



RCG's Secretariat
SECWEB

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and Fisheries Fund



SECWEB
SUPPORTING INFORMATION
RCG DECISION MEETING
September 2022

SECWEB is funded by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) of the European Commission



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BACKGROUND

The project SecWeb (MARE2020-08) was setup with the aim of developing mechanisms to support the planning and execution of administrative tasks and the branding and online visibility of the Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs), with the aim to establish a long-term supportive structure, the RCGs' Secretariat. The need for a coordination and administrative supporting structure for RCGs has already been identified by all RCGs in a number of previous projects, such as FishPi² and STREAM.

One of the expected outcomes of the project is to ensure future operation and funding learning from the pilot implementation experience and developing suitable business models for the long-term run of the Secretariat. To avoid any disruption of the services, ideally the funding mechanism should be in place once the project ends, 31st December 2022.

The business scenario proposed hereunder for the long-term funding of the RCG's Secretariat is the result of several consultation process with MS and numerous meetings held not only internally but also with RCGs chairs and European Commission; in order to find the best formula for the implementation of the RCG's Secretariat.

A consultation process was launched in January 2022 to get the views of stakeholders and Member States about the need for a supporting structure and the suitability of the business model (flat rate scenario) for the long-term funding of the RCG's Secretariat.

The results of the questionnaire pointed out three major concerns:

- Flat rate scenario was not acceptable for a number of Member States (MS), in particular land-locked countries.
 - Action taken: a new business model was developed
- The type of public procurement it is subject to MS's legislation. Some MS have to deal with very heavy and lengthy administrative procedures for these types of services
 - Action taken: considered a mid-term solution, 3-year procedure
- Ensure EMFAF funding eligibility for the service
 - Action taken: developed a text to be included in NWP

OBJECTIVE

To reach an agreement between all Member States involved in the Data Collection Framework for the mid-term (2023-2025) funding of the RCG's Secretariat.

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

A long-term plan to maintain the Secretariat as a permanent support structure to the RCGs is essential to guarantee funding efficiency, to reinforce experts' engagement and for strengthening the regional cooperation in the context of the DCF.

Implementation of the activity is expected from 2023 onwards, until 2025 and beyond.

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The activities will be carried out consistently with the business models and funding scenarios found most suitable and acceptable by the Member States (MS) and the European Commission (EC), as developed under SecWeb WP3. The work of the RCGs' Secretariat beyond SecWeb implementation period must be built upon the project's outcomes and the services should reach all the RCGs. Given the different background and context of the RCGs, the working methodology for the Secretariat should enable some flexibility to adapt to the specificities of each RCG, however, the overall service lines and protocols will be shared and defined in common. The outcomes and workplan from and for the subsequent intersessional periods will be presented and discussed for approval during the RCGs annual meetings.

The MS and the EC will contribute with financial support to the service contractualisation on the basis of the funding scenarios presented in the Excel file (DraftEstimation_BusinessScenariosFundings_20220822_SECWEB) as supporting information to this document. The service provider will invoice each party according to the share of the service that corresponds, according to the amounts set in the long-term financial plan and to the legal/administrative basis enabling the contractual procedure in each country. Each country will send a formal acceptance letter to the service provider before the start of the implementation period, specifying the amount, the invoicing period, the legal entity details, etc.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

The Secretariat service will cover the list of tasks that are presented in the following Table. A specific set of tasks will be directed to assist the European Commission in their role to facilitate Regional Cooperation for the Fisheries Data Collection. The tasks directed to the EC will be different from those provided and invoiced to the Member States participating in the RCGs. Those in common will be different in their scope, that will depend on the client in each case.

Additionally, administrative and financial management of the Secretariat will apply to both service sets, proportionally.

Further specifications on them will be elaborated and described within the annual work-plan of the Secretariat.

* Tasks covered by MS financing and COM financing are differentiated below for more clarity.

