Finalise and agree on operational proposals for regional sampling plans to be forwarded to regional work plan

Regional Work Plan: enhance structure, review procedure

Add further content and documentation, review and refine process

Year 3

End-user Needs: fine tune dialogue (cont) & assess additional needs

Cont. review end user feedback (Benchmark, SID, Data calls, Surveys)

Agree on additional/obsolete parameters

Data Quality: Transition to RDBES, electronic data capture

Complete transition to RDBES

Complete strategy for implementation of electronic data capture

Regional Sampling plans: finalise

Refine text and content for adoption

Regional Work Plan: finalise

Incorporate agreed sampling regional plans and data quality documentations, finalise STECF proposal

4 List of Outcomes and Achievements of RCG Baltic in this delivery period

During the first year of the new 3-year term of RCG Baltic the work under each ToR has been carried out by designated intersessional subgroups (ISSG). The deliverables for this period were delivered before the meeting. The main outcomes and the next steps were presented and discussed during the meeting. Below is a short summary of the work done by ToR at the 2019 meeting. Further progress, outcomes and deliverables achieved during the meeting are described in the RCG ISSG Report 2019 Part II, Reports on ISSG work 2018-2019 annex 1-12.

5 Progress report on ToRs and workplan

5.1 ToR 1 Propose ways to improve the alignment between data collection and end-user needs.

During this year's meeting, a lot of progress has been made under ToR 1 as follows:

- Feedback from the Intersessional Sub-Group End user
- Feedback from the Intersessional Sub-Group Revision EU-MAP

5.1.1 Feedback from ISSG End user

5.1.1.1 Progress during RCG BALTIC 2019

The sub group has had several skype meetings with selected members of the end-user group; 21/8, 18/12, 14/1, 12/2, 13/2 and 21/2 and one physical meeting hosted by ICES the 22/2. The minutes from the meeting with ICES and a full report on the ISSG End-user is attached in Annex 1 of "given Part II: of the RCG Baltic 2019 report "Reports on Intersessional SubGroup (ISSG) work 2018-2019".

Data call

The RCG welcomes the improvements made to the general ICES data call in later years, which at the moment covers most of the stocks for stock assessment. However, there are still some issues and potential improvements that data providers have provided feed-back to the RCGs on. The RCG suggests that the updated ICES stock data base (SID) should be used as part of a feedback loop, as it now allows comments from data providers to be sent directly to stock coordinators. Further, SID could be developed to capture in more detail what data is used and therefore needed for stock assessment than RCGs making the assumption that the data call provides that information. As an example, in the present data call it is not possible to see if the maturity data provided was used in an annual update, or not used at all and it can therefore be difficult to judge for the RCG how relevant data is for the stock assessment. If the data is not required, then the data call should not ask for the data.

The provision of data takes time and more data calls and greater diversity in those calls and tight deadlines puts pressure on a limited resource and leaves less time for assuring the data that is going to be used. This should be a consideration when the calls are drafted - asking for data that is not needed and/or data that has already been provided and not changed since the last submission is inefficient. The draft should only ask for updates if the historical data has changed.

A suggestion was made that ICES secretariat could provide support to WG in drafting more consistent and clearer data calls. The experience of the Baltic assessment working group (WGBFAS) in 2019 is an example of good practice. Here the ICES professional secretary, in cooperation with the stock coordinator/ assessor, went through all stocks and data needed for the different assessments in plenary. For DLS stocks, if ages were only needed from surveys it was made clear that age data was not required for the commercial data.

Further, the RCG supports ICES data centers aim to launch the ICES assessment data call in December as the deadline dates have significant impact on work processes and resource planning in the national laboratories.

A word of caution – an earlier datacall should not mean that data can be provided any earlier. The earlier in the year that the deadline is set the less time institutes have to collate, process and QA the catch, effort, age and sample data from the tail end of the preceding year.

As part of the output produced by the fisheries overview subgroup, the RCG Baltic analyzed a list with all landings by species / SD / MS. This was conducted to take into account the EU-MAP (2016/1251) where it is stated that age information shall be collected and coordinated on regional level based on end-user needs. All species with landings in the Baltic was discussed in plenary. It was suggested by

the RCG Baltic that for stop aging for the species where ICES is presently not using age information from the commercial fishery. However, otoliths from the commercial fishery should still be sampled if future needs for ages in assessment would appear. Further it was highlighted that the ages should be sampled and read from the survey as these data is used for stock assessment. The species where age readings from commercial samples should be terminated was ; Dab, Flounder (all 4 stocks), Brill and Turbot.

Upload logs

Up until this meeting the Upload logs had not been considered in the drafting of the code and report templates for the regional, fishery and stock overviews. When the data is used in estimations for assessments, the upload logs will be an important reference to the limitations of the data. It would be wrong to assume that all the data collected is available in the RDB. The RCG suggests that the upload reports should be considered by the SC for the RDBS and the ISSG Data quality:

- a) They should decide whether they are necessary and effective in capturing how complete and useable the Sample, Catch and Effort data might be.
- b) They should decide whether the upload procedure for the RDBES should provide the same facility to qualify each MSs uploads.

Survey data to be uploaded and available

In relation to the Survey Evaluation for the new drafting of EUMAP the RCGs have been working on mapping the use of surveys in the stock assessment. During this process it has become clear that, although many surveys are partly financed under the DCF and are used in stock assessments, not all surveys have their data uploaded and available on an international database, limiting access for the public and also other institutes and scientists. It also complicates the use of the data in any assessment. This is not necessarily a reluctance by MS to share the data, upload issues and data compatibility are often the main reasons. For example the data and survey indices from all the Nephrops Underwater TV surveys do not have a common international database available to upload them. To ensure transparent, well-documented, standardised, discoverable, and easily accessible data it should be the aim of Member States and ICES that all data presently used for stock assessment are stored in an international database and publicly available.

The RCG therefore recommends that it is the MS responsibility with ICES, to ensure that all the mandatory survey data is uploaded to existing international databases, or the correct storage is made available and the data then uploaded - especially if the surveys are coordinated by an Expert Group. Ultimately all survey data, if used for stock assessments whether mandatory or not need be made publically available.

5.1.1.2 Workplan 2020-2021

Review and streamline dialogue between data providers (RCGs) and End-users (ICES) in order to identify effective processes to meet end-user needs and allow the RCG to prioritise its activity relating to future **data collection, storage and transmission functions**.

ToRs

- 1) Review progress since last year
- 2) To see how best to improve on current interactions and communications with RCGs and ICES including using established mechanisms particularly in reference to:
 - a) Surveys

- Maintain and update, in collaboration with the ICES secretariat, the stock and survey databases developed for the 2019 evaluation of DCF surveys. Agree on a final naming of surveys for the databases and harmonize this with ICES (and databases).
 - Stations & otoliths. Can we use the outcome from BIOTIM to optimize the age/length sampling. Have ISDAA worked on optimization of station allocation.
 - SID. To work together with ICES in improving the variables used in SID and try to link the information to other databases.
 - Review of outcome of STECF 04 on mandatory surveys.
- b) Data for the Benchmark process
- DATRAS. Inventory list. DIG on providing similar data from survey data bases.
 - RDB. Inventory list. It should be possible by species and area to get an overview of available data within the RDB. We need a list on landings by stock and MS to improve the regional coordination of DLS stocks.
 - Stock overviews from RCG on all stocks on the benchmark list.
- c) Data collection
- Documentation
 - Best practice
 - Quality framework
- d) Data calls – Timing of EGs limits data quality checks. Still need to improve on streamlining the calls to what is actually wanted and what is needed. Still need to capture what is used

Workplan until RCG meeting in 2020.

Date	Task	Responsible	Other Participants
September 2019	Skype meeting with Rui, Jon and Marie on the SID and to conduct a workplan	Jon and Marie	Rui, Lucia
NC meeting (September)	Finalize the ToRs for the subgroup on End-user needs	Jon and Marie	RCG chairs and hole sub group
Liason meeting	Other end-users than ICES ??	Jon and Marie	
October 2019	Skype meeting with sub group on fisheries and stock overviews (DLS stocks)	Jon and Marie	Nuno, Lucia, Sven
March 2020	Skype meeting to plan end-user meeting with ICES	Jon and Marie	Whole sub group
March 2020	End-user meeting with ICES	Jon and Marie	Whole sub group and participants from ICES
April 2020	Writing report to RCG	Jon and Marie	Whole sub group
June 2020	Presenting to RCG	Jon and Marie	

5.1.1.3 Proposals for Recommendations and Decisions

RCG Baltic 2019-R1 Data check in RDB	
Recommendation	Data check in the RDB
Justification	Presently there seems to be a difference between data uploaded to the RDB and IC.
Follow-up actions needed	ICES data centre to compare data for 10 stocks (central herring, eastern Baltic cod, sprat 22-32 – from the Baltic) between IC and RDB. This information needs to be sent to MS contact list before 1. October 2019. MS to look into data difference and explain difference, correct them if mistakes are discovered and re-uploaded before 1. December 2019.
Responsible persons for follow up actions	ICES data centre and MS
Time frame (deadline)	Before 2020.

RCG Baltic 2019-R2 Data from mandatory surveys to be publicly available	
Recommendation	All data from mandatory research vessel surveys (Table 10 EU 2016/1251) should be made publicly available through an international database
Justification	Mandatory surveys funded under EUMAP and used for stock assessment, should be made publicly available.
Follow-up actions needed	MS to start the process of making all surveys in table 10 public available through an ICES data base.
Responsible persons for follow up actions	RCGs and ICES to identify missing data and the appropriate international database. MS to work to provide these data
Time frame (deadline)	Before 2020

RCG Baltic 2019 – D1 - To terminate the age readings for dab, flounder, brill and turbot from the commercial fishery in the Baltic sea (SD 22-32)	
Relates to	Outcome from ISSG “End user” and according to EU-MAP 2016/1251 that data should be collected based on end user needs agreed at marine regional level.
When	Brussels, September 2019

Details of Decision to be taken	NCs to decide on: To terminate the age readings for dab, flounder, brill and turbot from the commercial fishery in the Baltic sea (SD 22-32) Presently age readings from the commercial fishery is not used in the stock assessment for the given stocks, and these data is not asked for in the ICES data call. Sampling of the ages from the commercial fishery should continue if end-users at a certain point would need ages again. Age readings are however, used from the surveys and it is important to keep conducting the age readings from these species from surveys.
Implication	As ICES in the new data call will not ask for age readings from the commercial data, MS can already in 2019 stop aging the commercial samples from the given species. Start 2020 when the new data call is launched by ICES RCG chairs to send the decision to the ICES secretary and WGBFAS
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs Baltic
Supporting Documentation	

5.1.2 Feedback from ISSG Revision EU-MAP

5.1.2.1 Progress during RCG BALTIC 2019

The EU multiannual Union programme for data collection – EU-MAP (Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2016/1251) expires at the end of 2019. The new Data Collection Framework Regulation 2017/1004 has been adopted after the entry into force of the 2017-2019 EU-MAP Decision and a new EU-MAP needs to take into account the new legal framework for data collection. In order to allow for proper consultations of all relevant parties, the current EU-MAP provisions has been prolonged unchanged for a period of one-two years.

Revision of the EU-MAP has been started and the aims are to integrate the results from consultations with Member States through RCGs, STECF, other relevant end users and stakeholders. The first step has for the Regional Coordinating Groups (RCG's) to establish an intersessional RCG group to review any misunderstandings, errors or inappropriateness's of the present EU-MAP as well as suggestions for changes of the EU-MAP.

The RCG Intersessional Group for the Revision of the EU-MAP meet 6 – 8 May, 2019 in the VAC Virginie Lovelinggebouw, Gent, Belgium and the meeting was hosted by ILVO, Belgium. The meeting was attended by 19 participants from 14 Member States and one participants from the DG MARE. Unfortunately, the PGECON meeting 2019 has been scheduled to be held in the same week as the RCG Intersessional Group for the Revision of the EU-MAP. Therefore, no input on the part of the legislation the social and economic issues have been reviewed by the group. The outcome from the work is summarized in RCG ISSG 2018-2019, Annex 2.

ToR for the meeting was:

- a) Consider and propose on the basis of input from the RCG's and the recommendations given in the document "Recommendations for the revision of the Multiannual Union Programme

for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors (EU-MAP), priority issues and outstanding questions, October 2018” and the consequences any new data collection may have for the present data collection.

- b) Assess any new requests from end-users providing scientific advice for the management of the CFP and the consequences any new data collection may have for the present data collection.
- c) Assess any new additional data collection and consider any related cost implication and the consequences any new data collection may have for the present data collection.
- d) On the basis of evaluations in ToR a-c propose any changes to the present EU-MAP.

As a starting point for the review of the present EU-MAP each participants presented their general view on what is working and what is not working. Furthermore, their view on whether the revision of the EU-MAP should be of a more fundamental character or whether the revision just should be minor changes.

The general opinion was that the revision of the EU-MAP just should be minor changes and that the changes should aim to improve the process of transforming legislation text to setting up national data collection work plans. Moreover, the revision should also include correction of errors and improvement of the text for clarity reasons.

The Subgroup addressed the biological questions as raised in the EU Consultation document on the potential revision of EU-MAP biological and socio-economic data. Prior to the Subgroup meeting, input was requested from RCG chairs and participants. The input provided was summarized in a matrix, covering all questions and responses. The RCG subgroup reviewed the input and prepared a draft general RCG response to the document. This draft response is send to all RCGs for consideration and to finalize the response. The RCGs will respond to the prepared draft response, whether they agree or not, if not, why. The subgroup prepared a response matrix for the respective RCGs. The subgroup chairs will follow-up on the responses by each RCG and send the final version to the Commission as input to the September 2019 EWG in preparation.

In addition to the review of the question provided by DG MARE to the end-users a review was made on EU-MAP legislation. The following documents were reviewed:

Commission Delegated Decision on the multiannual Union programme for the collection and management of biological, environmental, technical and socio-economic data in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

Commission Implementing Decision on the list of mandatory research surveys and thresholds for the purposes of the multiannual Union programme for the collection and management of data in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

The outcome of the review and the suggestion for text changes of the legal text was made in the two above mentioned documents. The suggestions for text changes were made with track changes in Word versions of the documents.

Most of the suggested text changes relates to simplification and to reducing any ambiguity of the legal text. Unfortunately, the time did not allow changes of table 1A, 1B and 1C as well as minor changes to some of the other tables.

