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**Streamlining the establishment of regional work plans in the Mediterranean
and Black Sea**



STREAMLINE

European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

**WP3 – Establishing decision making structures and
processes**

**Deliverable 3.1 – Definition of the decision making
structure**

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document, Deliverable D3.1 “Definition of the decision making structure”, is the result of the activities performed under Work Package 3 “Establishing decision making structures and processes” of the STREAMLINE project.

This document presents the proposal for a general approach to decision-making structure and process for developing RWPs within the umbrella of the RCG Med&BS.

2. INTRODUCTION

Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs) were established under the current EU Regulation for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector (Data Collection Framework Regulation-DCF) to facilitate cooperation on data collection among Member States (MSs) in the same marine region or on specific fisheries. One of the primary purposes of the RCGs is to prepare regional work plans, which should include sampling designs/plans, procedures, methods, quality assurance and quality control for collecting and processing data, and conditions for the delivery of data.

To support the process for the establishment of RCGs and to provide support to their work, DG MARE launched Calls for Proposals in the years 2014 and 2016. In the case of the Mediterranean and Black Sea, the selected grants (MARE/2014/19 Med&BS project and STREAM) tackled the very relevant issue of exploring the scope for establishing regional cooperation in data collection activities.

STREAMLINE (“Streamlining the establishment of regional work plans in the Mediterranean and Black Sea”), funded under the EU Call MARE/2020/08, is aimed at supporting the operation and functioning of the RCG Med&BS, helping to advance beyond national approaches, and achieve the expected results of coordinated regional work for the fisheries data collection.

The general objective of STREAMLINE is to draft Regional Work Plans (RWPs) for the Mediterranean and Black Sea related to specific topics through a co-creative work process with the RCG Med&BS and Member States.

Among the various tasks and activities, STREAMLINE WorkPackage 3 (WP3) aims at establishing processes for discussion, exchange and decision making with the RCG Med&BS, including with its broader institutional embeddedness in national data collection structures that will enable the RCG Med&BS to come to commonly agreed decisions on regional work plans.

During the WP3 meeting which was held online on the 9th November 2021, it was decided by the group to propose the creation under the RCG Med&BS of a Steering Committee in charge of the decision-making process on RWPs. However, following a discussion with FISHN’CO, it has been considered as a more flexible approach establishing an Inter-Sessional Sub-Group (ISSG) with the mandate for drafting RWPs to be endorsed by the RCG during the annual meeting.

In addition, the candidate timelines that were presented by DG MARE during the RCG chairs and NCs meeting on the 10th March 2022 were taken into consideration to draft the timeline for the RCG Med&BS decision-making process. The three different options that were presented by DG MARE are summarised in Figures 2.1-2.3.

The first option considers the timeline as suggested by STECF EWG 21-17, where the submission of RWPs to the NCs should be in June 2023 and to the COM by 15 October 2023 (Figure 2.1).



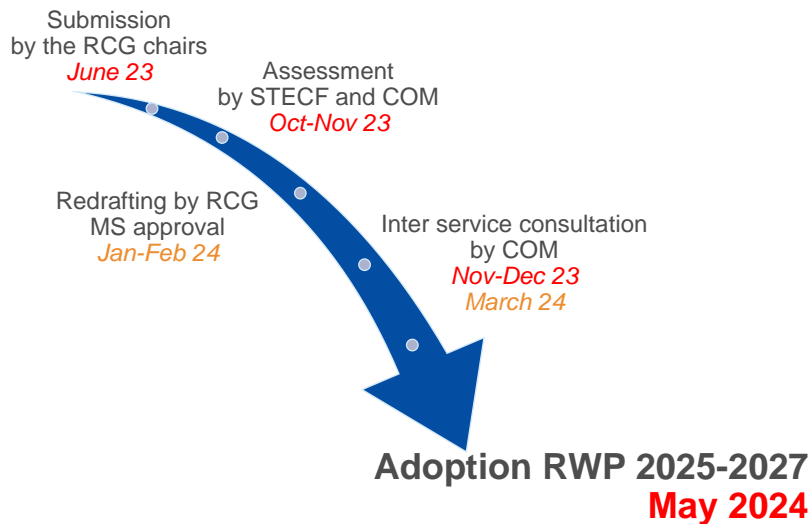


Figure 2.1. Timeline as suggested by STECF EWG 21-17: the submission of a RWP to the NCs should be in June 2023 and to the COM by 15 October 2023.

