



Regional Coordination Group
North Atlantic
North Sea & Eastern Arctic



Regional Coordination Group
Baltic

RCG NANSEA AND RCG BALTIC 2024 REPORT - Part I



Regional Coordination Group
North Atlantic
North Sea & Eastern Arctic



Regional Coordination Group
Baltic

Regional Coordination Group North Atlantic, North Sea & Eastern Arctic Regional Coordination Group Baltic

RCG NANSEA AND RCG BALTIC REPORT

Part I

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Acronyms

Acronyms

ACOM	Advisory Committee
AR	Annual Report
BRP	Biological Reference Points
CE	Commercial Effort
CECAF	Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
CINEA	European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency
CKMR	Close-kin mark-recapture
CL	Commercial Landings
COM	Commission
DCF	Data Collection Framework
DG MARE	Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
DM	Decision Meeting
DTMT	Data Transmission Monitoring Tool
EAF	Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries
ECON	Economic issues
EFCA	European Fisheries Control Agency
EMFAF	European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund
EMT	Electronic Monitoring Technology
ETP	Endangered, Threatened and Protected Species
FDI	Fisheries Dependent Information
GFCM	General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
IBTS	International Bottom Trawl Survey
IC	InterCatch
ICES	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea
ISSG	Intersessional Subgroup
JRC	Joint Research Center
LDF	Long Distance Fisheries
LM	Liaison Meeting
LP	Large Pelagics
Med & BS	Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea
ML	Machine Learning
MRF	Marine Recreational Fishery
MS	Member State
MSFD	Marine Strategy Framework Directive
MSY	Maximum Sustainable Yield
NAFO	North Atlantic Fisheries Organization
NANSEA	North Atlantic, North Sea and Eastern Arctic
NC	National correspondent
NEAFC	North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission
NWP	National Work Plan





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Acronyms

QAF	Quality Assurance Framework
RCG	Regional Coordination Group
RDB	Regional Database
RDBES	Regional Database & Estimation System
REM	Remote Electronic Monitoring
RFMO	Regional Fisheries Management Organisation
RSP	Regional Sampling Plan
RWP	Regional Work Plan
SCICOM	Science Committee
SID	Stock Information Database
SG	Subgroup
SSCF	Small Scale Coastal Fisheries
SSF	Small Scale Fisheries
STECF	Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries
TAC	Total Allowable Catch
TFA	Thematic Focus Areas
TM	Technical Meeting
VMS	Vessel Monitoring Systems



RCG NANSEA AND RCG BALTIC 2024 REPORT - Part I

Executive summary

Executive summary

The overall aim for RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic is to review the status of current issues, achievements and developments of regional coordination and identify future needs in line with DCF regulation (EU 1004/2017) requirements and the wider European environmental monitoring and management.

This was the last year for the 2022-2024 multi-annual Terms of References (ToRs) for the Regional Coordination Group North Atlantic, North Sea & Eastern Arctic (RCG NANSEA) and the Regional Coordination Group Baltic (RCG Baltic). The group met virtually on 4th June and physically in Bremerhaven, Germany, from 11-14 June 2024, with the possibility to connect remotely.

Five ToRs were handled during the RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic 2024 TM, with intersessional work carried out by designated ISSGs and subgroups during the RCG technical meeting. The intersessional work 2023-2024 was a setup of 14 different ISSGs, and their work was presented during the RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic 2024 TM. The output of the ISSGs is extremely valuable for the work of the TM and forms the basis of the discussions at the meeting. Next to the ISSGs, five subgroups were planned during the RCG TM.

During the RCG season 2023-2024 Regional Work Plans for NANSEA and Baltic have been finalized and submitted to the Commission. In addition, the RCG data call with deadline 2nd April 2024 for the first-time requested data in RDBES format instead of the previous RDB format, and these data were used for the Regional Work Plan, as well as for ISSG work.

ToR 1: Alignment between data collection and end-user needs

The work on this ToR is focused on communication with end-users and following up on recommendations. The communication between the RCG and end users is done through the ISSG 'End-users', which consists of RCG chairs, Commission and ICES as the primary end-user. The group met virtually and discussed recommendations.

The Commission gave a presentation on DCF topics relating to the RCGs, including the submission timelines for the Regional Work Plans 2025-2027 and for the next RWP 2028-2030 to be submitted in October 2026. The NWP submitted in October 2024 should link to RWP 2025-2027 and there is expectation that the NWP will incorporate Marine Action Plan activities as well as pilot studies previously implemented with success and considered necessary by MS. The Commission also updated regarding the introduction of the new RCG IT platform, change in timing of evaluation of Data Transmission issues, DTMT platform updates and Scientific Advice on Fisheries (SAF) grants.

ICES gave a presentation from the end-user side regarding the recommendations system which is managed in GitHub, and meetings between ICES and RCGs to update on status of recommendations. The Benchmark process was outlined including timeline from benchmark issue list creation in the expert group to implementation. It was discussed how RCGs can be informed and involved in the benchmark process, and how the overviews developed by RCG could be useful for Data Evaluation Workshops.

ToR 2: Data quality in data collection

This ToR focuses on coordinating and harmonising work and methods within the regions and overviews of fisheries and sampling. The ISSGs on 'RDB catch, effort and sampling overviews', 'Metier and transversal variable issues', 'Electronic Monitoring Technologies' and 'Surveys' are working on this ToR. In addition, feedback from the ICES WGRDBESGOV and ICES RDB/RDBES was given.