The following changes to the tables were:

Table 1A: To be merged with table 1B and 1C. The table should be build on the basis om species, region, management area (TAC area).

Table 1B and 1C: see above.

Table 1D: To be deleted.

Table 1E: Could be included in table 1A.

Table 2: Length classes suggested to be deleted as it is only used when reporting, not for sampling.

Table 3: To be deleted as species to be sampled by region is to be decided and coordinated at regional level based on end-users needs.

Table 4: Variables to be included should only be variables that according to the Control Regulation are mandatory to record.

Table 5A: Not assessed by the subgroup.

Table 5B: Not assessed by the subgroup.

Table 5C: Deleted and substituted by Appendix II (Geographical stratification by Region) of the COMMISSION DECISION of 18 December 2009 adopting a multiannual Community programme for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector for the period 2011-2013 (2010/93/EU).

Table 6: Not assessed by the subgroup.

5.1.2.2 Workplan for 2020 – 2021

The report from the ISSG 'Revision EU-MAP' will be sent to the Commission before the end of June 2019 as one input for the revision process. A STECF EWG meeting is planned for September 2019 where experts are encouraged to take part and contribute to the revision.

The Commission presented its approach on the development of the EU MAP. As a temporary solution, the EU MAP was renewed and already published on 4 June 2019. It will be applicable during 2020 and 2021.

The Commission will continue work on a more permanent solution, i.e. revision of the EU MAP, which is expected to come into force from 2021. During July 2019 an external contractor will compile information received from end users, RCG and EWG on surveys. During September 2019 MS input will be incorporated into the consultation process and a draft proposal for a legal act will be prepared. The Commission is aiming to adopt the EU MAP and Work Plan Template by early autumn 2020.

The revised EU MAP will aim at preserving the core requirements of the presently applicable EU MAP with necessary adjustments and additional data collection requirements if so required by the outcomes of the pilot studies.

RCGs are requested to:

- coordinate compilation of replies to future data needs at EU and regional level including needs from end users
- contribute to the consultation on the EU-MAP from Dec. 2018 (should not include needs which can be defined at regional level)
- be flexible and proactive (organise themselves and produce clear, concise, well-argued documents) to facilitate the EU-MAP revision, considering the tight adoption schedule

5.1.2.3 Proposals for Recommendations and Decisions

RCG Baltic endorses the approach and outputs from the ISSG and found the suggested changes useful and that the suggested changes would improve the legal text.

The modification to the current EU-MAP should be minimal, aimed at simplifying the requirements and the reference tables.

No proposals for decisions was put forward for the Decision meeting.

5.2 ToR 2 Implement and maintain data quality in data collection

During this year's meeting, progress has been made under ToR 2 as follows:

- Feedback from the ISSG 'Facilitate the production of regional overviews of fisheries and sampling'
- Feedback from ISSG 'Metier issues'
- Feedback from the ISSG on Facilitate quality assurance of data and sampling programmes'
- Feedback from the ISSG SCRDB & RDBES Core group + use of data by the sub-groups.
- Output from Work Package 6 of FishPi2 on Data quality
- Main elements of criteria developed of data quality by respective WGs to be used by RCG – ICES WGBIOP

5.2.1 Feedback from the ISSG 'Facilitate the production of regional overviews of fisheries and sampling'

5.2.1.1 Progress during RCG BALTIC 2019

A summary of the progress made during the intersessional work is presented below. Further progress, outcomes and deliverables achieved during the intersessional work are described in Annex 3 of Part II of this report "Reports on Intersessional Sub-Group (ISSG) work 2018-2019".

The group met in 10 online conferences (via Skype) since december 2018 and had several smaller Skype meetings in between dealing with specific tasks. In a first step, the group reviewed the work that had been done in the different RCGs regarding the data analysis and fisheries overviews. Based on that review, the group agreed on a common structure for headings and graphical content of the overviews. It was decided that structure would be used as a starting point for all RCGs, facilitating comparative analyses across regions. The group also decided on using [Github](#) (in the ICES EG section) as repository for the r-scripts developed. A restricted [sharepoint](#) was used to hold documents, protocols and RDB data extracts. A common extraction and preparation format was defined for RDB data.

At the start of subgroup work, reports on annual fisheries statistics of landings and effort (CL and CE tables of RDB) were found to be comparatively more developed than sampling overviews and quality indicators. This is largely explained by the focus of the work carried on former RCM (and RCG) groups on fisheries overviews, with less emphasis on analysis and evaluations of sampling data. Still, the fisheries overviews largely differed across RCGs, with different sections and types of graphs involved. Obtaining a common and coherent annual fisheries overview across all RCGs was thus established as the first goal of subgroup work towards the 2019 RCGs. This option later proved to be the most efficient considering that with regards to CL and CE analysis many scripts and routines for several fisheries statistics and overviews already existed; while routines working on sampling quality indicators or other measurements (CS tables) were more sparse and would require a level of planning and development that would not allow meeting deadlines at this early stages of pan-regional collaborative work. Still, in total, the four types of overviews were planned; only development differed among them. 2017 RCG NA and mac.nea data were the datasets selected as case-studies for development.

The documents on fisheries overviews are separated into two reports, providing an annual overview of the most recent data-year ([001 annual fisheries overview](#)) and an overview of data time series

([002 multiannual fisheries overview](#)). These two documents are presently in advanced stage of development, with the former being considered finalized.

The document on sampling statistics contains overviews on sampling intensity and -distribution of the most recent year ([003 sampling overviews](#)) and a document providing graphs and overviews for specific case studies or exemplary stocks/areas ([004 stock overview MAC NS](#)) are presently in early draft version and RCG members are welcome to contribute ideas and help specifying, which sampling statistics they would like to see included in a later, more advanced version.

Main achievements

- Common format for exchange
- Common format for data preparation
- Common private repository for RDB datasets
- Common public repository for code development
- Common set of functions (barplots, maps, river plots) and auxiliary datasets (e.g., colour coding, shapefiles, RCG specific graphical parameters)
- Agreement on common structure for annual fisheries overviews, multi-annual fisheries overviews, sampling overviews and stock overviews
- Common R-markdown script for annual fisheries overviews (in production)
- Production of 2018 fisheries overview document for all RCGs

Discussion outcome during RCG technical meeting: A process was agreed on quality checking, and development of new reports publication and use of new reports (See fig.

Progress during the RCG Baltic 2019

- During the meeting, the document *RCG_BA_2018_Annual_Fisheries_Overview* was presented. The other three documents were available for commenting and reviews as drafts, using 2009 to 2017 data. RCG Baltic discussed the respective graphs, tables and overviews of the 2018 Baltic Sea RDB data and made a lot of helpful comments and suggestions which will be included in the next intersessional work to finalize the document and establish it as a standard output.
- RCG Baltic also agreed, that some of the scripts of the fisheries overview should be available to the national data submitter of the RDB, where they can serve as a quality check before uploading. Such a script will be developed during the next intersessional work.
- First graphs and ideas for the sampling overviews were presented and got very positive feedbacks. Some changes were suggested and will be discussed further in the ISSG.
- The amount of overviews and graphs in the stock overview document might however be quite large, if not only the assessed species (WGBFAS) but also other important species (e.g. sandeel) should be displayed. The RCG Baltic therefore suggests the development of a Shiny app (an interactive web application based on R scripts and routines), where single stocks could be selected and graphs be generated.
- No further decisions were made on the multiannual fisheries overview and the case study document.
- RCG Baltic suggests that there should be more collaboration with ICES groups, especially with the sampling overviews, such as WGBIOP (e.g. age-reading), WGCATCH (reviewing the methods of the sub-group, developing guidelines) and the assessment working groups (sampling overviews, spatiotemporal distributions).

- With regards to data policy and confidentiality issues RCG NA NSEA considered that a consultation with the SC-RDB (Figure 5.1) and final approval by NCs (Figure 5.2) constitute appropriate safe-guards for publication of the material.

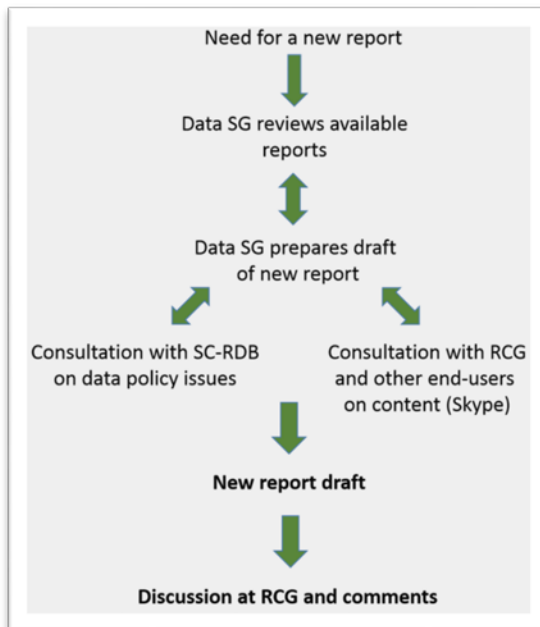


Figure 5.1 Fisheries Overviews: Process for the development of new reports

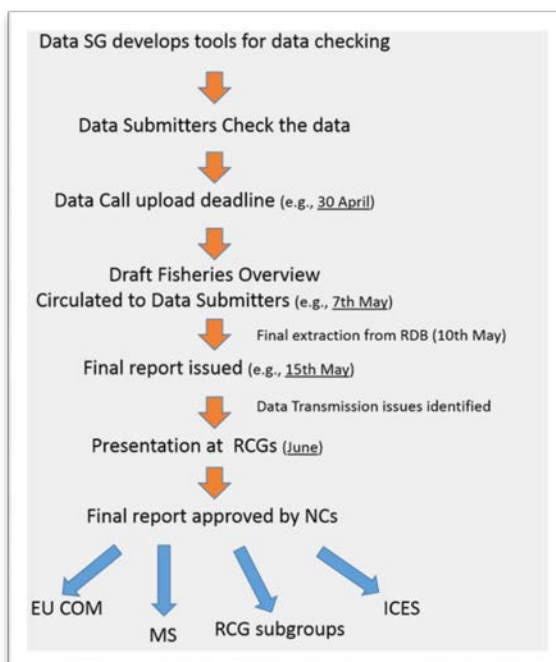


Figure 5.2 Fisheries Overviews: Agreed process on quality checking, publication and use of new reports

5.2.1.2 Workplan 2020-2021

The work of the subgroup was presented during 2019 RCGs. It is expected that an ammended version of document “001_annual_fisheries_overview” is reviewed and accepted as a routine document for future RCG usage. Key decisions need also to be taken with regards to inclusion/exclusion of several analytics in the remainder documents. In a next step, the groups will have to decide on the need for regional specifications in the available overviews.

After receiving the feedback from RCGs, the subgroup aims to continue to improve the existing scripts, extending them to the remainder of the documents and new analytics. Collaboration will also be established with WGBIOP whereby feedback will be obtained with regards to the content of the 004_Stock Overviews.

It is also intended to produce an R-package and a Shiny app that will give more flexibility to the end users and make the data gathering more easily accessible.

The subgroup will continue their work on a regular basis throughout the year to improve their achievements and give feedback to the RCG-chairs in regular intervals.

In summary the next tasks are:

- Incorporate RCG feedback, produce final reports for NC approval
- Develop tools for quality checking of data by data submitters
- Develop the Sampling and Stock overviews, in consultation with SC-RDB with regards to data policy issues. Collaborate with ICES WGBIOP on the stock overview and other end-users interested in using the different products.
- Document functions, develop R-package and a Shiny app
- Decide on regional specifications in the documents
- Review and analyse 2019 BMS and logbook registered discards present in CS and CL data in the RDB, making these data visible as graphs in the different types of overviews

5.2.1.3 Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

RCG Baltic 2019 – D2 Annual fisheries overview – approve content	
Relates to	Outcome of ISSG ‘Facilitate the production of regional overviews of fisheries and sampling’
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	Approve routine use of 001_annual_fisheries_overview. Suggestions made during the RCGs in June 2019 will be included in the next version of this document. NCs to approve the idea, concept and content of the annual fisheries overview document and whether this is a document that will be beneficial to the work of RCG and the assessment working groups.
Implication	The approval would finalize the first document of the ISSG and establish it as a standard document which will be produced before the RCGs (and preferably before the assessment working groups).

Who needs to take decision/agree	NC's NANSEA and Baltic
Supporting Documentation	Section 5.2.1, Google Docs: 001 annual fisheries overview

RCG Baltic 2019 – D3 Annual fisheries overview – to be public available	
Relates to	Outcome of ISSG 'Facilitate the production of regional overviews of fisheries and sampling'
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	NCs to approve whether the overviews can be made public as a stand-alone published document after RCG use The document will be reviewed before publication. Decide on who to review and approve (RCGs, SCRDB or other ?)
Implication	The report of the latest fisheries overview (one year back) would be made public after the RCGs
Who needs to take decision/agree	NC's NANSEA and Baltic
Supporting Documentation	Section 5.2.1, Google Docs: 001 annual fisheries overview

5.2.2 Feedback from the pan regional ISSG on 'Metier issues'

5.2.2.1 Progress during RCG BALTIC 2019

In 2018, a DCF Métier workshop was held. The workshop described the background of the métier work and highlighted that various methods have been implemented by MS to assign métiers to transversal data, and that different data sources are available across countries. A general workflow for assigning métiers to transversal data was developed, allowing for different data sources and situations. Common issues were discussed and where possible, a guideline for the best practices was given. The intersessional sub-group on Metier issues continued a number of work-streams that the workshop had identified. Further progress, outcomes and deliverables achieved during the intersessional work are described in Annex 4 of Part II of this report "Reports on Intersessional Sub-Group (ISSG) work 2018-2019".

The key points from the ISSG work on Métier issues:

1. To set up a repository for storing reference lists, scripts and documentation of procedures.
 - A public GitHub repository has been set up and is available by the link: <https://github.com/ices-eg/RCGs/tree/master/Metiers>
 - Reference lists, scripts and documentations from some member states are available there.