The second timeline proposal is based on an earlier adoption process (Figure 2.2). In this case, the redrafting of RWPs coincides with the work on national WP for NC, inter-service and voting, with the adoption process of the national work plans.

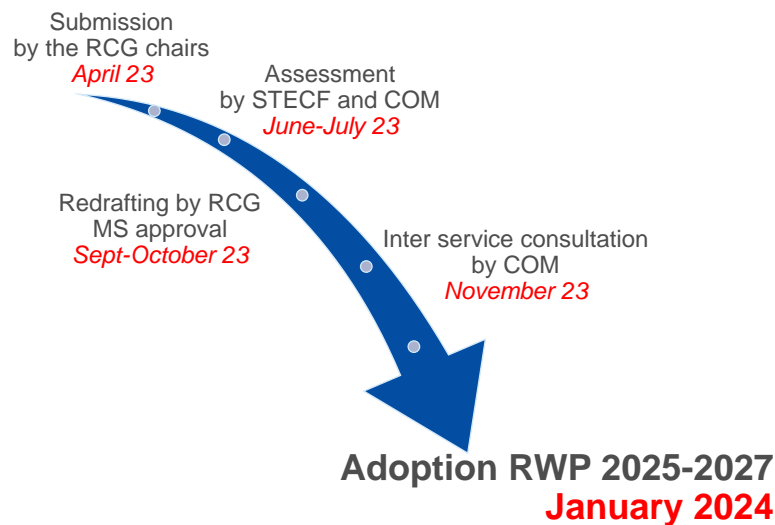


Figure 2.2. Draft decision-making structure and process for developing RWPs.

The third option proposes a longer process for the adoption (Figure 2.3). If the RWPs are not adopted by the COM, but agreed at RCG level, there will be two documents to testify this adoption: firstly the RCG report, which could include the agreed RWP; and secondly the STECF EWG report, which could include the RWP. Then, if during the WP assessment the RWPs are commented and need some feedback, they can be still re-evaluated by the following EWG on Annual Reports (June 2024). In both cases, there is enough time for MSs to incorporate the relevant parts of the RWPs into their NWPs (as STECF EWG 21-17 proposed). STECF and the COM will assess the NWPs, including their regional part which should mirror the RWPs (already submitted and known by the COM and STECF). The COM could reject a NWP which does not include the agreed RWP.

This has already happened, without legal consequences. In the 2021 exercise, the COM sent back to MS comments on the inclusion of agreed RWP parts which were not included in their NWP.



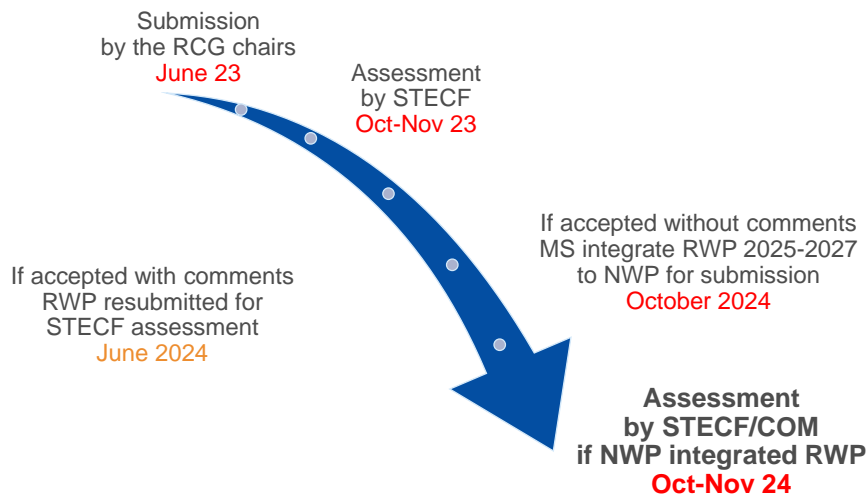


Figure 2.3. Draft decision-making structure and process for developing RWPs.