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The chairs of the ICES WGRDBESGOV gave a presentation on the outcomes from the 2023 WG meeting, as well as from intersessional work done in 2023-2024. The roadmap for development of the RDBES system was presented, highlighting that in 2027 data uploads will be accepted only to the RDBES. The changes in the data license have been suggested and are currently being revised. Different funding solutions have been specified for short and long-term development needs. An intersessional subgroup on Data Quality has been established to develop a plan to integrate a quality procedure for RDBES data. The outcomes from the work of the subgroup on Data Quality were presented and followed-up at the Technical Meeting in a subgroup dedicated to RDBES issues.

ICES gave an update regarding the RDBES structure, delivery of data to RCGs, the work done in the RDBES core group, the development of the RDBES by the ICES Secretariat and functionalities needed as identified by WGRDBESGOV. Funding is missing for one of the two RDBES developers by the end of 2024, work will be done to apply for funding as a special request to both the Commission and non-EU member states. Everybody that needs access to the RDBES data needs to sign the RDBES data license. An overview was given on data submissions in response to the joint RCG and ICES RDBES data call in 2024, upcoming RDBES workshops in 2024.

The ISSG on 'RDB catch, effort and sampling overviews' created the annual catch and effort overviews based on the RDBES data call. A new GitHub repository was created for new code used for RDBES data and the old is maintained with code used on the RDB data. The ISSG in the future will dedicate to multiannual overviews and sampling overviews. To address a request from ISSG PETS a table was made with total fishing effort and at sea monitoring effort by ecoregion and metier level 6, but the ISSG highlights that this can under- and over-represent existing plans. WGBFAS wants to continue using the overviews and a switch to a "self-organized" RDBES overview is being planned. BOG expressed their interest in the overviews for benchmarks and AWGs, but needs to evaluate the best way for ICES to take this on. The ISSG and RCG highlight that this ISSG provides a means to answer other ISSGs needs. The ISSG stresses that to ensure the work being developed by this group it is important that R expert participants can be more available to contribute. The name will be changed to "ISSG on RDBES Catch, Effort and Sampling Overviews".

The ISSG on 'Metier and transversal variable issues' continued supporting the implementation of metier codes requested in STECF FDI and ICES RDBES, ICES WGBYC and ICES VMS/logbook data calls. The group coordinates and communicates between RCGs and end-users (STECF and ICES) and deals with requests for new metier codes. Metier reports were produced, giving an overview of the metiers on different levels by region. The group started looking into the fecR package's maintenance for the fishing effort calculation and if it needs to be updated to fit with the RDBES format. The ISSG worked on an overview of methods used for cross-validation of data source to develop best practice guidelines, and also developed a template for documentation of methods used by MS to create RDBES CE and CL data.

The ISSG Surveys presented work on cost-sharing decisions for two surveys, worked on potential cost-sharing of other surveys and inputs to RWPs. A question on access for survey vessels to protected areas and windmill parks, which will take up more space in the coming years was dealt with by including two presentations on in the RCG meeting on a modelling approach to fill spatial or temporal gaps in the survey and an approach to reduce the tow duration in trawl surveys.

The ISSG on Electronic Monitoring Technologies reported that they started collaboration through a joint meeting between groups with similar interests (WGCATCH, WGTIFD, WGMLEARN, WGBYC), to map past and ongoing topics, avoid duplication of work and identify how to cooperate. The issue of collaboration and

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sharing of annotated/labelled images for used in AI processing of electronic monitoring was discussed. During the meeting, some possible bilateral or multi-lateral collaborations started being discussed.

A presentation was made by the chair of WGAGFA regarding the use of use of genetic based methods in the context of the DCF, ranging from widely used methods (genetic markers from tissue samples to characterize population structure and stock identification) to methods that are in research stage (e.g. stomach content DNA to identify stomach contents; environmental DNA from sediment or water samples to characterize species presence and abundance; close kin mark recapture to estimate population abundance; epigenetic age). The issue of how to move forward with the use of these methods in the DCF was discussed, with several scenarios hypothesized. Emphasis was given to the need to identify how these methods can contribute for meeting end user needs and to the need for adaptation to new data types. And in this context, it was also discussed if a separate ISSG should be created for genetic sampling. Still, it was decided to keep the topic regarding genetic methods in the existing ISSGs.

A summary of new methods in Data Collection was made by the RCG Chairs, including the method, the information provided, the development stage and relevant ICES WG. This summary included several genetics methods referred above, electronic monitoring for at sea and on shore sampling, image based Artificial Intelligence models for age estimation. The aim of the summary was to provide an overview to MS, and to kick start a discussion on how to deal with their use in the context of the DCF, focusing on aspects such as at how and what stage of their development should such methods be incorporated. Emphasis was given to the interest in finding ways to identify prominent end user needs that could be addressed with such methods, and how the produced data could then be incorporated.

One week in advance of the RCG Technical Meeting a questionnaire was sent to MS, concerning a simple overview on sampling of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems, including whether the MS have a dedicating sampling plan, and questions such as which sampling protocols and species identification guides are used. At the RCG Technical Meeting a brief summary of the results was presented, and it was discussed that it would be relevant for ICES survey group to identify and follow up on a way to gather and make accessible such information. International/Regional coordination in what concerns this type of sampling is relevant.