2. Initiate and collect documentation of logic applied by MS to assign métiers.
 - Excel template is developed and is available at GitHub.
 - At the moment of RCG meeting filled documentation of 5 MS were available.
3. Make métier descriptions based on template.
 - R Markdown script was developed to output two types of reports as word documents:
 - o Overview report listing metiers by region and MS.
 - o Metier description report.
4. Agree on a reference list of species grouped into species groups.
 - A common species reference list has been developed, based on FAO ASFIS species list.
 - Each species are assigned to one group (Grouping 2), which can be used by a script.
5. Clean up the métier lists. Remove overlapping métiers and standardize the codes.
 - The current list of approved metiers was splitted up by region and analysed.
 - For standardisation of metier codes and to avoid overlapping metiers the following system was suggested:
 - o `_>0_0_0` for unknown mesh size.
 - o `_0_0_0` for no mesh size (e.g. longliners).
 - o For traps (FYK, FPN, FPO, FIX), no mesh size ranges are proposed, `"_>0_0_0"` can always be applied.
6. Make a script for a standard procedure for assigning métiers based on a common data format, taking into account the recommendations made at the Metier workshop.
 - An R script has been developed that assigns metiers to transversal data, using a specified input format. It is currently working for the Baltic Sea. It assigns the metier by fishing sequence defined as a combination of time, area and gear.
 - The script has been tested by Denmark in area 27.3. Over 95% of the lines in the tested data set were assigned to the same metier as when using national procedures. The remaining 5% were assigned to other metiers due to overlapping metiers.
 - The script can be used if a metier list without overlapping metiers is approved, and it could be further developed for national refinements and could be improved by including procedures that analyse the general patterns of fishing vessels and algorithms that can assign metiers when they are not currently assigned due to missing/erroneous data.
7. Test effort calculation method agreed in the WKTRANSVERSAL in Nicosia for the RDB CE table.
 - Comparison between Effort Calculations – Regional Database (CE) and Transversal Data Workshop (fecR) methods was done. Comparison between UK FECR and RDB CE Days at Sea was performed.
 - Small overall differences in UK data was seen (mainly for passive gears and for small vessels), and in overall the fecR methodology is producing intended results.
8. Test impact of change of measure to determine target assemblage (to value of landings).
 - Two case-studies were accomplished:
 - o Demersal Celtic Sea fishery from ICES RDB data. The allocation of a fishing operation to a target assemblage was not effected by a change in metric.
 - o Target group classification analysis of Swedish data from 2018 in area 3.a. The current method for classifying the MCD target group could be refined. Today for many hauls assigned to MCD, >80% of the catch value is due to Nephrops.

5.2.2.3 Workplan 2020-2021

i. If the new system for metier codes are approved: Make an operational metier list with all relevant metiers and test it.

- Ensure all relevant metiers included?
- Agree on codes for selectivity devices between relevant countries

ii. Further develop métier descriptions based on new métier codes. These will be used both as descriptions and for quality checking.

iii. If a list of non-overlapping métiers is approved, the R script to designate métiers can be used and further developed/refined e.g. to analyse vessel patterns.

iv. Investigate other species lists (e.g. Fish Pi) with similar usage and consolidate into a single reference list.

v. Investigate further subdivision/refinement of métiers which would benefit from further refinement – eg. OTB_DEF_XX

5.2.2.4 Proposals for Recommendations and Decisions

The decisions proposed by the ISSG on Metiers to be forwarded to the Decision meetings were considered by the RCG Baltic to be of technical nature and not requiring formal agreement by the NCs. Therefore the RCG endorsed these decisions and will include them as part of the continuation of the ISSG work programme.

The decisions can be summarised as follows:

Decision in relation to ISSG on Metiers	Implication
Agree that the list of approved métiers should be changed to the standardised system suggested by the sub-group (without overlapping métier codes?)	The move to a standardised and cleaner code list will remove some of the anomalies seen between similar métiers across different sea areas and some logical inconsistencies. It will also simplify and facilitate the generation of R scripts. It is not suggested that historical data should be amended and it should be possible to map the new coding to previous datasets
Agree that the RCG métier GitHub repository should be used for reference lists, scripts and documentation and that this should be updated with documentation of methods.	The repository will serve to store and maintain metadata associated with métier, what will help to ensure consistency in the application of methodology and aid comparability between MS's submissions.
Agree that resources should be allocated for maintaining the repository - it is suggested that one or two technical staff should be responsible for this. It is further suggested that this should be one of the roles of an RCG Secretariat.	

Facilitate the provision of documentation of the procedures that are used by MS for assigning métiers to transversal data using the suggested excel template and uploading to the GitHub.	This will provide essential metadata for métiers to and will facilitate quality assurance and enable MSs data to be better understood and compared.
To agree that the suggested common species reference list should be used for assignment of target species assemblage. This should be compiled with lists for other groups (eg. Fish PI) where possible.	This is essential for the development of standard scripts to produce métiers. The list should be capable of being updated, particularly in line with changes to the standard FAO ASFIS code list.

5.2.3 Feedback from the ISSG on 'Facilitate quality assurance of data and sampling programmes'

5.2.3.1 Progress during RCG BALTIC 2019

The sub-group's aim is to facilitate quality assurance of data and sampling programmes and it has the following multi-annual ToRs:

- ToR (1) Compile table 5A in the national work plans for all the MS in the region and evaluate the overall documentation on quality of sampling programmes in the region using table 5A.
- ToR (2) Developed indicators to monitor overall progress on quality assurance in the region over time.
- ToR (4) Compile uploads logs retrieved through the RCG data call and prepare feedback to MS on data anomalies

The following text summarises the work done - the full details of the work can be found in the sub-group report described in Part II of this report "Reports on Intersessional SubGroup (ISSG) work 2018-2019".

Table 5A from the Annual Reports of each MS were collated. Data quality indicators were defined. Expected that document assists MS to fill in Table 5A with more useful information, and possibly feed into future changes to Table 5A or equivalent. Since this was the first time this analysis has been attempted there was an iterative character to this process and the indicator definitions were revised as questions and issues were identified.

The ISSG looked at indicators by RCGs. It seems the indicators aggregated by RCG have very similar values for the RCG BS, NA, and NSEA. The bottom point of the shield is due to the fact that RCG MS upload their commercial fisheries data in to the Regional Database (RDB) which gives the highest indicator value. The weakest areas are the procedures around "Accuracy and Bias", and "Data Capture". Data Capture checks usually exist but are typically not available publicly and might only exist as routines within national databases or computer applications, or within a native language manual. This means it is very difficult for MS to share tools or code. The procedures for evaluating Accuracy and Bias often either do not exist or are not formally documented. To reach Level 4 a MS needs should be shown "best practice" by providing a clear reference to guidelines established by an expert group or similar. Marine recreational data capture is still at the pilot stage in many MS. Recreational sampling is also more heterogeneous than commercial fisheries sampling which can make the quality procedures harder to document.

Recommendations to MS when completing Table 5A:

- Provide links to relevant documentations where possible and ensure links provided are correct and work,
- Ensure documents referenced are reasonably recent (2014 and latest),
- Provide the date that the documentation was written / updated,

- Provide explanations of why this is good/best practice e.g. give explicit references to any expert group reports that define the practices that are being followed,
- Double-check whether “NA” is a legitimate answer to the question.

Summary of important issues raised in the “Upload logs” submitted during the 2019 RCG data call (for 2018 data) and accompanying spreadsheet were established. No major issues raised in the upload logs for RCG Baltic received so far.

5.2.3.2 Workplan 2020-2021

2019+: Facilitate quality assurance of data and sampling programmes (DC- from presentation)

This sub-group has multi-annual ToRs. The work remaining is:

- ToR (2) Develop indicators to monitor overall progress (based on table 5A) on quality assurance in the region over time.
- ToR (3) Collate relevant tools developed for quality control and quality assurance in data collection developed by other groups and projects (e.g. fishPi2 WP6, ICES WGCATCH, BIOP-TIM) and make plans (including accessibility, storage and training) for how these can be integrated in regional work and how MS can be supported to integrate them in national work.
- ToR (5) Discuss data checks for the new RDBES.

More participants from the Baltic region are welcome to be involved in this ISSG that will change to “Data Quality and Confidentiality”. RCG Baltic has considered this and participants are suggested (see separate document “ISSG_Participants_2019-2010”).

5.2.3.3 Proposals for Recommendations and Decisions

No proposals for decisions is of relevance for the Decision meeting.

5.2.4 Feedback from the ISSG SCRDB & RDBES Core group

5.2.4.1 The need for development of the RDBES

Summary

The Steering Committee for the RDB (SCRDB) noted in its 2018 report that “(the) RDBES is the main prerequisite for development of regional sampling programmes, for standardisation of data, and the tool for ensuring transparency and quality assurance of input data for stock assessment in the North Eastern Atlantic area.”¹ The RCG’s that make use of the current RDB have advocated for the longer term development of, and their commitment to, such a regional system.

While funding for the hosting and maintenance of the current RDB and RDBES are annually budgeted through the Grant Agreement with the European Commission, the funding of development work for the RDBES is more precarious and ad hoc. Until now, the development funding for the RDBES has come from i) a special request from the European Commission, ii) through a request made to ICES’s own equity, and iii) from ICES/EU member states via experts’ time, travel, and subsistence. In 2019

¹ Report for the Steering Committee of the Regional Database, 2018; page 1 – executive summary <http://ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Expert%20Group%20Report/acom/2018/SCRDB/01%20SCRDBES%202018%20Report.pdf>

there is no additional request from the Commission, and the ICES equity funding will be used by the end of the year.

The phase that the RDBES is now in is the most demanding in terms of resources – both within the ICES Secretariat and for the wider RCG community. We are proposing a time limited contribution of funds (4 years at €75,000 per year = €300,000) from EU member states supporting the RDBES through the RCG's – this will cover RDBES development until the system is live and has completely replaced the current RDB and InterCatch. The funding model for any further development will stabilise beyond the 4 year scope of this request for interim funding as the InterCatch and RDB systems will be shut down, thus freeing internal ICES resources, and the ICES clients will support development activity through their agreements with ICES. The figure is comprised of both development time (human resources at the ICES Secretariat) and dedicated Workshop travel (which will be necessary to support the roll-out of the RDBES).

The data model, database script and any associated source code will be made available under a General Public Open Licence² through the GitHub open platform. This does not apply to data held within the RDBES, rights to which are governed by the RDB Data Policy³.

Priorities

The priorities for RDBES development will be defined and reviewed by the SCRDB on an ongoing basis - this consists of members representing EU member states and ICES member countries, along with invited representatives from the ICES Secretariat and European Commission.

The two top priorities for development are:

- 1) To ensure that data can be made available for the coordination of regional fisheries data sampling plans for the North Atlantic, North Sea & Eastern Arctic, and Baltic RCGs,
- 2) To provide ICES with a regional estimation system such that statistical estimates for stock assessment can be produced from detailed sample data in a transparent manner.

There are also a number of other areas that the RDBES could be used for including:

- Bycatch and PETS data
- Large Pelagic RCG data,
- Recreational data for the RCGs and ICES,
- Diadromous data for the RCGs and ICES.

The development of these, and any further areas identified, will be reviewed and prioritised by the SCRDB taking into account the progress made on the two highest priorities and the resources available.

Further details of the development of the RDBES are found in RCG ISSG 2018-2019, Annex 12.

Resources required

The total cost of annual development equates to ca. 145 000 EUR - the figures in the table are based on the RCG's contributing 41% of this total cost as well as the cost of dedicated workshops. This development figure is based on software developers time, data and code management, as well as project management time. This figure excludes maintenance and hosting, which are part of an existing agreement

² See SmartDots example <https://github.com/ices-eg/SmartDots/blob/master/LICENSE>

³ http://ices.dk/marine-data/Documents/Data_Policy_RDB.pdf

with the Commission. The overhead rate in the calculation is 7%, the same as the rate used for the Grant Agreement with the Commission.

In the case where the RCG's are not able to provide funding, development would continue at 59% capacity and progress, according to the outlined time-line or prioritization, would be significantly impacted. This would therefore have an impact on the overall plan of the RCGs to deal with catch sampling planning, design and efficiency.

Table 5.1 Financial resource requirements to progress the technical development of the RDBES

	(EUR)	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total (EUR)
		@41% of total cost of annual development				
Human Resources	Technical Development Technical development, including software and database, Web Interface and Security, interface to GitHub including versioning, data exchange both ways, results check, quality checks, download of data, Project and Data Management Overseeing user requirements and use cases, Project tracking and resource deployment, data and reference code management	60 000	60 000	60 000	60 000	240 000
Meetings, Travel, Training	Dedicated RDBES workshops/support aimed at developing specific functionality, or building capacity/training in the data provider/data users of the RDBES	15 000	15 000	15 000	15 000	60 000
Total RCG MS Contribution		75 000	75 000	75 000	75 000	300 000

Table 5.2 Financial allocation per member state, based on a flat rate or a pro rata rate, proportional to DCF funding allocation

Baltic, North Sea & Eastern Arctic and North Atlantic					
			Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
YEAR 1, Total cost	75 000 €				2 500 €
	EMFF sum 2014-2020	Distribution key	EMFF Distribution	Flat rate	Flat rate of Option 3 + distribution key
Member State	€	%	€	€	€
BE	41 746 051	1,01	757	5 000	2 879
DK	208 355 420	5,04	3 780	5 000	4 390
DE	219 596 276	5,31	3 984	5 000	4 492
IE	147 601 979	3,57	2 678	5 000	3 839
EE	100 970 418	2,44	1 832	5 000	3 416
ES	1 161 620 889	28,10	21 074	5 000	13 037
FR	587 980 173	14,22	10 667	5 000	7 834
LV	139 833 742	3,38	2 537	5 000	3 768
LT	63 432 222	1,53	1 151	5 000	3 075
NL	101 523 244	2,46	1 842	5 000	3 421
PL	531 219 456	12,85	9 637	5 000	7 319
PT	392 485 464	9,49	7 120	5 000	6 060
FI	74 393 168	1,80	1 350	5 000	3 175
SE	120 156 004	2,91	2 180	5 000	3 590
UK	243 139 437	5,88	4 411	5 000	4 706
	4 134 053 943	100,00	75 000	75 000	75 000

5.2.4.2 Workplan 2020-2023 for the RDB development

De l	Description	2020	2021	2022	2023
1	RDBES Population and Estimation workshops	X	X	X	X
2	Test data call and estimations for selected stocks	X			
3	Further development of upload and simple checks, interface to TAF for simple estimations of selected stocks, further development of downloads, testing and correcting source code	X			

4	Test data call and estimations for “all” stocks		X		
5	Development of advanced checks, interface to TAF for standard estimations of all stocks, further development of downloads, testing and correcting source code		X		
6	Data call for 2021 data			X	
7	Supporting countries, further development of downloads, adjustments of interface to TAF for all estimations of all stocks, testing and correcting source code			X	
9	Data call for 2022 data and previous years’ data				X
10	Supporting countries, adjustments of interface to TAF for all estimations of all stocks, testing and correcting source code				X
11	Commercial catch estimations running through TAF				X
12	RDBES data available for RCG use				X

5.2.4.3 Proposals for Recommendations and Decisions

RCG Baltic 2019 – D4 – Central resources to support work in the RCGs - a need for robust long term funding of the RDBES development	
Relates to	Outcome of fishPi2 WP1 on governance of RCGs
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	a.) NCs to decide if they will finance the technical development, project management and dedicated workshops of the RDBES at an annual cost of €75,000 between 2020 and 2023; b.) NCs to decide on which model to use for costsharing, flat rate or pro rata of EMFF DCF funding allocation as outlined in table 5.2 and further elaborated in section 5.5.1
Implication	RDBES development will be completed and it will be available to support the RCGs according to the development road-map.
Who needs to take decision/agree	RCG NANSEA/BS National Correspondents
Supporting Documentation	Above and Section 5.5.1

5.2.5 Work Package 6 of fishPi2 on Data quality

5.2.5.1 Output from Work Package 6

The workplan of fishPi2 WP6 on data quality has been totally modified during the course of the project, since the developments initiated during the first fishPi project had to be discontinued as not fit to be part of the RDBES solution. Adding the fact that the data format structure for the RDBES was not finalised yet by the end of 2018, the WP was amended to put all efforts into further development of quality checks in anticipation of the type of data format and processing which will be needed once the RDBES is fully functioning. Within this new context, significant progress has been made in developing a generic S4 R objects to handle fisheries data which will provide a more flexible system that could handle data in a wide variety of formats. The WP6 output has been called CLEFRBD and is available on the ICES github (<https://github.com/ices-tools-dev/FishPi2/tree/master/WP6>). It may now be tested on real datasets.