Although the objective of this document is to propose a draft for decision-making structure and process under the umbrella of the RCG Med&BS, it would be advisable to have a standardized and agreed approach among all the EU RCGs in the decision-making processes on RWPs. To this end, a cooperation among all the RCGs with the support of the regional grants, the RCGs Secretariat and DG MARE would play a pivotal role.

In addition, the development of a web interface/tool to compare NWPs and RWPs to cross-check the compatibility and consistency between the two. This tool would help Member States not only to compare their NWP and RWP, but also to drive Member States in incorporating RWPs. This tool may be developed in the future (medium term) taking advantage of the support of the RCGs Secretariat and possibly the Med&BS Regional Database.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

The proposal for a general approach to decision-making structure and process for developing RWPs is given below, with a supporting schematic view in Figure 3.1.

The phase included in the red rectangle in Figure 1 represents the preliminary steps in the process, and involves the endorsement by the RCG Med&BS of the proposed decision-making structure and process. This phase has to be finalized by September 2022 during the annual meeting of the RCG Med&BS.

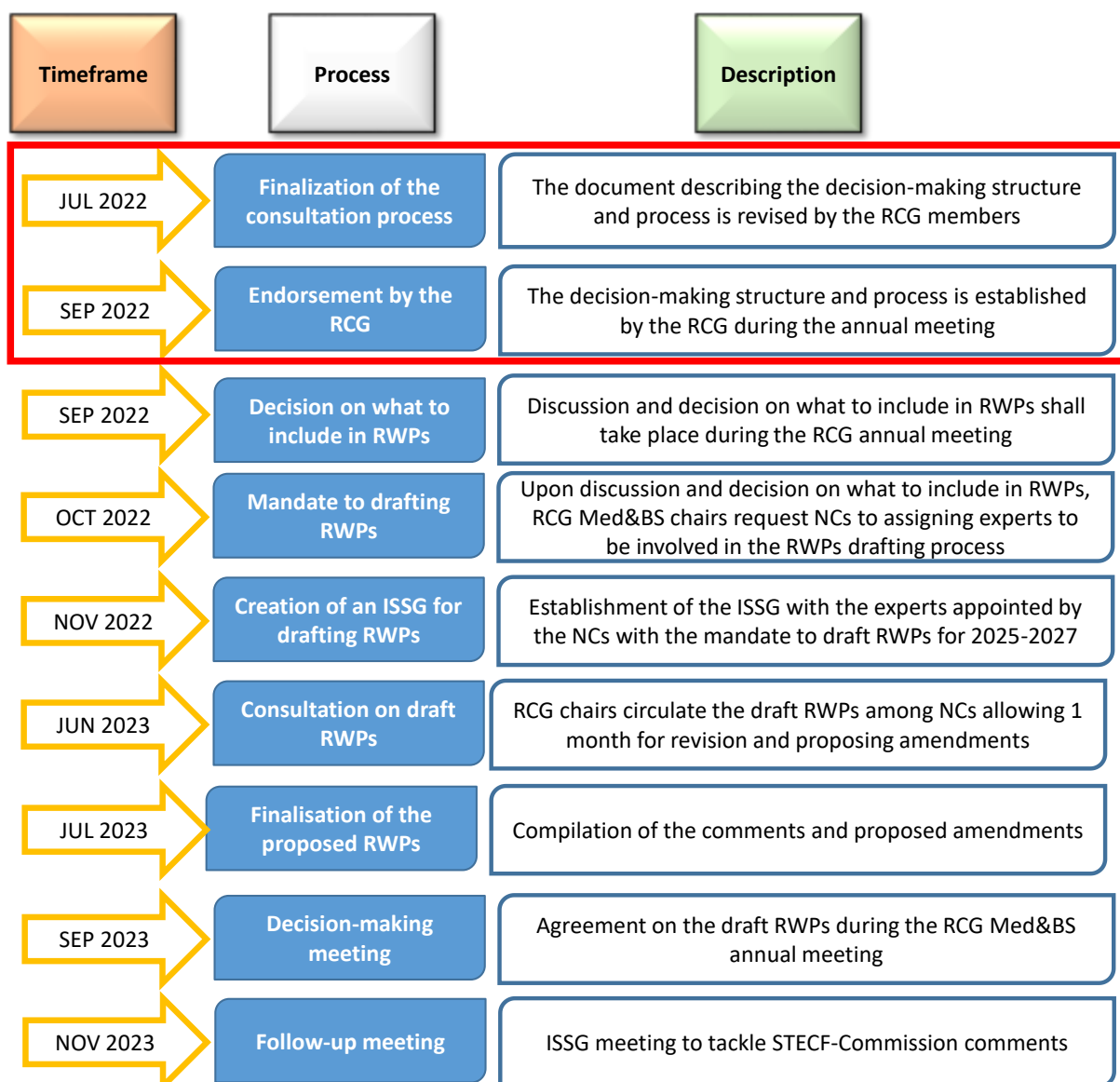


Figure 3.1. Draft decision-making structure and process for developing RWPs.

3.1. Decision on what to include in RWPs

During the RCG Med&BS annual meeting in September 2022, it will be discussed and agreed on which RWPs shall be drafted and submitted to the Commission. This phase must be based on a clear description of what exactly will be included in a RWP and who or what organization/institution will be responsible for the implementation of the activities.

A preliminary discussion before the RCG Med&BS annual meeting is strongly recommended.

3.2. Mandate to drafting a RWP

After the annual meeting, the RCG Med&BS chairs will officially request all the NCs to identify and appoint the relevant national experts (with expertise in the different fields that will be considered in the RWPs) to be involved in the activities of the ISSG. The ISSG will have the mandate to draft the RWPs on the fields agreed during the RCG annual meeting.

3.3. Creation of an ISSG for drafting RWPs

The ISSG on drafting RWPs should be tasked with preparing fully operational RWPs to be presented to the RCG Med&BS 2023 meeting and be implemented in the period 2025-2027. In preparing the RWPs,