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ToR 3: Impact on management measures on data collection

Updates on New Control Regulation and Marine Action Plan were presented by the Commission. The revised control regulation (2023/2842) has been agreed and will be gradually implemented until 2030. It includes full digitalization of tracking and catch reporting for all vessels, including the small-scale fishery and also obligations for recreational fisheries. During the next two years, work will be ongoing on the updates of the Implementation Act (EU 404/2011) and the RCG highlighted that the most important sections for the RCG work will be annexes X and XI specifying the logbook reporting, and which is where it is stated that gear dimensions are optional, and article 22 specifying the frequency of vessel position transmission. In what concerns the Marine Action Plan, the feedback given by the Commission at the RCG technical meeting focused on the obligation of the MS regarding existing legislation and on the expectation of the Commission that MS will improve their monitoring of incidental bycatch of sensitive species (through or outside the DCF) and reflect these improvements to be made through the DCF to be presented in the NWPs to be submitted in October 2024. The Commission also referred the financial support that is being given in this sense, and the interaction established though the Joint Special Group.

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The RCG Chairs presented feedback from their participation as observers in a series of meetings organized by the Commission. The First Meeting of the “Joint special group in support of the Marine Action Plan” focused mostly on the expectations from the Commission, starting with the expectation of a roadmap expected to be prepared by MS to the COM by March 2024 on existing and planned activities to meet 2030 Biodiversity Targets. In the “Workshop on Financing the Marine Action Plan” the existing EU funding programs were presented together with one example of one ongoing project each. Feedback from ISSG Diadromous Fishes who participated as observers in the “Workshop on Rebuilding the European eel stock and sustainability of sectors: silver eel capture and release” was also presented by the RCG Chairs. Feedback from the 2nd online meeting of the “Joint special group in support of the Marine Action Plan” is included in this report, even though the meeting took place after the RCG Technical Meeting; it focused mostly on presentation of three ICES Special Advises to the Commission.

ToR 4: Development and implementation of Regional Work Plans

The Regional Work Plans (RWPs) have been agreed upon by National Correspondents at the 2023 Decision Meeting and reviewed by STECF in November 2023. The ISSG addressed the comments and suggestions from STECF. Additionally, the RWP tables have been updated with the most recent data. After consultation with MSs the RWPs were submitted to the EC on the 31st May 2024. The RWPs become legally binding if they are referenced in the National Work Plans (NWP). Therefore, at the Technical Meeting the sub-group focused on developing a template to guide MSs on how to link RWPs with NWPs. It was emphasised that the work on drafting RWP for 2028-2030 should start. The sub-group prepared an overview of steps that make up the RWP drafting process.

ISSGs that feed into this ToR are Diadromous Fishes, Optimized and Operational Regional Sampling Plans, Case Study of the trawl fishery in Iberian Waters, Identification of case studies of PETS bycatch monitoring, Freezer trawler fleet exploiting pelagic fisheries in the Northeast Atlantic, the Case study of fisheries for small pelagics in the Baltic, Evaluation of data collected for the SSF at EU level, Regionally coordinated stomach sampling and Recreational fishery.

The overarching ISSG on Optimized and Operational Regional Sampling Plans was on hold and had no activity in 2023/2024, similarly to 2022/2023. The ISSG will continue on hold in 2024-2025, as no need for reactivation was identified.

The three ISSGs for Regional Sampling Plan case studies presented their work's status. The ISSG Case Study on the small pelagic in the Baltic updated the documentation on the regional sampling plan included in the Regional Work Plan for the Baltic. At the Technical Meeting a misreporting of sprat and herring was recalled and discussed, with emphasis on how to address it concerning the past and future. The ISSG ‘Case study Freezer trawler fleet exploiting pelagic fisheries in the Northeast Atlantic’ worked on proposing a statistically robust regional sampling scheme to collect biological information on target species and bycatch. The ISSG conducted simulation studies, and tested a sampling protocol, which need to be further developed and tested in 2024/2025. The ISSG Case Study of the trawl fishery in Iberian Waters progressed in the preparation of a pilot study to be implemented in 2025-2026. The limitations to the implementation of the pilot study (in terms of sampled ports) previously identified were reevaluated and maintained as before. The sampling of foreign landings is one of the key novel aspects achieved with the regional sampling plan to be tested in a future pilot

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study. Therefore, in 2024 focus was given to the implementation of a survey by scientific observers on shore to quantify the expected industry refusal rate of Portuguese vessels landing in Spanish ports.

The ISSG on 'Evaluation of data collected for the SSF at EU level' focused on the possible impact of the new EU Control Regulation and possible improvements on SSF data. The group highlighted both potential improvements, but also some concerns related to the implementation of this regulation.

The ISSG 'Identification of case studies for ETP bycatch monitoring' reported recent initiatives (e.g. EU Marine Action Plan, ICES Special and Recurrent Advices to COM by WGBYC) in addition to the annual work of ICES WGBYC. Emphasis was put on the type of content produced in the Special and Recurrent Advices, especially in that they provide to MS information on the influence of both monitoring sampling design and coverage on the resulting accuracy of rates of bycatch per unit of effort; and based on this provide possible pathways for sampling plans to be defined. The ISSG also highlighted the risk mapping of potential bycatch risk (by métier and division) that was recently updated by WGBYC. Moreover, the ISSG also highlighted large international EU funded projects such as Cibbrina, Marine Beacon, REDUCE that aim at significant progress on monitoring and mitigation of incidental bycatch of ETP species. The ISSG followed up on the Control Regulation and identified potential improvements for this topic. As a note, there is a need to change from PETS to ETPs because of the confusion and connotation with the word pets.

Regarding the ISSG on Diadromous Fishes, emphasis was given to the large dialogue and coordination efforts made to store all diadromous species sampled data (both from commercial fisheries and from surveys). The contribution of the DIASPARA project to the regional coordination was highlighted. The ISSG also raised the need for WGs from ICES and other end-users to accommodate the regional coordination and articulation with the RCG in their remits.