At the end of the project, a webinar was planned to take place on 17th June – “Follow-up on fishPi² WP6 - A proposal to use generic S4 R objects to handle commercial fisheries data”. The speaker was Laurent Dubroca, who prepared a 30 min presentation which was followed by a discussion. The recording of this webinar is available on the github given above..

5.2.5.2 Workplan 2020-2021

Next steps on how the output from fishPi2 Wkp 6 can be progressed

Discussion in fishPi2 team at the moment : data quality issues would be best developed in a ad hoc project tackling exploratory data analysis, validation and quality control, estimation and processing and reporting based on the needs and expectations on the RDBES. The CLEFRDB library developed in fishPi2 WP6 has this objective of being the first element of a dedicated library gathering data processing means and functions.

5.2.5.3 Proposals for Recommendations and Decisions

No proposals for decisions is of relevance for the Decision meeting.

5.2.6 Feedback from PGDATA relating to the quality of fisheries data collection

In 2019, PGDATA is in its 2nd year of a 3-year programme of work where the focus was to design a Quality Assurance Framework on data quality for stock assessments, identify improvements in data quality that have the greatest impacts on the quality of advice, and improve or create communication routes between data collectors and end-users. The work on Quality Assurance Framework was completed in 2019 and used by ICES in its Road map towards a Quality Assurance Framework for ICES Advice. The other terms of references are under development with some progress made on e.g. proposals for SISP (Series of ICES Statistical Protocol) in the fishery-dependent data collection, accessibility to reports and workshops information on protocols and best practices, and improving communication routes between data collectors and end-users. The ICES/PGDATA suffers from a low number of participants (8-10) due probably to the strategic discussions more than the practical solutions to identified issues. Experts in charge of data collection in their institutes/countries (e.g. experts participating to RCG) would present the skills needed to PGDATA and would be welcome.

5.2.7 **Main elements of criteria developed of data quality by respective WGs to be used by RCG – ICES WGBIOP**

The ICES Working Group on Biological Parameters (WGBIOP) conducted intersessional work with the RCG sub-group on end-user needs: WGBIOP will receive an annual inventory report from the RDB with information on species, area, sampling platform, country, numbers of ages, numbers of maturity by month/quarter. This provides an overview of the number of fish aged/matured by country and area and can be included in a statistical analysis to indicate how biased an estimate is. It also indicates how important different MS are when age reading/maturity workshops are set up.

WGBIOP would like to be kept informed of results from RCG data (biological) quality sub-groups.

Age calibration events relevant to the RCG 'Diadromous Sub-Group' under the guidance of WGBIOP are: 1) Baltic and Atlantic Salmon Scale Exchange (planning in progress – results ready for 2021 Baltic salmon benchmark); 2) Workshop on Age Reading of European and American Eel (ICES WKAREA3, 17-18 June 2019) in collaboration with the INTERREG SUDOANG project. In both cases, the SmartDots platform will be used and inventory report from RDB would be helpful for these groups as background information.

Regarding further development of SmartDots, the ICES Working Group on SmartDots Governance (WGSMA) was established and is working efficiently on improvements with highest priority in close working relationship with WGBIOP and the ICES Data Centre. Maturity staging calibration on SmartDots is ready for testing. At its next meeting (7-10 Oct 2019), WGBIOP will prioritise further improvements and developments, estimate costs and identify available resources, including possible funding routes.

Finally, the ICES "Workshop on Better Coordinated Stomach Sampling" (WKBECOSS; Santander, Spain, 3-6 Sep 2019), recommended by the 2018 WGBIOP, was announced to the RCG.

5.3 **ToR 3 Review impact on management measures on data collection**

During this year's meeting, progress has been made under ToR 3 as follows:

- Feedback on "ISSG Implications of the Landing obligation" - identify & flag issues

5.3.1 **Feedback on ISSG 'Implications of the LO'**

5.3.1.1 **Progress during RCG BALTIC 2019**

Despite the landing obligation being fully in place since 2019, it is clear that discards will continue under various forms of exemptions (high survivability, de minimis, prohibited species etc) and for non-quota species. This requires continued observer programs under the DCF and the new catch categories add to the complexity of interpreting official catch records and observer data collected onshore and offshore. STECF PLEN 17-01 stated that there would appear to be a "lack of reporting by vessel operators of fish discarded under exemptions, discards of fish currently not subject to the landing obligation and catches of fish below MCRS". This statement is validated by the lack of data coming from the control agencies on both registered discards and BMS landings. STECF PLEN 17-01 also states that "if the data situation does not improve and the true quantities being caught as reported do not reflect the actual removals, they may have a significant impact on the quality of scientific advice".

In 2016 the RCMNA proposed an intersessional task group to continue monitoring the impact of the Landing Obligation (LO) on data collection and catch estimates. This work was continued in 2017 and 2018 at a pan regional level for the Northern regions, also involving the Baltic Sea.

The questionnaire *Monitoring the impact of the landing obligation on data collection* was amended and circulated in order to capture the practical issues and perceived concerns relating to the landing obligation in the North Atlantic, Baltic and North Sea. The returned questionnaires were analysed and a full report is presented in RCG ISSG 2018-2019, Annex 6 along with a copy of the template. In addition, summaries from the RDB on BMS and logbook registered data were produced.

General summary on the findings:

Overall, the findings were quite consistent across the three regions (North Sea, North Atlantic, North-Eastern Arctic, Baltic Sea) and relatively little change in comparison with 2017 was observed in the questionnaires relating to sampling, fishing behaviour, de-minimis monitoring, and recreational fisheries. Studies on the implication of the LO have continued in 2018. Some countries are experiencing increased refusal rates, possibly related to the LO.

From the analysis of the RDB data it became clear that BMS landings and logbook registered discards are rare. For assessment purpose, the total catch estimate is important. Presently, many MSs try to estimate the BMS fraction as a separate fraction on observer trips. However, it is not always clear if a basket containing BMS fish will be landed or discarded at a later point. This could result in the same sample being used for both the discard sample and the BMS sample. In such a case it is important that the MS subtracts the BMS amount from the discard amount.

5.3.1.2 Workplan for 2020 – 2021

Based on the findings above and in Annex 6 it has been concluded that at this point in time there is no need for sending out the questionnaire *Monitoring the impact of the landing obligation on data collection* to all MS on an annual basis. This need could be reviewed in three years time (or when changes to the EU-MAP are in place) to capture other and additional relevant information concerning the LO. Analysis on the RDB outputs should continue within the subgroup overview of fisheries. The subgroup has further concerns on the quality of the BMS and logbook registered discard data in relation to the lack of BMS and logbook registered discards in the fisheries and in the RDB database.

RCG Baltic 2019 suggests the Pan-Regional Subgroup on the Landing obligation is suspended and will convene in 3 years time with the following ToRs:

- Evaluate the implication of the landing obligation on national and regional catch sampling programmes [redesigned questionnaire]
- Overview of methodologies in the estimation of refusal rates

The following existing ToR should be taken up by the ISSG Overview of fisheries:

- Review and analyse 2019 BMS and logbook registered discards to include CS and CL data in the RDB.

5.3.1.3 Proposals for Recommendations and Decisions

As the RCG Baltic 2019 agrees the Pan-Regional Subgroup on the Landing obligation to be suspended, there are no specific decisions needed from ISSG to present to the NCs.

5.4 ToR 4 Development and implementation of Regional Workplans

During this year's meeting, a lot of progress has been made under ToR 4 as follows:

- Feedback from ISSG “Development of Draft Regional work plan”
- Feedback from ISSG “Towards a regional sampling programme – Case study of fisheries for small pelagics in the Baltic”.
- Feedback on review of mandatory surveys (EWG 19-05)
- Review of output from fishPi2 WKPG 4 and next steps
- Review of output from fishPi2 WKPG 5 and next steps

The results of the different ISSG are described in Part II of the RCG Baltic 2019 report “Reports on Intersessional SubGroup (ISSG) work 2018-2019”.

5.4.1 Feedback from ISSG “Development of Draft Regional work plan”

5.4.1.1 Progress during RCG BALTIC 2019

Early 2018, the work package 1 of the project fishPi2 (EU MARE/2016/22) dealing with RCG governance, discussed how to initiate the establishment of regional workplans. The group highlighted that a regional sampling plan only is a part of a regional workplan and that there were elements of the present data collection that could be regionalized and turned into a regional work plan.

A Regional Work Plan (RWP) should mirror National Work Plan (NWP) and aimed at providing data collection designed regionally rather than nationally. In consequence, the starting point of the reflection is to derive all the set of tables of a NWP in a RWP.

Timing for a Regional Work Plan

The logical timing would be for a RWP in 2022, due to legislation and scheduling of NWP:s (2020-2021). RWP:s needs to be finalised in October 2021, with acceptance by all participating member states. Procedure would include two rounds, preliminary proposal in 2019 (RCG meeting June and NC meeting September), fine-tuning as subgroup in Q3 2019 and first half of 2020, for final acceptance at NC meeting September 2021. The biggest time factor could be the member state acceptance and fine tuning based on their concern. The possibility to “test-run” RWP in autumn this year or in 2020, would help to find out how test-RWP follows the evaluation process within the STECF and Commission process. These questions will be key in the coming RCGs for setting up a RWP roadmap.

The starting base for discussion would be RWPs for

- Baltic Sea
- North Atlantic and North Sea and Eastern Arctic
- Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea
- Long distance fishery (could include the case of the large freezer trawlers?)
- Tuna fisheries?

The mechanism of work between RWP and NWP

The elements of data collection regionally coordinated and reported in a RWP would replace their description in NWP. The tables fully described in RWP (Table 1A, table 7A, table 7B) would disappear totally from NWP. The regional sampling schemes (in RWP), complementing national sampling schemes (in NWP) have to follow another path, and a reference to RWP sampling scheme should be made in all related NWP.

The setting of a minimal RWP, with initial building blocks to start with and the learning phase during the process of developing, regionally agreeing and preparing the submission of a RWP would considerably help in establishing the procedure that the development and submission of a RWP entails. The report from the intersessional work is found in RCG ISSG 2018-2019, Annex 9.

5.4.1.2 Work plan 2020-2021

ISSG RWP will continue its work after agreement by NCs on the overall approach. The group will specifically focus on the following:

- Finalise table 1A and propose a new table setting for RWP and consider, whether to use relative stability, average landings in the reference years (or both).
- Consider fishPi2 proposal for table 4ABCD, exchange with ISSG on Regional Sampling Plans (Baltic small scale fisheries, NA freezer trawlers, ...) and propose the settings and contents of tables 4ABCD
- Develop the content and settings of table 7A with only RCG ISSG and RCG meeting
- Design the table 7C list of bi-lateral or multi-lateral agreements, including innovated actions for task sharing and capacity building
- Propose contents and design of table 1G (and 1H) on International cost-sharing on surveys

5.4.1.3 Proposals for Decisions

The NCs are not yet required to decide on a draft regional work plan, but are requested to endorse the overall approach, the “test run” of a RWP with basic building blocks in 2020 and the roadmap to a draft regional work plan in 2021.

5.4.2 Feedback from ISSG Towards a regional sampling programme – Case study of fisheries for small pelagics in the Baltic

5.4.2.1 Progress during RCG Baltic 2019

Status on the small pelagic sub group work has been summarised in the report from this ISSG see RCG ISSG 2018-2019, Annex 10 also including meeting notes and the details of the datacall. The sub group has had several skype meetings with most members of the small pelagic group; 5/3, 29/4, 10/5 and 7/6.

The sub group on small pelagic launched a data call with more detailed information on the trip data to conduct analysis based on the FishPi2 tools. Some problems with the data quality were detected and several MS had to re-upload data before the analysis could be conducted.

First part of the analysis was to decide on the sampling frame and only active vessels were selected to be included in the regional small pelagic sampling program. The passive gears land a relatively small amount of total sprat and herring landings and can still be sampled but this can be conducted on a national scale and do not need to be included in the regional program.