Technical specification	MS financing	COM financing
List of tasks*		
I. Daily regular operations and processes:		
I.1. Manage daily communication and correspondence with the RCGs stakeholders		
I.2. Maintain and manage interaction/requests records		
I.3. Draft official letters, reports, etc		Separate task to be detailed
I.4. Manage the secretariat's legal, finances and staff obligations according to the annual plan and guarantee due diligence and accountability of the service		Separate task to be detailed
I.5 Maintain working tools and repositories such as:		Separate task to be detailed
I.5.1. Stakeholders' database		
I.5.2. Maintenance of virtual repositories, website and working areas.		
I.5.3. Other databases, logbooks or records agreed in the annual workplan for the Secretariat		

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<p>1.6. Maintain basic protocols and organisational procedures updated and accessible for the interested parties: 1.6.1. Participants' itinerary (chair and co-chair mandate and remits) 1.6.2. Rules of procedure 1.6.3. Terms of reference of RCG</p>		<p>Separate task to be detailed</p>
<p>1.7. Communication and dissemination activities: 1.7.1. Web, e-newsletter & Social network maintenance and promotion 1.7.2. Corporative image and branding strategy maintenance 1.7.3. Become the Stakeholders' focal point and helpdesk for the RCGs network 1.7.4. Manage consultation processes (questionnaires and surveys)</p>		
<p>1.8. Elaborate (in consultation with the RCG and ISSG chairs) a year-around action plan, with KPIs and targets for implementation and monitoring, and subject it to approval during the RCGs annual meeting cycle</p>		
<p>2. Support to meetings and meetings' reporting</p>		
<p>2.1. Support the RCG chairs to prepare, set up, announce and manage the RCG Technical Meetings, Pre-decision and Decision Meeting</p>		
<p>2.2. Support the RCG chairs across the reporting process from RCG meetings (from the compilation of inputs to the final edition and dissemination)</p>		
<p>2.3. Support the RCG chairs and the Liaison Meeting chair to prepare, set up, announce and manage the Liaison Meeting</p>		
<p>2.4. Support the RCG chairs and the Liaison Meeting chair across the reporting process from the Liaison Meeting (from the compilation of inputs to the final edition and dissemination)</p>		
<p>3. Support intersessional activity</p>		
<p>3.1. Support the RCG chairs to organise and monitor the intersessional work and achievements</p>		
<p>3.2. Provide administrative support for the design and launch of new initiatives by the RCG network</p>		

BUSSINES MODEL

TOTAL COST OF THE SERVICE

The estimations for running the RCG's Secretariat have been done on yearly basis and taking into account the experience gained during the implementation of SECWEB. Supporting RCGs, in particular RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic, through the whole RCGs cycle has allowed for a full detailed description of the services and estimation of resources.

The scenario considers 150 thousand euros as the preliminary annual budget. These estimations are valid until 2025. A revision of the costs is expected every three years to account for possible change of conditions, inflation rate, etc.

Total amount per MS are total net amounts, VAT has not been considered in the calculations.

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The scenario considers providing support to the six RCGs, namely: RCG North Atlantic, North Sea & Eastern Arctic; RCG Baltic; RCG Long Distance Fisheries; RCG Large Pelagics; RCG Economics Issues and RCG Mediterranean & Black Sea.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

To be in place from 1st January 2023 to avoid any disruption of the services.

Remaining questions to be addressed

Despite the efforts to find a common administrative procedure for all MS for the long-term funding of the Secretariat some questions still remain. In order to proceed there is the need to gather MS's feedback on the following:

1. How much is the **financial limit** for a **direct service contract** in your country?
2. Is it feasible for your organisation to **formalise a direct service contract** for more than one year for the Secretariat Support service?
 - 2.1. What is the **time-frame limit** for this in case it exists?
 - 2.2. How much is the **financial limit** for a direct service contract without open procedure in your country?
3. Is there in your national administration **any special requirement for foreign service providers (within the EU)?**

If yes, could you:

- 3.1 Please explain what they are (and legal references to it)
 - 3.2 What are possible solutions for having services from another EU member state to your national administration?
4. Normally for **public institutions** there is need to gather **three offers from different potential providers** for a minor service contract. Are there exceptions to this rule foreseen by law in your country (e.g a limit to the budget?)