The ISSG on Recreational Fisheries identified candidate stock to be included in the Regional Sampling Plans. The opportunities and threats of the new Control regulation were analysed. The group supports incorporating data from recreational fisheries in the RDBES.

The ISSG Regionally coordinated stomach sampling and Recreational fishery worked on the sampling plan, methods and manuals for regionally coordinated stomach in the North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat that is currently ongoing. It was highlighted that several countries are collecting but not analysing the stomachs and that analysis should also be implemented. At the meeting, a potential regional sampling plan for the Baltic started being discussed.

ToR 5: Governance

The ISSG NCs had a sub-group work at the Technical Meeting. The financing of the RCG Secretariat has been discussed following the outcomes from the meeting of the RCG ECON. The tables from RWPs containing bi and multilateral agreements have been updated. A procedure on how to react when MS does not follow the agreements included in RWPs has been discussed.

The RCGs Secretariat presented an update of their basic regular activities as they were agreed as an outcome of the SecWeb project. The RCGs Secretariat supports the RCG work, by maintenance of virtual working spaces, correspondence, support to RCG chairs and is maintaining the <https://www.fisheries-rcg.eu/> website. Under the new SecWeb 2.0 project starting in June 2024 further development of the RCGs Secretariat will be made, including work on the stakeholder database and new web-based contents. A solution for long-term funding has not yet been found, and work is ongoing to find a solution.



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The intersessional groups (ISSGs) within the RCG will continue their work in 2024/2025, and two ISSGs remain on hold. A meeting for ISSG chairs will be set up in November to discuss different aspects of the work of ISSG, timeline, expected outputs and the role of the ISSG vs. ICES. One particular aspect to be addressed will be discussing the assignment of genetics/new methods topics as well as coordination related with VMEs sampling to existing ISSGs.

ToR 6: AOB

The possibilities to make the work of the RCG NANSEA & Baltic and the ISSGs more visible were presented, and includes the website www.fisherires-rcg.eu where e.g., news can be posted and meetings advertised in the calendar.





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Administrative details

I Administrative details

Regional Coordination	Regional Coordination Group North Atlantic, North Sea & Eastern Arctic (RCG NANSEA) Regional Coordination Group Baltic (RCG Baltic)
Year of Appointment with the current cycle	3
Reporting year within the current cycle (1,2 or 3)	3
Chair(s)	RCG NANSEA: Josefine Egekvist, Denmark & Rita Vasconcelos, Portugal RCG Baltic: Maciej Adamowicz, Poland

Meeting venue	Meeting dates
Virtual Meeting	4 June 2024
Johann Heinrich von Thünen Institute, Bremerhaven, Germany (Physical meeting)	11- 14 June 2024



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 the development of RDB and RDBES.
- Review the outcome of regional-orientated projects and other groups.
- Develop a strategy for the implementation of electronic data capture (REM).

3. Review the impact of management measures on data collection

4. Development and implementation of Regional Work Plans

- Identify and propose potential regional workplans.
- Review and evaluate the outcome of regional-orientated projects to identify templates, content, and actions to incorporate into the regional work plan.
- Optimize the use of surveys: efficiency, multi-purpose & task sharing decisions and actions to be taken.

5. Propose ways to improve 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

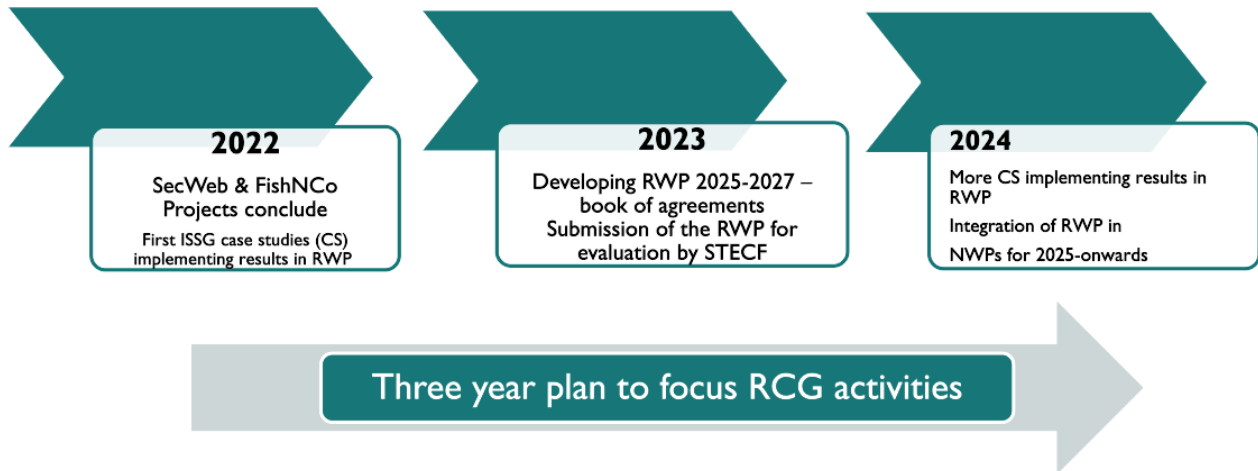
- Promote the publication of findings, likely in the form of peer-reviewed publication (e.g. CRR) that documents the development of methodologies in the field of regional coordination & data collection and the state of scientific knowledge on the topic at the end of the 3-year TOR period.
- Identify pilot studies—decisions and actions to be taken.