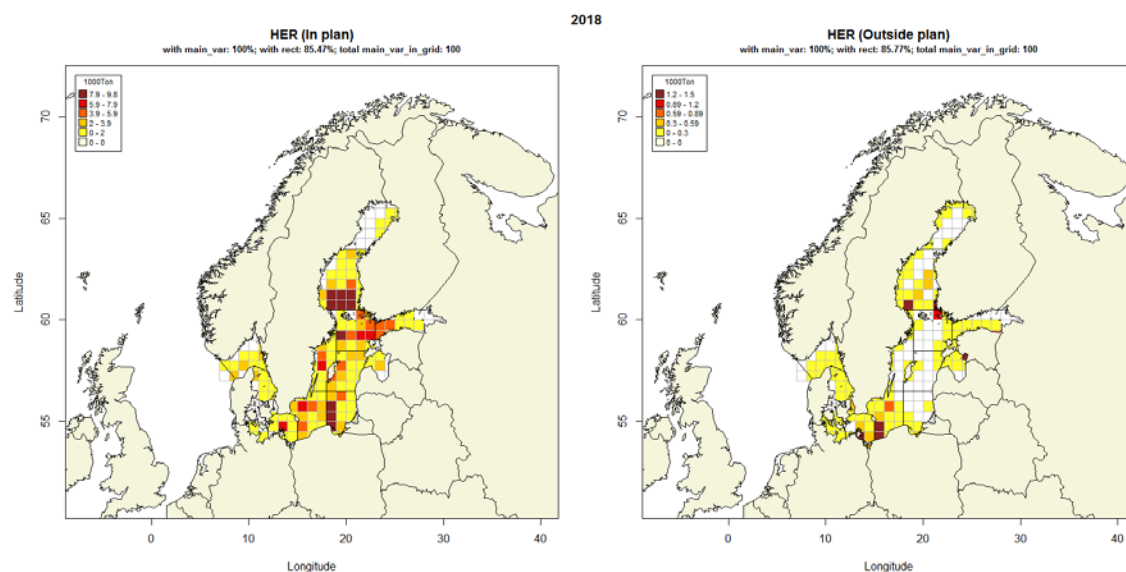


Figure 5.4.2.1. Herring landings inside and outside the regional sampling plan by ICES square based on 2018 data.

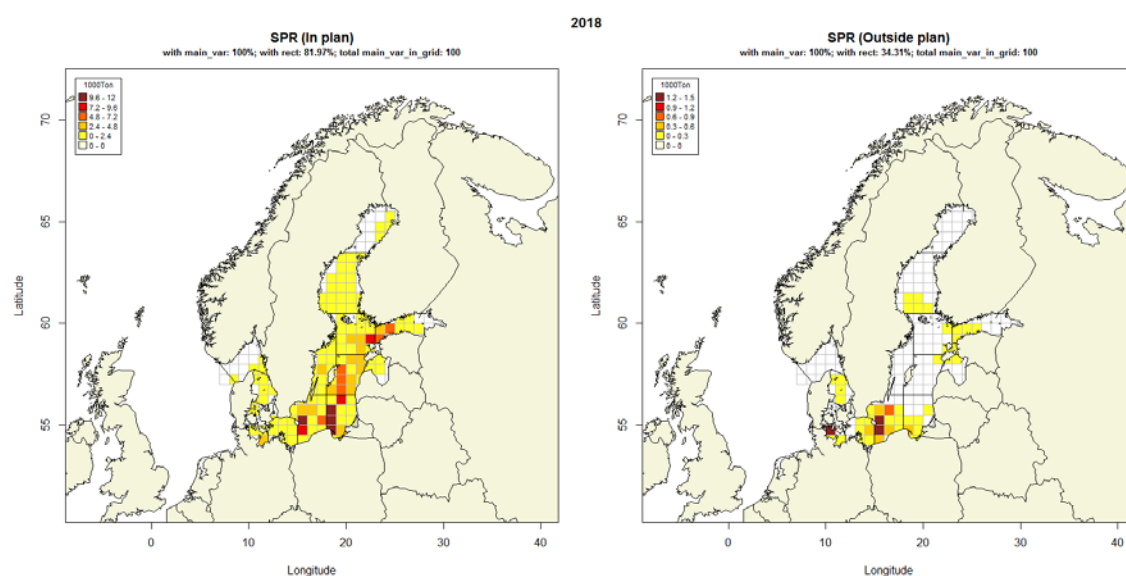


Figure 5.4.2.2. Sprat landings inside and outside the regional sampling plan by ICES square based on 2018 data.

The analyses conducted to date were based on present sampling level but effort was distributed according to other variables (stocks, combined sprat and herring landings, vessel length, SD, landings by MS and numbers of trips conducted by MS). These analysis show that sampling effort allocated to each country may vary significantly depending on the priority established for the future regional sampling programme (table 5.4.2.1) and are therefore useful as a start of the discussions on the variables to use to improve a regional sampling program. The full set of analysis can be found in Annex 10.

Table 5.4.2.1. Numbers of present samples by MS. 552 samples were used in the allocations

	Initial (2018)	Outside plan	In plan
DEU	41	7	34
DNK	74	0	74
EST	106	8	98
FIN	86	2	84
LTU	8	0	8
LVA	91	7	84
POL	36	12	24
SWE	147	1	146
TOTAL	589	37	552

During the RCG Baltic 2019, different scenarios for sampling effort allocation were discussed as well as the sampling method. Presently four possible sampling platforms could be used:

- At-sea sampling (excluded, see explanation below)
- Only Self-Sampling
- Only Onshore sampling
- Combination of Self-sampling with Onshore sampling (preferred option)

Only few MS are presently sampling small pelagic with observer at sea and therefore this solution was not included in the discussion. Considering self-sampling as the only solution has considerable risks: if fishermen stop to sample due to different reasons the whole sampling program could be jeopardized. On the other hand if samples are only collected on-shore (at factories, auctions) the haul information will not be available as well as the quality if the sample is often lower. Therefore, a combination of a self-sampling and on shore sampling scheme would be the preferable option. A solution could be to have self-sampling on a vessels above a certain vessel length and a on shore sampling program covering the total fleet.

To explore these and other possibilities it was decided during the meeting that a workshop should be conducted in the fall 2019. The idea is that all MS involved in the fisheries participate and help to set different scenarios that will then be simulated. It was further decided that Denmark and Sweden would try already to start a bilateral sampling program in 2020.

5.4.2.2 Work plan 2020-2021

ToR 1. Description of the fisheries. (done)

ToR 2. Generate description of present national sampling programmes, including overviews of sampling protocol and sampling intensities. Partly done. An overview was produced in the RCG Baltic 2019 meeting. However needs to be refined. (partly done)

ToR 3. Generate overview of data that is collected on the regional level. An overview table was conducted during the RCG Baltic (done)

ToR 4. Identify what commercial data ICES AWG need for these stocks. If relevant meet up with relevant stock coordinators and assessors at appropriate meeting. Not conducted yet

ToR 5. Compare data presently collected with data needed by the AWG. Identify gaps and data presently collected but not used Not conducted yet

ToR 8. Suggest common sampling protocol (Harbour and self-sampling) – difference between HC and I sampling (to be conducted during work shop)

ToR 9. Suggest proper sampling sizes for age, weight and length (to be conducted during work-shop)

ToR 10. Suggest if and when maturity data need to be collected from commercial samples (end-user needs)

ToR 11. Suggest if other types of data (e.g. scales, genetics, parasites) shall be collected (end-user needs)

ToR 12. Suggest how data (samples and transversal data) shall be stored and exchanged (work-shop 2019)

ToR 13. How to raise the different sampling programs (work-shop 2019)

ToR 14. Simulations of the sampling plans that demonstrate the efficiency of the new regional programme relative to present programmes

Questions we need to be aware of:

- Foreign landings – how to sample – upload data
- Access to vessels / harbours (samples in license)
- Control samples (risk-based)
- Validation of self-sampling
- Raising of data – different sampling programs can give a more difficult raising procedures.

Workplan until RCG meeting in 2020

Date	Task	Responsible	Other Participants
1/8 2019	Feed back on work-shop meeting	All members of the sub group	
September (?) 2019	Work shop on regional sampling	Marie, Katja, Nuno and Kirsten	All members of sub group
October 2019	Final suggestion for a regional workplan	Marie, Katja, Nuno and Kirsten	All members of sub group
October 2019	Implementation of new regional sampling plan for Denmark and Sweden	Katja and Marie	
November 2019	Meeting with the industry	Katja and Marie	
January 2020	Implantation of regional sampling plan for Denmark and Sweden	Katja and Marie	

5.4.2.3 Proposals for Recommendations and Decisions

RCG Baltic 2019 – D5 – Moving towards Regional Sampling Plan on fisheries for small pelagic in the Baltic	
Relates to	Outcome of ISSG 'Towards a regional sampling programme – Case study of fisheries for small pelagics in the Baltic'
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	General decision: NC to decide on if the Baltic region should continue and develop a regional sampling plan for the small pelagic fisheries, agree to continue the work in this ISSG. Short term decision: a) All MS to plan for participation in the ISSG workshop and development of the sampling plan b) Denmark and Sweden would try to set up a bilateral sampling protocol from 2020 as a test case. Long term decision: MS to plan for adaptation of their current sampling plan in line with the findings on the development of regional sampling plan.
Implication	To make progress and move towards a regional sampling programme in the Baltic it is of major importance that the MS are involved and participate in the development and the planned Workshop
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of Baltic
Supporting Documentation	Report from ISSG 'Towards Regional Sampling Plan for fisheries on small pelagic in the Baltic' found in RCG ISSG 2018-2019, Annex 10

5.4.3 Feedback on review of mandatory surveys (EWG 19-05)

5.4.3.1 Progress during RCG Baltic 2019

The Commission presented the latest developments on the revision of the scientific surveys. STECF Experts met in May 2019 in Brussels to discuss the evaluation of the scientific surveys (EWG 19-05). Experts used the input of MS and end users to run the Decision Support Tool (DST) and produce a list of surveys for inclusion in the mandatory list of surveys, to be adopted with the revised future EU MAP. The EWG also tried to address more horizontal questions: during the analysis the experts were expected to highlight gaps and duplications.

The outcomes of the EWG meeting were the following:

1. a definite list of surveys proposed for inclusion as mandatory under the future EU MAP,
2. a list of surveys excluded from the proposed mandatory list,

3. a list of surveys that fulfil part of the criteria, but not all. These surveys are still considered useful, but cannot 'make it to the mandatory list'. The EWG will highlight what actions need to be taken to fulfil the rest of the criteria, so that they can be included,
4. gaps (stocks) not covered by surveys,
5. survey duplications (i.e. multiple surveys covering the same stock),
6. environmental variables collected by surveys (MSFD indicators)
7. Roadmap on next steps

5.4.3.2 Workplan for 2020 – 2021

The report of the EWG will be published in July 2019 following STECF plenary session and will be made available to RCGs, MS and end users afterwards. The report will also contain a roadmap on next steps.

5.4.3.3 Proposals for Recommendations and Decisions

No decisions are of relevance for the NC decision meeting.

5.4.4 Joint monitoring survey

During the RCG Baltic meeting the survey database partly developed by the RCGs was presented in an updated version including the surveys conducted by HELCOM and MS to monitor ecosystem indicators as described in the MSPD provided by the BONUS project SEAM. The idea behind the combined survey database was to give MS an overview of existing vessels in the region and also to provide information on contact persons, possible times where a given vessel is not used (night) and main aim of the given survey. This database could provide a platform for additional sampling or combining already ongoing surveys. This would allow for increased cost-efficiency by combining fisheries and environmental surveys, as the data collection framework (DCF) surveys (coordinated by ICES) could be used as platforms to address some of the sampling requirements of other descriptors than pure fish stock assessment.

5.4.5 Review of output from fishPi2 WP 2&3 and next steps

WP2 & 3 were not dealt with within the RCG Baltic technical meeting and the outcome from the work is to be read in the RCG NA NSEA report.

5.4.6 Review of output from fishPi2 WP 4 and next steps

5.4.6.1 Output presented to RCG Baltic 2019

WP 4 of fishPi2 " Impact of Marine Ecosystems had the following objectives:

To provide a regional sampling plan **incidental by-catch of protected birds, mammals, reptiles and fish (PETS), predator-prey relationship** and **natural mortality of fish**, allowing an accurate, cost-efficient implementation of fisheries impacts on ecosystems by initiating new studies in a step-wise approach.

- a. Propose **specific areas of regional cooperation, additional requirements and possible trade-offs**,
- b. Develop or refine **methodologies/collection protocols**,
- c. **Allocating tasks to Member States** for the collection and analysis of these data,
- d. Solutions for **regional storage systems, data processing, management and raising of data**,
- e. Evaluation of **cost implications**

The work package identified the important ecosystem components to evaluate natural mortality and predator-prey relationships; reviewed the methodologies and protocols to estimate natural mortality and spatial distribution, examined related regional storage systems, data processing, management and raising of data and proposed how tasks can be allocated and what the estimated costs would be for a sampling programme. In addition, the work package identified ecosystem components and species for which information would be particularly important to obtain. In relation to bycatch, the work package also reviewed the methodologies and protocols and estimated costs for the proposed methods.

5.4.6.2 Next Steps

In terms of bycatch, the ISSG on “Update of Risk Assessment for bycatch in the North Atlantic” will consider the output and recommendations of FishPi2 WP4 in its work programme for 2019-2020 where specific case studies will be used to progress the risk assessment and development of bycatch sampling plans in the North Atlantic (see RCG Report NA NSEA). For the period 2019-2020 also case studies from the Baltic will be included as well as participants from the Baltic region.

In order to progress the regional coordination of stomach sampling, a new ISSG is proposed in the RCG NA NSEA with the ToRs and time lines.

Terms of Reference for an Intersessional subgroup on regionally coordinated stomach sampling:

- Define key biological parameters (e.g. natural mortality) that are needed for stock assessments (single- and multispecies) and can be deducted from coordinated stomach analysis studies.
- Compile and review available information on stomach sampling manuals and best practice from relevant previous studies.
- Identify international and national surveys that may be available for the stomach sampling (time of the year, duration, number of stations, spatial distribution)
- Develop (or adopt) an appropriate stomach sampling manual or guidelines for best practice. (Estimate expected expenditure of time and costs for analysis – per stomach, per haul, per species, per country involved)
- Suggest a regional stomach sampling plan for the North Sea: Period, timing, sample sizes, surveys to be sampled, and predator species to be sampled.
- Communicate and circulate this plan to relevant countries that are involved in the fishery on the sampled species and/or are participating in the scientific surveys. Ask for feedback.
- Incorporate the suggestions from the feedback into the sampling plan.
- Suggest a starting date and sampling period for the first sampling campaign.