the ISSG should take into account the outputs and recommendations of all the regional grants, with particular reference to MARE/2014/19 Med&BS, STREAM and STREAMLINE (Spedicato, 2016; Ligas, 2019).

The ISSG on drafting RWPs should be established with specific deadlines for preparing the draft RWPs and presenting them to the RCG and NCs.

The use of a sharepoint where all the experts are able to work on documents and files would be an easy and efficient approach to involve all experts.

3.4. Consultation on draft RWPs

The deadline for presenting the draft RWPs is June 2023. The draft RWPs should be sent to be reviewed by all experts and NCs. The RCG chairs should allow 1 month for comments and proposals for amendments. The consultation will take place offline, but web based meetings may be organized to streamline the process of review of the RWPs.

3.5. Finalisation of the proposed RWPs

A dedicated meeting of the ISSG should be organized in July 2023 for finalization of the RWP. The ISSG should compile the comments and proposals for amendments received and prepare the proposal for the final draft of the RWPs. The NCs could be invited at the end of the meeting where they will have the opportunity to amend and/or comment on the draft RWPs.

3.6. Decision-making meeting

During the 2023 RCG Med&BS annual meeting, the RWPs 2025-2027 should be finalised and agreed. A specific session within the annual meeting may be organized. A final consultation with the NCs should be organised with the objective to reach an agreement. During the decision meeting the procedure for reaching an agreement on the approval of the draft RWP will be included in the agenda of the meeting. In case a final agreement could not be reached during the annual meeting in September 2023, the RCG chairs may set a date (up to two weeks) for reaching an agreement on the approval of the draft RWPs by all NCs. When the final agreement by consensus is reached the RCG chairs should send the final draft of the RWP 2025-2027 to the commission/STECF in due time for evaluation and approval.

3.7. Follow-up meeting

After STECF EWG and COM evaluation, an adjustment or a revision of the RWPs could be needed to follow-up on comments or recommendations. During the communication process with the COM, the ISSG experts, relevant NCs and RCG chairs should be available in order to agree on the revised RWPs in a timely manner.