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Summary of Work plan RCGs 2022-2024

3 Summary of Work plan RCGs 2022-2024

The workplan of the RCG NANSEA & Baltic 2022-2024 is illustrated by the two figures below, where the first illustrates the major milestones of the RCG work 2022-2024. Major milestones have been related to work on and submission of Regional Work Plans for 2025-2027.



The table below illustrates RCG goals by ToR in further detail, by year for 2022-2024.

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	Year 1 (2022)	Year 2 (2023)	Year 3 (2024)
	<i>Fine tune dialogue & assess additional needs</i>	<i>Fine tune dialogue & assess additional needs (cont.)</i>	<i>Fine tune dialogue & assess additional needs (cont.)</i>
End-user Needs	Review & improve feedback mechanism (benchmark, data call, SID) Cont. review end-user needs Agree on additional/obsolete parameters Exchange of recommendations	Cont. review end-user feedback (Benchmark, SID, Data calls, Surveys) Agree on additional/obsolete parameters Exchange of recommendations	Cont. review end-user feedback (Benchmark, SID, Data calls, Surveys) Agree on additional/obsolete parameters Exchange of recommendations

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Summary of Work plan RCGs 2022-2024

	Year 1 (2022)	Year 2 (2023)	Year 3 (2024)
Data Quality	<i>Procedures and documentation</i>	<i>Transition to RDBES, electronic data capture</i>	<i>Transition to RDBES, electronic data capture</i>
	Review/Develop documentation on inventory and quality of DCF data Coordinate automation of data flows	Finalise documentation on inventory and quality of DCF data and elements to be forwarded to the regional work plan) Agree on the adoption of automated processes First draft strategy on coordinated electronic data capture	Complete transition to RDBES Complete strategy for implementation of electronic data capture
Regional Sampling Plans	<i>Review & progress</i>	<i>Review & progress</i>	<i>Finalise</i>
	Review outcome of regional-oriented projects (Demersal, Pelagic, bycatch), agree on next steps to develop operational proposals for regional sampling plans	Finalise and agree on operational proposals for regional sampling plans to be forwarded to the regional work plan	Refine text and content for adoption
Regional Work Plan	<i>Set up basic structure, test procedure</i>	<i>Enhance structure, review procedure</i>	<i>Finalise</i>
	Agree on basic building blocks, develop structure and content, and agree on 1st proposal for testing.	Add further content and documentation, review and refine the process	Incorporate agreed sampling regional plans and data quality documentation, finalise STECF proposal

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

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

During the last year of the 3-year RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic term, the work under each ToR has been carried out by designated inter-sessional subgroups (ISSGs). During the RCG TM ISSGs presented their main outcomes and asked for feedback from the group. As a result of the discussions, decisions, recommendations, and tasks for the ISSGs were agreed.

The RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic 2024 report is composed of three parts:

- The overview of the work done by ToR at the 2024 Technical Meeting (TM) can be found in Part I of the report.
- Part II presents the recommendations and decisions endorsed by the RCG. They will be looked at during the September Decision Meeting (DM).
- Detailed progress, outcomes and deliverables achieved in all ISSGs are described in Part III report, “Reports on intersessional subgroup (ISSGs) work 2023-2024”.

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5 Progress report on ToRs and workplan

5.1 ToR I Propose ways to improve the alignment between data collection and end-user needs (by region)

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

- Feedback from the ISSG and subgroup 'End-users and RCG interaction'
- Feedback from the European Commission (DG MARE)
- Feedback from ICES as an end-user

5.1.1 Feedback from ISSG 'End users and RCG interaction'

This ISSG aims to review and streamline the dialogue between data providers (RCGs) and end-users to identify effective processes to meet end-user needs and allow the RCGs to prioritize their activity relating to future data collection, storage and transmission functions. The subgroup was established as a pan-regional group in 2018. The 'Mandates and remits of the RCG NANSEA & Baltic' document specifies what the RCG can facilitate. This document is available at the RCG website: <https://www.fisheries-rcg.eu/rcg-nansea/>.

Progress during 2023-2024

In the season 2023-2024 the ISSG members organised or were invited to a number of meetings with end users. Regular information meetings between ICES and the RCG chairs were held to ensure cooperation. Annual meeting between RCG chairs, ICES and European Commission took place on 14th March 2024. The meeting allows to exchange information on the current status of recommendations, as well as, many important activities related to Regional Work Plans, RDBES, third countries, RCG work, etc. The minutes of the meeting can be found in the Part III of the RCG NANSEA Baltic TM Report.

Within the DCF community there has been recently intensive work on many topics. The most important were:

- Finalising Regional Work Plans,
- Issuing the first Joint RCG-ICES data call to RDBES,
- Following-up on the Marine Action Plan and the new Control Regulation.

ISSG members participated in a number of meetings with end users that addressed the points mentioned above. RCG chairs were in regular contact with other ISSG chairs regarding issues important to end users.

The 'RCG Mandates and remits' document was updated with the clarification of the role of RCGs vs ICES. The document was agreed with ICES and approved by National Correspondents at the Decision Meeting in September 2023.

In 2023 RCG NANSEA and Baltic received two recommendations from ICES Benchmark workshop on Northern Shelf cod stocks (WKBCOD):

- ICES_2023_66: National catch sampling programs should take the new sub-stock structure into account when planning future commercial catch sampling.
- ICES_2023_67: Start sampling genetic information from North Atlantic cod on a regional basis.