Timeline

- September 2019: Define the biological parameters to be deducted from coordinated stomach content analyses in close cooperation with WGSAM.
- September 2019: Compile and review available information on stomach sampling manuals and best practice and sketch a draft for a coordinated stomach sampling program for the North Sea
- 3 – 6 September 2019 at WKBECOSS: Present the preliminary results of an ongoing pilot stomach sampling and analysis study (predator: *Merlangius merlangus*, area: German Bight)

and present the draft of a coordinated stomach sampling program for the North Sea. Receive feedback from international experts on stomach sampling programs.

- September-December 2019: Update the draft and circulate it within the subgroup. The result will be a finalized version of a regional sampling program for the North Sea.
- December 2019: Suggest a starting date for the first coordinated stomach sampling campaign in the North Sea.
- December 2019/January 2020: Await confirmation of participation or refusal.
- February 2020: Ask for confirmation or refusal.

5.4.6.3 Proposals for Decisions

Endorsement of 2019-2020 tasks for the ISSG on “Update of Risk Assessment for bycatch in the North Atlantic. Baltic is suggested to be added.

Agreement to the new ISSG on regionally coordinated stomach sampling and endorsement of its ToRs and tasks for 2019-2020. This ISSG was not discussed in the RCG Baltic and a request will be sent to participants in the Baltic, asking for participation.

5.4.7 Review of output from fishPi2 WP 5 and next steps

5.4.7.1 Output presented to RCG Baltic 2019

WP 5 of fishPi2 “ “Small Scale and Marine recreational fisheries” had the following objectives **for small scale fisheries**: to review and evaluate different methodologies used by Institutes/MS and to consider the fleet segmentations <10m, 10-12m and 12-15m for data collection purposes. The project outputs under WP5 highlighted:

- The need and importance to calculate good quality estimates of the SSF fishing activity variables (effort, catches etc.)
- The need of an Assessment of the coverage/completeness and the quality/reliability representativeness/precision of the data collected
- SSF have to be monitored differently by a census or a sampling approach adapted to their specific features.
- Transversal (logbook, sale notes) data coming from the current CR is not well adapted or insufficient to the SSF.
- Missing catches due to exceptions in the regulation
- Low quality effort information (under 10m fleet)
- Low quality on species composition of the catches (higher taxon codes use!!)
- Lack or scarce information of other biological variables data (length, discards, PETS BYCATCH...)
- Considerable differences between official and scientific estimates (i.e. 2-40% catch and effort depending on the species, region...)
- Difficulties in the implementation of surveys

The RCG was asked to discuss the following aspects in relation to SSFs:

Given the high uncertainty of the quality of the data collected for the SSF, is necessary to make a rigorous evaluation of this fleet data at EU level. RCGs could be the responsible of this evaluation by region through experts in this fleet (Regional sampling plans + Data Analysis and Quality “Pan regional subgroup”);

Although the SSF is part of the commercial fleet, but due to their special characteristics consider a specific section in the reviewed EU MAP. The fleet segments to be considered: <10/10-12/12-15 fleet segments. (EU MAP revision subgroup “Governance Pan regional group”);

Data collection on biological data (length frequencies, Discards, PETS bycatch etc.) and methodologies to collect these data needs to be evaluated based on end users needs. (End users and RCGs “Pan regional subgroup”);

Catches made by SSF may present a different size structure than catches made by LSF

SSF can contribute significantly to the overall discard (i.e. nursery areas in coastal areas) rate and amount depending on gear type;

PETS bycatch could be relevant (i.e. gillnets and cetaceans, longlines and seabirds, turtles).

The main outputs of WP5 in relation to **marine recreational fisheries** was the following:

Pilot studies:

- Important differences in the expertise and objectives:
- Some MS objective is to improve their routinely surveys and analyse different methodologies
- First survey to collect MRF data
- Review of the existing pilot studies showed a large variety of objectives at a MS level (e.g. target population, target species, period, duration etc.).

Sea bass case study:

- MSE test different scenarios for precision & bias to see impact on assessment
- National surveys: uncertainty driven by countries with largest catch, so need to focus there (i.e. France & UK)
- MRF is a multispecies fishery (multispecies approach needed)

The RCG was asked to consider the following recommendations by WP5 in relation to marine recreational fisheries:

- A scientific evaluation of the outcomes of the pilot studies should be done (STECF, conducted by experts on MRF sampling programmes) to assess the potential impact on stocks and facilitate the design of the future routine data collection on MRF. Outputs evaluated by the RCGs (Regional sampling plans Pan regional subgroup).
- Multispecies surveys are needed to provide data on level of catches and releases of all species and allow the impact of MRF on stocks to be assessed (EU MAP revision subgroup “Governance Pan regional group”).
- Complete SSF and MRF data needs to be included in European databases (RDBES) to ensure that it is available and utilized by end users including stock assessors, RCGs, etc.
- There is a need for a regional data base adapted to the specificities of SSF and MRF.
- fishPi2 in parallel with WGRFS proposal to ICES (SHORT AND LONG TERM)
- Proposal presented to the SC RDB.

Next Steps:

In order to progress the regional coordination of SSF and to apply the outputs of FishPi2 WP5, a new ISSG is proposed with the ToRs and time lines.

Title: Evaluation of the data collected for the SSF at EU level.

Specific tasks 2019-2020:

1. Assessment of the coverage/completeness and the quality /reliability of the data collected
2. Sampling effort allocated to these fisheries at regional level under the EU MAP sampling programmes
3. Analysis of differences between transversal data (sale notes/logbook) and scientific estimates coming from specific sampling programmes
4. Data collection on biological data (length frequencies, discards etc.)

Who: RGN NANS & EA, RCG BALTIC RCG MED & BS

When: Intersessional for 2020

Anticipated output: Draft about the coverage and quality on the data collected for the SSF.

Data requirements: Transversal data uploaded to the RDB ES and data collected for the SSF under the EU MAP sampling programmes

5.4.7.2 Proposals for Decisions and Recommendations

Agreement to the new ISSG on “Evaluation of the data collected for the SSF at EU level” and endorsement of its ToRs and tasks for 2019-2020.

Recommendations in relation to MRF:

- A workshop should be held by the STECF to review the outcomes from the recreational fisheries pilot studies, compare impacts with commercial fisheries, and make proposals for future data collection.
- MRF data should be stored within the RDBES, but funding is limited, so the costs of integrating rec fish data need to be estimated by ICES, a funding source identified, and level of prioritisation agreed.
- MRF data should be included in the stock assessment as a matter of course, but this can be a challenge from a methodological perspective, so best practice for inclusion so recreational fisheries should be developed.
- Review of the outcomes of regional cooperation projects (FishPi2, STREAM, SECFISH) is needed to support the development regional sampling programme for recreational fisheries and should be done by an intersessional group.

5.5 ToR 5 Propose ways to improve the regional coordination and feedback on regional issues

During this year’s meeting, a lot of progress has been made under ToR 5 as follows:

- Governance of RCGs- FishPi² project WP 1 -Central resources to support work in the Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs), a need for robust long term funding
- Feedback from ICES Working group on Recreational Fisheries (WGRFS)
- Feedback from ISSG on Diadromous Fish

- Suggestion for a joint venue with shared plenary of pan regional issues. For RCG Baltic and RCG NASEA 2020
- Update of Rules of procedures for Baltic RCG

5.5.1 **Governance of RCGs – Outcome FishPi² project WP 1 - Central resources to support work in the Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs), a need for robust long term funding**

5.5.1.1 **Progress during RCG BALTIC 2019**

Background and rationale

The Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs) are the main hub for regional coordination and cooperation within the different regions. The RCGs should in accordance with Council regulation (EU) 2017/1004 aim at developing and implementing procedures, methods, quality assurance and quality control for collecting and processing data with a view to enabling the reliability of scientific advice to be further improved. The RCGs may further prepare draft regional workplans, complementing or replacing the national workplans MS submit to the Commission on a regular basis. The RCGs have further a key role to interact with end-users of scientific data (EU) 2017/1004 and to, after end-user consultation, coordinate and agree on details in data to be collected and managed on the regional level ((EU) 2016/1251).

The RCGs have complex and extensive tasks but are presently not supported by central resources. The only exception is the maintenance of the regional database that is included in the MoU between ICES and the Commission. The meetings of the RCGs are presently prepared, run and reported by the elected chairs. This makes the system vulnerable as different chairs have different levels of ambition. The RCGs have further, in order to increase the effectiveness, agreed on working procedures where most analytical work is done between meetings. This requires that the chairs keep track of the work between meetings as well. The newly adopted Rules and Procedures do also put more responsibility on the chairs as there now, for example, are clearer rules for documents, participation in meetings and observers. All this requires administration.

The RCGs are expected to interact with a wide group of end-users. This is difficult since the work of RCGs are largely invisible resulting in end-users to be either unaware of RCGs or to have unrealistic expectations.

The recent fishPi² project (MARE/2016/22) identified the need for robust funding of central resources for RCG work to be effective and consistent. The project elaborated suggestions for a secretariat (to assure consistency and to reduce the burden on the chairs) and a webpage (to increase outreach) and suggested that the costs for such resources, as well as costs for development of the RDBES (regional database and estimation system) to meet future RCG needs, are something that need to be discussed between the NCs and the Commission. The suggestions were presented and discussed at the RCGs (NANSEA and Baltic) technical meetings in June 2019.

Need for decision

The NCs (in Baltic, NS&EA and NA) need to take a decision assuring medium-long term (> 3-5 years) funding for central resources necessary for effective RCG work. Identified central resources needed are

- Development of functionalities of the RDBES for RCG use (further elaborated in section 5.2.3)
- Secretariat for the RCG

- Website for the RCGs.

The central resources will support regional management of fishery dependent data necessary for regional workplans and regional sampling plans. They will further contribute to make end-users aware of ongoing work in the RCGs and support overall outreach. A secretariat will ease the burden for chairs and participants in the RCGs and assure consistency in outputs over time when chairs are changing.

Table 5.5.1 Estimated costs for essential central resources (areas covered by RCG Baltic, RCG NS&EA and RCG NA)

	Maintenance	Development	Document
Regional Database and Estimation System (RCG part)	Presently included in MoU between ICES and COM	~ 75 000 euro/ year	ICES /SCRDB
Secretariat	~ 100 000 euro/ year		fishPi2 report
Webpage	Included in budget for secretariat	~ 30 000 euro	fishPi2 report

The estimated total cost for a secretariat and to establish a webpage would be 130 000 euro the first year and 100 000 euros the following.

Models to finance

The RCGs (and their predecessors the RCMs) have repeatedly tried to get funding for central resources (in particular development RDB, WebGr) from the Commission. Lack of funding on the central level imply that resources on the local level (MS) might not be used in the most efficient way. It is thereby suggested that the MS share the costs of the central resources. This has advantages as RCGs and MS keep independency and control over how central resources are developed and utilized.

If MS agree to finance the central resources this can be done in different ways eg. as a flat rate across MS, dependent on MS share in EMFF or as combinations between the two. Below are tables (year 1 and year 2-5) showing examples of different MS contributions assuming different models. The example is including the 15 MS participating in RCG NE&EA, NA and Baltic.

Table 5.5.2 Financial allocation per member state, based on a flat rate or a pro rata rate, proportional to DCF funding allocation

Regions					
Baltic, North Sea & Eastern Arctic and North Atlantic					
			Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
YEAR 1, Total cost	130 000 €				2 500 €
	EMFF sum 2014-2020	Distribution key	EMFF Distribution key	Flat rate	Flat rate of Option 3 + distribution key
Member State	€	%	€	€	€
BE	41 746 051	1,01	1 313	8 667	3 434
DK	208 355 420	5,04	6 552	8 667	7 162
DE	219 596 276	5,31	6 905	8 667	7 413
IE	147 601 979	3,57	4 642	8 667	5 803
EE	100 970 418	2,44	3 175	8 667	4 759
ES	1 161 620 889	28,10	36 528	8 667	28 491
FR	587 980 173	14,22	18 490	8 667	15 656
LV	139 833 742	3,38	4 397	8 667	5 629
LT	63 432 222	1,53	1 995	8 667	3 919
NL	101 523 244	2,46	3 193	8 667	4 772
PL	531 219 456	12,85	16 705	8 667	14 386
PT	392 485 464	9,49	12 342	8 667	11 282
FI	74 393 168	1,80	2 339	8 667	4 165
SE	120 156 004	2,91	3 778	8 667	5 189
UK	243 139 437	5,88	7 646	8 667	7 940
	4 134 053 943	100,00	130 000	130 000	130 000
			Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
YEAR 2 - 5, Total cost	100 000 €				2 000 €
	EMFF sum 2014-2020	Distribution key	EMFF Distribution key	Flat rate	Flat rate of Option 3 + distribution key
Member State	€	%	€	€	€
BE	41 746 051	1,01	1 010	6 667	2 707
DK	208 355 420	5,04	5 040	6 667	5 528
DE	219 596 276	5,31	5 312	6 667	5 718
IE	147 601 979	3,57	3 570	6 667	4 499
EE	100 970 418	2,44	2 442	6 667	3 710
ES	1 161 620 889	28,10	28 099	6 667	21 669
FR	587 980 173	14,22	14 223	6 667	11 956
LV	139 833 742	3,38	3 382	6 667	4 368
LT	63 432 222	1,53	1 534	6 667	3 074
NL	101 523 244	2,46	2 456	6 667	3 719
PL	531 219 456	12,85	12 850	6 667	10 995
PT	392 485 464	9,49	9 494	6 667	8 646
FI	74 393 168	1,80	1 800	6 667	3 260
SE	120 156 004	2,91	2 906	6 667	4 035
UK	243 139 437	5,88	5 881	6 667	6 117
	4 134 053 943	100,00	100 000	100 000	100 000

5.5.1.2 Workplan 2020-2021

Depending on the decisions taken by NC in September 2019, it's the responsibility of the RCG chairs to set up a plan for how to make progress in the direction and ambition of the decision within the suggested ISSG 'Implementation of secretariat and webpage'.