If so, could you please explain if you consider this could apply for the Secretariat given the service description provided, the background and the need for all the network to go for a common service provider?

5. Can your country have the **service contract** for the Secretariat services **in forced from 1st January 2023?**
If not, when do you think it will be feasible to have the contract in force?

Note: Please provide **feedback to the above questions no later than 12th September 2022.**

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TEXT FOR NATIONAL WORK PLAN

The text below has been developed as a proposal text to be included in SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION; TEXT BOX 1B: OTHER DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES in the respective National Work Plans and allow eligibility of EMFAF funding for the RCG's Secretariat services.

1. Aim of the data collection activities

Support the operation and functioning of the RCG's Secretariat for a fluent regional coordination of data collection activities.

2. Duration of the data collection activity

01/01/2023 – 31/12/2025

3. Methodology and expected outcomes of the data collection activity

The Secretariat's organizational structure has been set up and pilot tested throughout the SecWeb project. The key functions of the RCG's Secretariat have been determined in close collaboration with all RCGs, in particular with RCG and Intersessional Subgroups (ISSGs) chairs. A business model has been developed. In addition, good practices in communication within and among the RCGs have been promoted and installed. The overall capacity to reach out to a wider public and increase the visibility of the work and output of the RCGs has been boosted with the development of a dedicated website and the consolidation of a visual identity.

RCG chairs and the RCG's network in general have acknowledged the added value of having an RCG's Secretariat to the overall aim of improving data collection activities.

Based on SecWeb project outputs the proposed data collection activity will connect the whole RCG network and stakeholders to work together on common goals. The Secretariat provides fluent administrative and coordination support for more efficient regional coordination liberating national experts involved in data collection activities from heavy burden administrative tasks.

Overall expected outcomes

- ✓ A full-time dedicated Secretariat support service for the RCGs enables a consistent approach to administering RCG activities, facilitates communication, and enhances the intersessional work, supporting also the work of sub-groups.
- ✓ A dynamic and permanently updated website will be kept available including as features:
 - Integration – allowing seamless synchronization with third-party information needs and requests.
 - Responsive display – to serve content across multiple devices, screens, and browsers.
 - User experience- maintaining a satisfactory user experience throughout the website sections.
 - Accessibility – To any interested visitor in a user-friendly way across the website sections.
 - Retention- keeping visitors coming back to the website.
 - Links to relevant restricted access sites and virtual environments.
- ✓ The Visual identity for the RCGs is increasingly consolidated and visibility and understanding of the work by the RCGs is enhanced for the relevant stakeholder groups.
- ✓ A regularly updated Stakeholders' database improves the communication function among the RCGs' experts and the stakeholders' community.
- ✓ Internal communication protocols and help-desk in place makes it easier for any new comer to efficiently join, adopt responsibilities, and contribute to the RCGs objectives and work commitments.

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- ✓ The public description of the secretariat functions, operational working protocols and commitments will build trust and enhance the whole network transparency and accountability.

TO BE DECIDED

Decision Meeting, 19th September 2022

In order to achieve the implementation of the outcomes of the project SecWeb from the 1st of January 2023 onwards and to reach an accepted legal baseline for all national administrations, it is agreed to insert the text above on regional contribution for the secretariat in their revision of the WVP2022-2024/2027.

Additionally, to inform all NCs on a level playing field, it is recommended to have the effective NCs present during the DM and the NC meetings where the scenarios for the long-term support will be presented. If not, it could take too much extra time to inform the effective NC, and questions raised after the meetings could be replied with a too big delay and the whole process for establishing a (accepted by all MS) long term scenario could be hampered.

NCs Meeting, 20th September 2022

Each MS individually formally agrees on the principle of the implementation of a long-term secretariat in support of the work of all RCGs and agrees to ensure a financial contribution based on the scenario coming from SecWeb.

The individual national confirmation to agree with the principles of the business scenario, should be in place not later than the 1st of January 2023. The implementation of the administrative agreements between the provider and the national administrations, including the agreed financial contribution (based on the scenario from SecWeb and in accordance with the national legislations) could be finalized during the first half of 2023 (depending on the respective national administrations procedure).