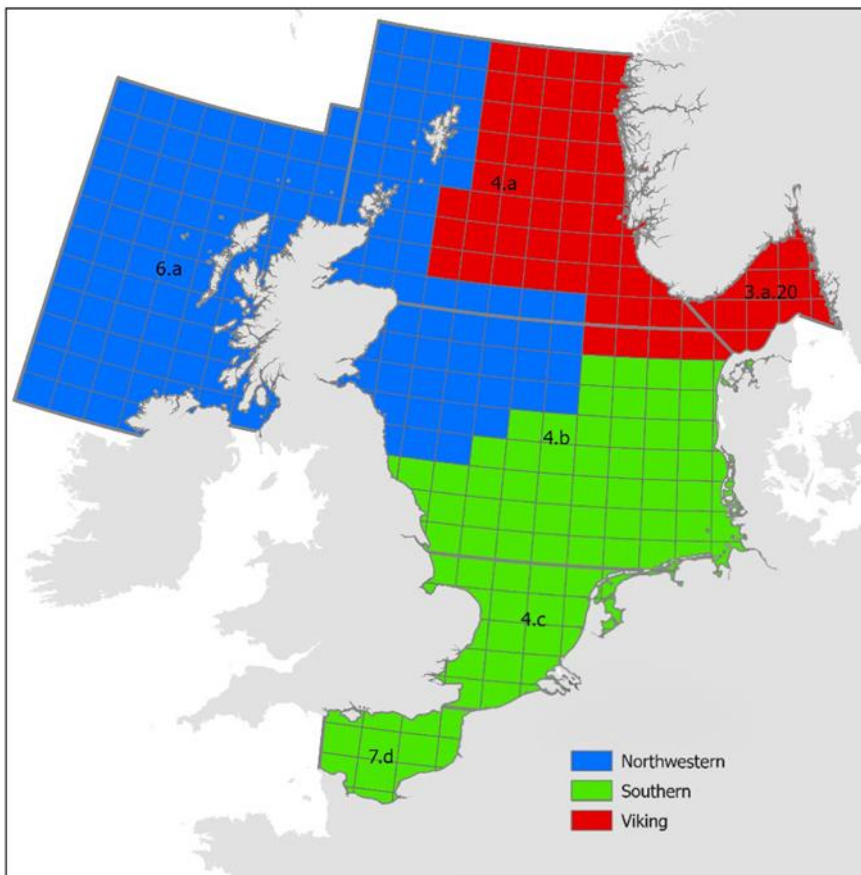
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The background for these recommendations was presented and discussed at the Technical Meeting. As a result from the discussion, it was agreed to formulate a recommendation to all MS to collect genetic samples from spawning (running) cod in the southern North Sea (4b, 4c) and the channel 7d, in spring 2025. The aim of this sampling is to make best use of resources (both at sea and in the lab) and therefore only sample and analyse samples that are expected to help improving the stock assessment and advice on the Cod in Subarea 4, divisions 6.a and 7.d, and Subdivision 20 (North Sea, West of Scotland, eastern English Channel, and Skagerrak).

The project EMFAF-2023-PIA-FisheriesScientificAdvice GenDC has been funded and signed in May 2024. The project duration is 2 years. The project aim is to improve stock assessments and sustainable management of marine fisheries, specifically cod, through integrated genetic data collection.

It is presently not possible with genetics to differentiate between the southern and the Northwestern cod component. These two stock components were split based on other data at the stockID workshop ICES. 2020. Workshop on Stock Identification of North Sea Cod (WKNSCodID). ICES Scientific Reports. 2:89. 82 pp. [http://doi.org/ 10.17895/ices.pub.7499](http://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.7499)



It is presently only possible to genetically split the Viking components from the Dogger (Northwestern)/ Southern as well as to split Viking from Kattegat cod.

Details on collection:

It is important to have individual fish information such as:

- total length, wet weight, age, sex, maturity stage.
- further information from the vessel (HH). Position, date, GPS position of the sample



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How to sample:

A fin clip/gill clip/muscle tissue sample (1X1 cm), which should be stored in a small (2 ml. microtube) filled with 98-100% ethanol. The tissue sample should at maximum be 30% of the tube volume. It is important that the ethanol is covering the whole tissue sample. Write with a pencil a clear individual ID, so it is possible to link the sample to all other fish and station information. If the individual fish cannot be identified, the sample is useless. Store samples in a fridge or just not within sunlight.

Samples to be sent to:

Jakob Hemmer- Hansen ; jhh@aqu.dtu.dk / msh@aqu.dtu.dk

Danmarks Tekniske Universitet

Vejlsøvej 39

Bygning Silkeborg-039, 8600 Silkeborg, Denmark

Workplan for 2024 – 2025

1. Communication channel between ICES and RCG chairs,
2. Communication channel between the COM and RCG chairs,
3. Communicate with ICES regarding ISSG Overviews outputs to ICES WGs.
4. Prepare a guide on creating recommendations and updating their status.

Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_R01: The RCG NSEA & Baltic recommends that all MS collect genetic samples from spawning (running) cod in the southern North Sea (4b, 4c) and the channel 7d, in spring 2025. The collection could be conducted from IBTS, BTS or other relevant scientific survey program as well as from observer programs if possible.