5.5.1.3 Proposals for Recommendations and Decisions

RCG Baltic 2019 – D6 – Central resources to support work in the RCGs - a need for robust long term funding	
Relates to	Outcome of FishPi2 WP1 on governance of RCGs
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	a) NCs to decide if they will finance the central resources b) NCs to decide on which model to use for costsharing, either to use the models presented in 5.5.1 or another model. c) NC to decide on starting year, if 2020, include in WP 2020-2021.
Implication	The central resources will support regional management of fishery dependent data necessary for regional workplans and regional sampling plans. They will further contribute to make end-users aware of ongoing work in the RCGs and support overall outreach. A secretariat will ease the burden for chairs and participants in the RCGs and assure consistency in outputs over time when chairs are changing.
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of NANSEA and Baltic
Supporting Documentation	See text in chapter 5.5.1 and for details regarding funding for RDBES see chapter 5.2.3

5.5.2 Feedback from ICES Working group on Recreational Fisheries (WGRFS)

The importance of MRF in Europe from a biological, social and economic perspective was illustrated and the need to embed MRF within the broader fisheries management process highlighted, but it is currently unclear what this means from a regional coordination perspective. At a European level, the PECH committee issued a report on the state of play in MRF in 2018 that recommended robust data were collected on all species and gears, inclusion in future regulation, rules for management and financial support under the EMFF. Since then, the proposed update to the control reg text included provision for licensing, reporting and enforcement of MRF, but this was not well received by individual member states. In addition, updates have been proposed to the EU-MAP related to recreational fisheries. MRF has also been excluded from the landing obligation.

The ToRs for the WGRFS were reiterated, and the RCG was reminded that the WGRFS will be setting up new 3-year ToRs starting in 2020, so it is important for the RCG Baltic to identify specific tasks that it would like the WGRFS to undertake during this period. The challenges with understanding angler behaviour was highlighted and the ToRs for the ICES workshop on integrating

human dimensions into the management of MRF (WKHDR) that will happen in November 2019 were discussed.

MRF data is no longer included in the economic data call, so a solution for storage is needed urgently to ensure that MRF data are accessible, transparent and coordinated. At the 2018 meeting, the proposal was to store raised estimates in the RDBES. A proposal has been made and discussed with the SCRDES, but is unlikely to be done until after the fisheries independent surveys are complete. In addition, it was unclear how much funding would be needed. It is important that these issues are resolved, so that the deadline for inclusion is known and funding sources identified.

5.5.2.1 Progress during RCG BALTIC 2019

RCG Baltic discussed the importance that these issues are addressed from a regional cooperation perspective and the need for a closer links between the RCGs and WGRFS. This would help to advise on the EU MAP regulation, carry out scientific evaluation of National Work Plans for MRF, update the species list for each region, and define additional data collection needs.

It was clear that a database is needed to store MRF catches now that they are not included in the economic data call. The RDBES was still felt to be the right solution, but a clear timeline is needed and estimation of the funding requirements, so that these issues can be addressed now. In addition, the potential to upload of raw MRF data should be considered in the longer term.

The MRF pilot studies are starting to deliver data, but it was not clear how to proceed with data collection in the revision of the EU-MAP. At present, this could range from inclusion as regular surveys to no further data collection required. As a result, a detailed evaluation of the pilot studies is needed to assess the impact of MRF and identify future data collection approaches. Hence, an evaluation of the MRF pilot studies was proposed that should be done within an STECF EWG, possibly by a specific subgroup alongside the evaluation of the 2020 Annual Reports.

5.5.2.2 Workplan 2020-2021

The workplan for 2020-21 should focus on:

- Development of regional workplans based on the outcomes from FishPi2, STREAM and SECFISH.
- Inclusion of MRF data in the RDBES.
- Assessment of the pilot studies in order to define the future requirements under the EU-MAP.
- Support assessment working groups in understanding key stocks for MRF, data quality and methods for inclusion of MRF data in stock assessments.
- Working closely with the WGRFS to ensure that RCG Baltic future needs are satisfied.

5.5.2.3 Proposals for Recommendations and Decisions

There are two main recommendations on MRF:

- STECF should assess the outcomes of the pilot studies and define what is needed for future data collection. Full recommendation is put forward in RCG NA NS&EA 2019 report.
- MRF data should be incorporated in the RDBES.

5.5.3 Feedback from ISSG on Diadromous Fish

5.5.3.1 Progress during RCG BALTIC 2019

Report from ISSG is found in RCG ISSG 2018-2019, Annex 8.

The report of Diadromous Fish group includes the issues presented below.

1. Development of regional sampling/work plans for diadromous fish and quality assurance of data
 - 1.1. What are the regional work/sampling plans intended to contain and achieve, and how they can be beneficial to the Member States in terms of eels, salmon and sea trout (ToRs developed by Baltic RCG 2017)
 - Completed: overviews fisheries, sampling programmes, data collection & data needs for ICES EWGs (see DSG report)
 - Issue: data collection not shared between MS, difficult to agree details for regional plans. But coordination is possible and being implemented. Quality assurance is where we can possibly do the most useful work.
 - In Baltic potential issues with cost sharing between countries with few, and countries with many rivers
 - Conclusion: DSG keeps working on regional sampling plans, dependent on FishPi2 (and Med equivalent) outcomes
 - 1.2. Recommendations on fisheries and fishery-independent data needs for regional work/sampling plans, considering the tables of data needs drafted by RCGs 2018 and then updated by ICES expert working groups
 - Some data requested in EU-MAP currently not used in ICES stock assessment and therefore not collected by some countries, other data is not requested by EU-MAP but is used in assessments (see DSG report): -> *A future data collection programme, as flexible as possible where data collection can be included or omitted (depending on end user needs) following discussions/decisions in the DSG/RCG, would be desirable*
 - Work plans should follow recommendations of the WKESDCF report 2012 and make use of index catchments and standardised sampling methods
 - A pilot study is required to identify a standardised method for the collection of catch and biological data on recreational fishing for eel, both retained and released
 - 1.3. Support to the ICES WGs in determining the effect of fisheries and fishery-independent data quality issues on their assessments, and recommendations for addressing issues via the regional work/sampling plans
 - Data on recreational catches (in marine and freshwater) are typically uncertain and work to improve data collection and estimation procedures is needed
 - Levels of misreporting and unreporting are to a large extent unknown, especially in salmon and sea trout in the Baltic. Unclear how it affects assessment results and advice about fishing possibilities. -> *Proposed: i) Reliable data on species composition in catches from the offshore and coastal fisheries where substantial*

misreporting is suspected to take place should be made available to the EGs, ii) a more comprehensive control program of the sea fishery

- Evaluate and potentially increase electrofishing programs in some rivers due to spatially expanding populations
- Collection of sea trout parr densities from typical trout streams all Baltic Sea riparian countries
- Standardisation of reporting eel stock indicators in future to limit potential variability
- Establishment of eel Data Quality Assurance System
- Establish methods to quantify effect of data quality on the international eel and salmonid assessments

1.4. Work with the end-users and the RDBES steering group and developers to make best use of the RDBES for developing and implementing regional work/sampling plans

- Commercial landings and effort for Baltic salmon and sea trout (currently in InterCatch) should be possible to upload to RDBES
- Biological sampling data from Baltic salmon and sea trout catches should be possible to upload to RDBES (currently in RDB FishFrame)
- Questions remain how recreational catch statistics should be included in RDBES
- Not clear whether biological monitoring data from rivers and lagoons (electrofishing data, juvenile and adult counts, etc) will be possible to fit to RDBES structure in the future
- Completing development of the specific Eel DB is a high priority and should be pursued within the next couple of WGEEL meetings, and WGNAS is examining salmon DB possibilities

1.5. The rivers to be monitored for eel and salmon at regional level.

- The seven selected Baltic Sea Index Rivers cover all salmon assessment units, and this selection is judged to be sufficient for the WGBAST to perform analyses and provide stock advice
- Salmon abundance data (mainly parr densities derived from electrofishing, but also smolt counting in a few cases) from non index rivers are also necessary for ICES stock assessment and advice
- Sea trout index rivers in the Baltic should be established to fulfil assessment requirements with respect to geographical coverage and data collection needs
- Member States should provide their list of eel index rivers or habitats and describe their selection process

2. Recommendations

2.1. How to address any fisheries and fishery-independent data transmission issues reported by the end-users

- Data calls are new to diadromous fish and ICES is still developing information on transmission issues

- The content of different data calls relevant to eels and salmon must be checked for inconsistencies and a method developed to standardise and optimise data calls in the future, including the eel stock coordinator made aware of all data calls that feature eels

2.2. The revision of the EU MAP based on end-user requirements.

- DSG made recommendations at the subgroup EU MAP reform meeting in Ghent in May 2019

5.5.3.2 Workplan 2020-2021

Issues to be touched upon:

- Work on regional sampling plans, dependent on FishPi2 outcomes
- Work towards a pilot study to identify a standardised method for the collection of catch and biological data on recreational fishing for eel, both retained and released
- Investigate levels and effects of mis- and unreporting of diadromous fish in
- Work with end-users on evaluation of electrofishing programmes for salmonids and establishment of Data Quality Assurance Systems for diadromous fish.
- Work with the end-users and the RDBES steering group and developers to make best use of the RDBES
- Continue work with end users on selection of index rivers for eel and sea trout in the Baltic Sea
- Keep abreast of Data Calls for diadromous fish
- Evaluate possibilities for sharing the survey costs between countries with few and countries with many migratory fish rivers in Baltic
- Consider the collection of economic data of migratory species in freshwater

5.5.3.3 Proposals for Recommendations and Decisions

RCG Baltic 2019 – D7 Index rivers and potential cost sharing	
Relates to	Outcome of ISSG Diadromous Fish
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	1) NCs to agree that MSs should start to define their Index river selection procedures 2) NC to agree on if cost sharing should be applied between countries having few rivers and countries having many rivers in Baltic. If yes, discuss and suggest on a plan for how to proceed.

Implication	Enhances the integration of diadromous fish work in the data collection and consequently improves the data quality and potentially fits the data collection better to the needs of end-users (ICES EWGs).
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of NANSEA and Baltic
Supporting Documentation	RCG ISSG 2018-2019, Annex 8.

5.5.4 Suggestion for more effective time used for RCG meetings for RCG participants in the Baltic and NA NS&EA region

Since almost all intersessional work is panregional and that the outcome from Fish Pi2 will be included in new suggested ISSG that also are pan regional, and due to the fact that all MS in the Baltic also are participating in the RCG NA &NSEA there was a discussion on how to make the time spend in meetings more effective. RCG Baltic suggest to test that the RCG Baltic technical meeting in June 2020 will be held at the same time as RCG NA NSEA with a joint venue with shared plenary of pan regional issues. One part of the meeting could consist of feedback from panregional Intersessional work and other relevant topics fitting the TORS followed by discussions. Another part of the meeting to split in regions (NA NSEA and Baltic) to discuss regional aspects.

5.5.4.1 Proposals for Recommendations and Decisions

RCG Baltic 2019 – D8: ‘Back to back meeting’ RCG Baltic and RCG NANSEA	
Relates to	Outcome from RCG Baltic Plenary
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	RCG Baltic suggest to test that the RCG Baltic technical meeting in June 2020 will be held at the same time as RCG NA NSEA with a joint venue with shared plenary of pan regional issues. Since almost all intersessional work is panregional, outcome from Fish Pi2 to be included in new suggested pan regional ISSG, and that all MS in the Baltic also are participating in the RCG NA &NSEA, the joint meeting will save valuable time and money for all experts and seems to be an appropriate way to move forward.
Implication	A joint meeting with RCG NA NSEA and RCG Baltic will increase the size of the group (In total 45-55 participants), having implications on venue. The venue needs to fit a large group of people, preferably easy to access for most MS. For the meeting 2020 Poland has offered to host the meeting and is suitable for a joint RCG Baltic and NA NSEA. Before a potential secretariat is established, RCG Baltic suggest that a joint RCG will still need in total 4 chairs (2 BS, 2 NA &NSEA). Furthermore, the RCG Baltic suggest that part of the meeting will consist of

	feedback from panregional Intersessional work and other relevant topics fitting the TORS followed by discussions. Another part of the meeting to split in regions (Baltic and NA NSEA) to discuss regional aspects.
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of Baltic and NA SEA
Supporting Documentation	None

5.5.5 Update on Rules of Procedures for Baltic RCG

5.5.5.1 Progress during RCG BALTIC 2019

During RCG Baltic it was discussed that the Rules of Procedures for the Baltic should be compared to the RoP for RCG NA NSEA and see if the two documents should be streamlined. The latest agreed RoP for the Baltic can be found at <https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/docs/rcg>.

Since there was no time for preparation of the comparison during the meeting, no documents will be put forward to the Decision meeting in September.

5.5.5.2 Proposals for Recommendations and Decisions

No proposals for decisions was put forward for the Decision meeting.

5.6 ToR 6 Support of ToRs

During this year's meeting, a lot of progress has been made under ToR 6 as follows:

- FishPi² project (MARE/2016/22)
- Proposal for ISSG work 2019-2020

5.6.1 FishPi² project (MARE/2016/22)

5.6.1.1 Progress during RCG BALTIC 2019

This project has brought together over 50 scientists from 14 institutes, from 10 Member States (13 countries and autonomous regions) in work package teams, to address Biological data collection in EU waters.

The project consortium spans the basins of the North Sea and Eastern Arctic and the North Atlantic. The project consortium reunited many of the participants of the fishPi project (MARE 2014/19) with additional participation from Regional Co-ordination Meeting North Atlantic (RCM NA) institutions.

The project has built on the work achieved in the fishPi project, further strengthening regional cooperation, and has provided some clear guidance on the implementation phase of regional sampling. Work packages have specifically addressed the operation of putative Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs) (WP1); sets out scoping of regional fisheries (WP2); and proposes regional sampling plans for commercial fisher-

ies (WP3). Other work packages have addressed stomach and incidental bycatch sampling (WP4); small scale and recreational fisheries sampling (WP5); and national and regional data quality (WP6). The project outcomes have been disseminated to the North Sea and Eastern Arctic, North Atlantic, and Baltic RCGs in 2018 (WP7).

The feedback from these interactions led to a dissemination workshop with National Correspondents and DG MARE representatives in February 2019 (WP8). The project team established close links with other successful consortia and the STREAM project in particular, thus building both within region expertise and facilitating pan-regional cooperation. This report which documents the work conducted under the fishPi2 project is divided into a Summary Report and a series of related Annexes which contain more detailed material relevant to each Work Package.