Agreement of the RWPs by the Commission

When the final agreement on the RWPs is provided by COM (depending on the timeline option which will be agreed), the MSs will have time until October 2024 to integrate/refer on the relevant parts from the RWPs into their NWP.

A communication channel between ISSG, RCGs, NCs and the COM could be established through a Questions and Answers (Q&A) through a user-friendly tool to be defined for possible queries.

4. REFERENCES

Ligas A. (2019). Strengthening REgional cooperation in the Area of fisheries biological data collection in the Mediterranean and Black Sea (STREAM). MARE/2016/22 SI2.770115. Final Report. 86 pp. + Annexes

Spedicato M.T. (2016). Strengthening regional cooperation in the area of fisheries data collection in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. MARE/2014/19 SI2.705484. Final Report. 32 pp. + Annexes



5. ANNEX: Minutes of the WP3 meeting



Streamlining the establishment of regional work plans in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, STREAMLINE (SI2.839815)

Work Package 3 meeting, 09th November 2021, 09.30-11.00 CET (web meeting on Teams)

Minutes of the meeting

09.30, Welcome and opening of the works, adoption of the agenda.

Mr Ligas provided a brief presentation of the STREAMLINE time plan with main focus on Work Package 3 and the expected outcomes from this activity. The relevant points of the existing RCG Med&BS Rules of Procedures (RoPs) for the drafting and decision on regional work plans (RWPs) were also presented and discussed.

The existing RoPs are considered adequate for starting the process of defining and implementing a decision making structure on RWPs under the umbrella of the RCG Med&BS. Nonetheless, the participants agreed on the need to update the RoPs and possibly achieve the goal of common RoPs for all the RCGs.

The participants agreed to start the process of defining the decision making structure on RWPs in a co-creative approach between the STREAMLINE grant and the RCG Med&BS. Cooperation with the other regional grants (namely FISHN'CO and SECWEB), and the other RCGs will be sought. In this regard, the RCG Secretariat and web site created under the SECWEB grant may play a pivotal role in facilitating the cooperation.

Mrs Vukov kindly offered to draft a roadmap to highlight the next steps toward the definition and creation of the decision making structure on RWPs. The draft roadmap was presented, discussed and agreed during the meeting, and is summarized below.

STEERING COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL WORK PLANS (2023-2024)

- Launch procedure: inform NCs (December 2021)
- Clarify legislative procedure for RWP adoption and NWP amendments (including formats) – missing documentation and guidelines (decision making structure depends on procedure to submit RWP/amended NWP)

SC-RWP:

- Establish SC-RWP (MS to nominate persons with mandate to make decisions, nominate chairperson)
- Establish workflow with timeframe and milestones
- First SC-RWP meeting: February 2022 (TBD)
- Clearly define which NWP Sections will be affected (2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 4.2, Annex 1.1) and how
- Define deadlines to keep the RCG informed of the progress of such work at intervals agreed by the RCG (point 5.4 RoP of RCG Med&BS)

Meetings:

- December 2021/January 2022: Meeting with NCs on RWP - proposal for establishing SC-RWP
- December 2021/January 2022: Meeting with DG MARE on legislative procedures
- Meeting among regional grants: STREAMLINE, FISHN'CO, SECWEB



The participants also agreed that several aspects dealing with RWPs (e.g., evaluation procedures, overlapping with national WPs, etc.) still need to be clarified. To this end, a meeting with DG MARE would help tackling those issues.

While closing the meeting, and thanking all the participants for their availability and support, Mr Ligas informed that the draft minutes (including the draft roadmap) will be circulated shortly.

The meeting closed at 11.00 CET.

List of participants:

Name and surname	Affiliation
Alessandro Ligas	CIBM
Paolo Sartor	CIBM
Charis Charilaou	DFMR
Evelina Sabatella	NISEA
Antonio Cervantes	IEO
María Gonzalez	IEO
Kolyo Zhelev	EAFA
Simona Nicheva	EAFA
Violin Raykov	IO-BAS
George Tserpes	HCMR
Angeliki Adamidou	FRI
Ivana Vukov	MPS