5.1.2 Feedback from the European Commission

Objectives

Update on DCF-related activities:

- Regional and national work plans 2025-2027
- DCF IT platform
- DTMT update
- Other updates: SAF grant projects

Achievements

Regional work plans in their final form will be approved by STECF EWG 24-08 in last week of June. The national WP will incorporate relevant RWP parts. No modifications in RWP 2025-2027 would be

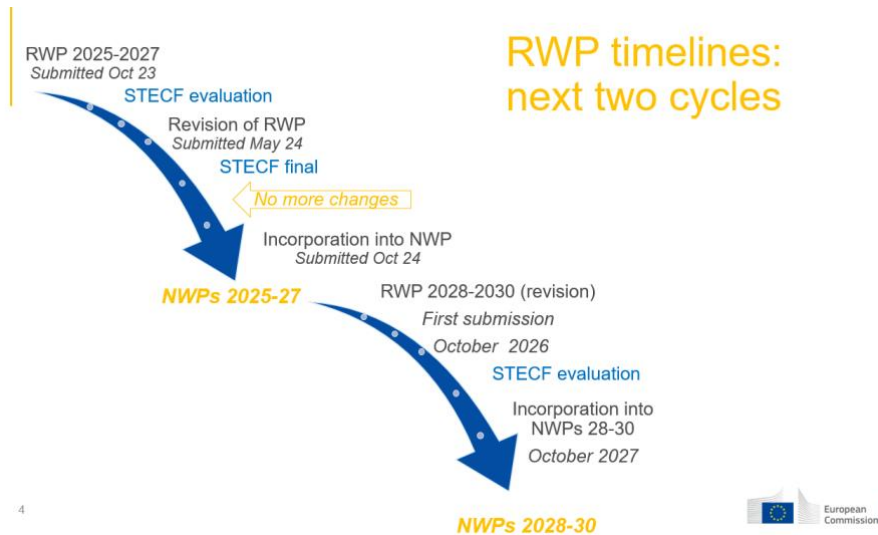


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introduced during the implementing period. New regionally agreed activities may be incorporated in amended national WP 2026 and 2027. Next draft RWP 2028-2030 to be submitted in October 2026.

On top of the RWP parts, the NWP 2025-2027 should incorporate marine action plan activities; reflect improvements related to identified data collection issues (DTMT); integrate pilot study results into regular data collection; introduce new pilot studies reflecting end-user needs.



DCF IT platform development phase 3 in progress allowed for uploading AR 2023. Most MS experienced difficulties: investigation is ongoing to solve the technical problems. Validation rules for uploading WP 2025-2027 are being fine-tuned and should be ready in summer. WP submission will contain both workflows, through email (mandatory) and platform (voluntary).

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2024 timeline for the platform use



Modified DTMT assessment cycle will be first run in STECF EWG 24-08 AR assessment group, with only high severity issues to be assessed, and other issues left for MS to resolve during following data uploads.

COM informed on 6 winning projects in the Scientific Advice for Fisheries grant.

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Outcomes from discussion during the RCG TM

New methods tested with pilot studies should be included in the NWP/AR.

A question on how to include bilateral agreements in NWP tables 2.1 and 2.5. Is it the MS sampling or the vessel flag country that reports the sampling scheme will be picked up as a task for the ISSG RWP.

Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

No recommendations or decisions

5.1.3 Feedback from ICES as an end-user

ICES presented an update on processes related to the RCGs (SID, benchmarks, recommendations, general dialogue, etc.). In general, the collaboration between ICES and RCGs was considered very positive and a further strengthening of the communication was encouraged. The links to the RCG Secretariat website could be enhanced even further on relevant ICES SharePoint sites to increase the awareness of the RCG activities in the ICES community.

The benchmark process was outlined including timeline from benchmark issue list creation in the Expert Group to implementation in year+2. An active role of the RCGs was discussed, primarily in connection with the Data Evaluation Workshop. Given that the issues concerning data and surveys vary between the individual benchmarks, the role and level of involvement will have to be clarified on a case-by-case basis. **Thus, the RCG Chairs should be informed as soon as the benchmarks have been decided by ACOM. Specification of how the RCGs can contribute and what is needed from them is necessary.** The catch and effort overviews developed by the RCGs would be highly useful for the Data Evaluation Workshops for e.g. looking at changes in sampling coverage and fishing patterns. **ICES should manage and curate the code with time (to also include non-EU countries), the resourcing is being discussed. Presently the code and specifications for the maps are still managed by the RCG ISSG for these overviews.** The RCGs and ICES Secretariat need to work on an operational link concerning these overviews to ensure the code is correctly adapted and as well informing the experts when applying the maps about the underlying data and calculations.

The current recommendation system includes RCGs, where ICES groups can put forward recommendations to RCGs and vice-versa. The RCG Chairs and ICES Secretariat and SCICOM chair, and chairs of EOSG, DTSG and FRSG have set up a system for sense-checking recommendations prior to these going to RCGs. The document outlining the remit for the RCGs has been helpful here. Review of recommendations will be done annually (or if needed, ad hoc) in the early spring to feed the recommendations forward to the RCGs in due time for the June meeting (overview on SharePoint). **The RCG chairs and the ICES Secretariat will meet shortly after the publication of the TM report to update the GitHub concerning status of the current and new recommendations.**

A detailed overview of the data call process was presented, including the identification of data transmission issues and reporting to DGMARE and ACOM (for non-EU ICES member countries). **Should an Expert Group have data needs or transmission issues, which they would like to enhance to e.g. RCGs,**



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the data call module in SID should be used. Of course, also with the support of the ICES Secretariat team running the relevant Expert Group. The potential for data collection lying within the DCF and the coordination by the RCGs could be made clearer to the Expert Groups, in particular when working with diadromous species. However, ICES do need to collate data from all ICES member countries and thus the data call structure and aim goes beyond the DCF. **It was suggested that the expert groups could request a presentation of the data collection structures in the ICES areas.** The status of the development of new modules in SID was given, this database is still considered highly informative and useful by the RCGs.

There was a wish from the RCGs/data submitters for as early as possible to be notified of upcoming data call deadlines, and in some cases the reasoning for unusually long time periods between a given deadline and the Expert Group meeting.