The Summary Report and Annexes can be found at the following URLs:

<https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/docs/regional-grants>

<https://www.masts.ac.uk/research/>

The Summary Report and Annexes together with ancillary R code can be found at: <https://github.com/ices-tools-dev/FishPi2/tree/master/>

5.6.2 Suggestion for ISSG work 2019-2020

5.6.2.1 Progress during RCG BALTIC 2019

The setup of the intersessional work 2018-2019 has increased the overall achievement for the RCG work dramatically. The work done during the startup year in the ISSGs is impressive and the output is of very high quality. The RCG Baltic are convinced that RCG work benefits from being divided in several ISSG and that the way of working should be developed further and to be continued. The suggested next steps for the ISSGs has been endorsed by the RCG Baltic and is covered in this report. A few ISSG are suggested to be suspended over the next year and a few new ISSG are suggested to start 2019-2020. The overview of the suggested ISSG for 2019-2020 are presented below.

5.6.2.2 Work plan for 2020-2021

Table 5.6.2.2 Overview of the ISSG groups suggested for the period 2019-2020.

Overview on sub group work 2019-2020				
TOR	Topic	Intersessional Subgroups (ISSG)	Panregional/ regional	Comment
TOR 1	End-users and RCGs	RCGs and Endusers (ICES)	Panregional	ongoing
TOR 2	Regional Database	RDB-Steering Group	Panregional	ongoing
		RDB Core Group	Panregional	ongoing
	Data Analysis and Quality	Regional overviews of fisheries and sampling.	Panregional	ongoing
		Develop / continue to develop codes, tools	Panregional	ongoing
		Metier issues	Panregional	ongoing
		Data Quality and Confidentiality	Panregional	ongoing , new name
TOR 3	Implication of management measures on	No subgroup suggested		suspended
TOR 4	Regional Workplan	Development of Draft Regional work plan	Panregional	ongoing
TOR 4	Regional Sampling Plans	Finalizing Regional Sampling plans, suggested in FishPI2	Panregional ?	
		Update of Risk Assessment for bycatch in the North Atlantic and the Baltic	Panregional	ongoing, Baltic to be included
		Towards a regional sampling plan for the freezer trawler fleet exploiting pelagic fisheries in the Northeast Atlantic	Regional NA	ongoing
		Towards a regional sampling programme – Case study of fisheries for small pelagics in the Baltic	Regional Baltic	ongoing
TOR 4	Surveys	No subgroup suggested		postponed to 2020-2021
TOR 4	Diadromous Fishes	Development of the regional work/sampling plans for data collection and quality assurance.	Panregional	ongoing
TOR 4	Small scale fisheries	Evaluation of the data collected for the SSF at EU level	Panregional	new ISSG
TOR 4	Stomach sampling	Sampling of stomachs	Panregional ?	new ISSG
TOR 5	Governance	Implementation of generic tools for RCGs (Web/ Secretariat) ? Chairs of RCGs	Panregional	new ISSG

5.6.2.3 Proposals for recommendation and decisions

RCG Baltic and RCG NA NSEA 2019: D9 - Decision to be taken on ISSG 2019-2020	
Relates to	Outcome of all ISSG work presented in the different TORS in the report
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	NC to agree on the list of ISSG that are suggested for 2019-2020.
Implication	Work in ISSG needs experts and manpower (1 week of work / ISSG and person). The ISSG work force the MS to switch from working with a national focus to work with a more regional focus which is in line with idea of EU-MAP.
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of NA NSEA and Baltic
Supporting Documentation	Table 5.6.2.2 overview of ISSG work 2019-2020. Section 5.1 – 5.6 in this report Part II of the RCG Baltic 2019 report “Reports on Intersessional Sub-Group (ISSG) work 2018-2019”, Annex 1-12

6 Conclusions

Evaluation of new approach RCG

In general:

- RCG Baltic was happy with the new approach and the presentations held during the meeting were of very high quality.
- The setup of the intersessional work is very useful and contributes well to the overall achievements. The work done in the ISSGs is impressive and the output is of very good quality.

Suggestions for improvement:

- The time for discussions after presentations were too short. RCG Baltic suggest that more time is set aside for presentation, discussions and conclusions (2 h / topic instead of 45 min – 1 hour/ topic).
- The agenda was too intense and a mix of presentations and sub group work is suggested for future meetings.
- It's a risk that all the development and thinking of the RCG work is done within the ISSG and that countries that are not participating in all ISSG get lost..
- It's important to encourage the MS to take part in the ISSG, but it's also important to understand that not all MS can take part in all ISSG. The outcome from the ISSG therefore needs to be available before the meeting, presented for the RCGs and that time is set aside during the meeting for discussions and reflections on the outcome as well as thinking of the next steps.
- Avoid bringing in information from too many other groups, since the meeting gets too intense. If there are many ISSG running, the technical RCG meeting will be fully booked by discussing their outcome and way forward.
- It's maybe important that one of the RCG chair is participating in the ISSG Diadroma group to make a strong link with the discussions taking place in the subgroup and the RCG.

7 Next meeting

RCG Baltic Technical meeting 2020 is suggested to take place during the same dates and at the same venue as RCG NA NS&EA.

Date and venue is dependent on the decisions taken in September on this issue. Poland has offered to host the meeting, either in Gdynia or Krakow. The RCG Baltic meeting will be followed up with a decision meeting for the NCs XX September 2020.

In order to have an overlap between incoming and outgoing chairs for the Baltic, the suggested chairs for 2020 are Maria Hansson (Sweden) and for 2020-2021 Elo Rasmann (Estonia). To be decided by NCs in September meeting.

9 List of participants

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10 Overview Proposal for Decisions and Recommendations

Recommendations:

RCG Baltic 2019-R1 Data check in RDB	
Recommendation	Data check in the RDB
Justification	Presently there seems to be a difference between data uploaded to the RDB and IC.
Follow-up actions needed	ICES data centre to compare data for 10 stocks (central herring, eastern Baltic cod, sprat 22-32 – from the Baltic) between IC and RDB. This information needs to be sent to MS contact list before 1. October 2019. MS to look into data difference and explain difference, correct them if mistakes are discovered and re-uploaded before 1. December 2019.
Responsible persons for follow up actions	ICES data centre and MS
Time frame (deadline)	Before 2020.

RCG Baltic 2019-R2 Data from mandatory surveys to be publicly available	
Recommendation	All data from mandatory research vessel surveys (Table 10 EU 2016/1251) should be made publicly available through an international database
Justification	Mandatory surveys funded under EUMAP and used for stock assessment, should be made publicly available.
Follow-up actions needed	MS to start the process of making all surveys in table 10 public available through an ICES data base.
Responsible persons for follow up actions	RCGs and ICES to identify missing data and the appropriate international database. MS to work to provide these data
Time frame (deadline)	Before 2020

Decisions:

RCG Baltic 2019 – D1 - To terminate the age readings for dab, flounder, brill and turbot from the commercial fishery in the Baltic sea (SD 22-32)	
Relates to	Outcome from ISSG “End user” and according to EU-MAP 2016/1251 that data should be collected based on end user needs agreed at marine regional level.

When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	NCs to decide on: To terminate the age readings for dab, flounder, brill and turbot from the commercial fishery in the Baltic sea (SD 22-32) Presently age readings from the commercial fishery is not used in the stock assessment for the given stocks, and these data is not asked for in the ICES data call. Sampling of the ages from the commercial fishery should continue if end-users at a certain point would need ages again. Age readings are however, used from the surveys and it is important to keep conducting the age readings from these species from surveys.
Implication	As ICES in the new data call will not ask for age readings from the commercial data, MS can already in 2019 stop aging the commercial samples from the given species. Start 2020 when the new data call is launched by ICES RCG chairs to send the decision to the ICES secretary and WGBFAS
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs Baltic
Supporting Documentation	

RCG Baltic 2019 – D2 Annual fisheries overview – approve content	
Relates to	Outcome of ISSG ‘Facilitate the production of regional overviews of fisheries and sampling’
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	Approve routine use of 001_annual_fisheries_overview. Suggestions made during the RCGs in June 2019 will be included in the next version of this document. NCs to approve the idea, concept and content of the annual fisheries overview document and whether this is a document that will be beneficial to the work of RCG and the assessment working groups.
Implication	The approval would finalize the first document of the ISSG and establish it as a standard document which will be produced before the RCGs (and preferably before the assessment working groups).
Who needs to take decision/agree	NC’s NANSEA and Baltic
Supporting Documentation	Section 5.2.1, Google Docs: 001_annual_fisheries_overview

RCG Baltic 2019 – D3 Annual fisheries overview – to be public available	
Relates to	Outcome of ISSG ‘Facilitate the production of regional overviews of fisheries and sampling’
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	NCs to approve whether the overviews can be made public as a stand-alone published document after RCG use The document will be reviewed before publication. Decide on who to review and approve (RCGs, SCRDB or other ?)
Implication	The report of the latest fisheries overview (one year back) would be made public after the RCGs
Who needs to take decision/agree	NC’s NANSEA and Baltic
Supporting Documentation	Section 5.2.1, Google Docs: 001 annual fisheries overview

RCG Baltic 2019 – D4 – Central resources to support work in the RCGs - a need for robust long term funding of the RDBES development	
Relates to	Outcome of fishPi2 WP1 on governance of RCGs
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	a.) NCs to decide if they will finance the technical development, project management and dedicated workshops of the RDBES at an annual cost of €75,000 between 2020 and 2023; b.) NCs to decide on which model to use for costsharing, flat rate or pro rata of EMFF DCF funding allocation as outlined in table 5.2 and further elaborated in section 5.5.1
Implication	RDBES development will be completed and it will be available to support the RCGs according to the development road-map.
Who needs to take decision/agree	RCG NA NS&EA/Baltic National Correspondents
Supporting Documentation	Above and Section 5.5.1

RCG Baltic 2019 – D5 – Moving towards Regional Sampling Plan on fisheries for small pelagic in the Baltic	
Relates to	Outcome of ISSG 'Towards a regional sampling programme – Case study of fisheries for small pelagics in the Baltic'
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	General decision: NC to decide on if the Baltic region should continue and develop a regional sampling plan for the small pelagic fisheries, agree to continue the work in this ISSG. Short term decision: a) All MS to plan for participation in the ISSG workshop and development of the sampling plan b) Denmark and Sweden would try to set up a bilateral sampling protocol from 2020 as a test case. Long term decision: MS to plan for adaptation of their current sampling plan in line with the findings on the development of regional sampling plan.
Implication	To make progress and move towards a regional sampling programme in the Baltic it is of major importance that the MS are involved and participate in the development and the planned Workshop
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of Baltic
Supporting Documentation	Report from ISSG 'Towards Regional Sampling Plan for fisheries on small pelagic in the Baltic' found in RCG ISSG 2018-2019, Annex 10

RCG Baltic 2019 – D6 – Central resources to support work in the RCGs - a need for robust long term funding	
Relates to	Outcome of FishPi2 WP1 on governance of RCGs
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	a) NCs to decide if they will finance the central resources b) NCs to decide on which model to use for costsharing, either to use the models presented in 5.5.1 or another model. c) NC to decide on starting year, if 2020, include in WP 2020-2021.
Implication	The central resources will support regional management of fishery dependent data necessary for regional workplans and regional sampling plans. They will further contribute to make end-users aware of ongoing work in the RCGs and support overall out-

	reach. A secretariat will ease the burden for chairs and participants in the RCGs and assure consistency in outputs over time when chairs are changing.
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of NANSEA and Baltic
Supporting Documentation	See text in chapter 5.5.1 and for details regarding funding for RDBES see chapter 5.2.3

RCG Baltic 2019 – D7 Index rivers and potential cost sharing	
Relates to	Outcome of ISSG Diadromous Fish
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	3) NCs to agree that MSs should start to define their Index river selection procedures 4) NC to agree on if cost sharing should be applied between countries having few rivers and countries having many rivers in Baltic. If yes, discuss and suggest on a plan for how to proceed.
Implication	Enhances the integration of diadromous fish work in the data collection and consequently improves the data quality and potentially fits the data collection better to the needs of end-users (ICES EWGs).
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of NANSEA and Baltic
Supporting Documentation	RCG ISSG 2018-2019, Annex 8.

RCG Baltic 2019 – D8: Joint venue with shared plenary of pan regional issues for RCG Baltic and RCG NA NS&EA in 2020	
Relates to	Outcome from RCG Baltic Plenary
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	RCG Baltic suggest to test that the RCG Baltic technical meeting in June 2020 will be held at the same time as RCG NA NSEA with a joint venue with shared plenary of pan regional issues. Since almost all intersessional work is panregional, outcome from Fish Pi2 to be included in new suggested pan regional ISSG, and that all MS in the Baltic also are

	participating in the RCG NA &NSEA, the joint meeting will save valuable time and money for all experts and seems to be an appropriate way to move forward.
Implication	A joint meeting with RCG NA NSEA and RCG Baltic will increase the size of the group (In total 45-55 participants), having implications on venue. The venue needs to fit a large group of people, preferably easy to access for most MS. For the meeting 2020 Poland has offered to host the meeting and is suitable for a joint RCG Baltic and NA NSEA. Before a potential secretariat is established, RCG Baltic suggest that a joint RCG will still need in total 4 chairs (2 BS, 2 NA &NSEA). Furthermore, the RCG Baltic suggest that part of the meeting will consist of feedback from panregional Intersessional work and other relevant topics fitting the TORS followed by discussions. Another part of the meeting to split in regions (Baltic and NA NSEA) to discuss regional aspects.
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of Baltic and NA SEA
Supporting Documentation	None

RCG Baltic and RCG NA NS&EA 2019: D9 - Decision to be taken on ISSG 2019-2020	
Relates to	Outcome of all ISSG work presented in the different TORS in the report
When	Brussels, September 2019
Details of Decision to be taken	NC to agree on the list of ISSG that are suggested for 2019-2020.
Implication	Work in ISSG needs experts and manpower (1 week of work / ISSG and person). The ISSG work force the MS to switch from working with a national focus to work with a more regional focus which is in line with idea of EU-MAP.
Who needs to take decision/agree	NCs of NA NSEA and Baltic
Supporting Documentation	Table 5.6.2.2 overview of ISSG work 2019-2020. Section 5.1 – 5.6 in this report Part II of the RCG Baltic 2019 report “Reports on Intersessional Sub-Group (ISSG) work 2018-2019”, Annex 1-12