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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 'WGRDBESGOV'
- Feedback from ICES RDBES
- Feedback from SG RDBES
- Feedback from the ISSG & SG 'RCG catch, effort and sampling overviews'
- Feedback from the ISSG 'Metier and transversal variable issues'
- Feedback from the ISSG 'Surveys'
- Presentations: Examples on surveys in areas where it is not possible to trawl
- Feedback from the ISSG on 'Electronic Monitoring Technologies'
- Presentation on Genetics sampling

5.2.1 Feedback from the 'WGRDBESGOV'

The Working Group on Governance of the Regional Database & Estimation System (WGRDBES-GOV) provides the governance function for the Regional Database & Estimation System (RDBES) that is currently in development. It is composed of representatives from ICES member countries and EU Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs).

The RDBES has an important part to play in increasing transparency and improving the quality of stock assessment within ICES. It has already replaced the RDB data system in 2023, and it is planned to replace ICES InterCatch in 2027. By that time, there will be a single joint RCG-ICES data call covering all type of data (catch, effort, biological estimates, recreational fisheries, by catch), and the assessment of all stocks currently uploaded to IC will be done using RDBES data and in TAF. To achieve this important milestone, the WGRDBESGV has defined a roadmap and it also promotes workshops and working groups which help data submitters and stock coordinators with the transition to the new system.

In April 2024, for the first time, a joint RCG-ICES data call has been launched. And a proposal for a fixed deadline calendar for AWGs data submission was sent to ICES. The work done by the WGRDBESGOV in relation to data quality, data license and funding was also presented, and a subgroup was organized during the RCG TM to progress in specific topics (see section 5.2.3):

- Quality checks for RDBES data. Follow up of the presentation from RDBESGOV ISSG Quality by Karolina Molla Gazi.
- Procedures for communicating issues found in RDBES data. RCG/ICES.
- Documentation of methods used for creating the RDBES data. Suggestion for template from ISSG Metier and transversal variables.
- Funding.
- Conversion module from RDBES to FDI.
- Revision of RDBES data license.

Remaining points: Roles and permissions needed in RDBES system for RCG work (e.g., download); historical RDB data (what to do?).

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WGRDBESGOV – Intersessional Subgroup on Data Quality

High-quality data is essential for effective provision of scientific advice, as it ensures that the information used is precise, comprehensive, and trustworthy. Maintaining data quality involves regular data cleansing, validation, and verification processes to remove inaccuracies and standardize data formats. The WGRDBESGOV ISSG on data quality was tasked to develop a plan to integrate a quality procedure in the RDBES process. We have identified several aspects of data quality and how to integrate them in the process both in the short term and in the long term.

Workflow

The proposed workflow of RDBES data quality (Figure 5.2.1.1) is the following:

1. The data submitter uploads their national data in RDBES where the format, duplicate and code consistency checks are performed as a built-in function of the system.
2. The data submitter will use the R markdown script developed under this subgroup or another QC system to check the data and identify potential errors, inconsistencies and/or problematic records in their data and re-submit them.
3. The end user will extract of the data and will perform their own checks relating mainly to the content of the data.
4. The end user will report back to the data submitter if errors are spotted.
5. If no issues, end-user will make the relevant end product, after checking that it complies with the RDBES data license.

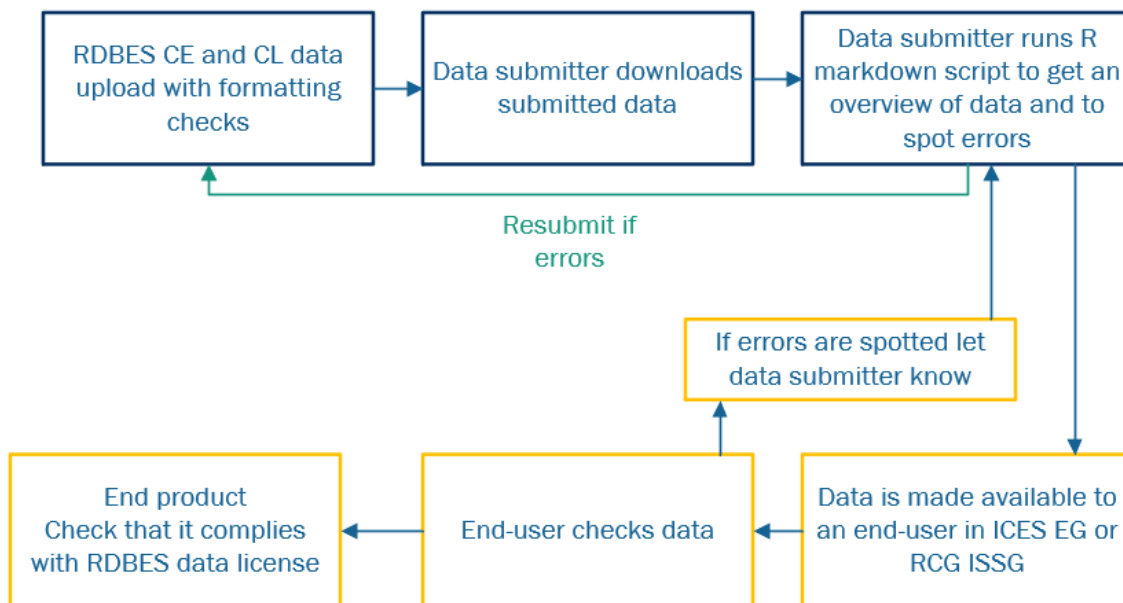


Figure 5.2.1.1: Workflow of RDBES data quality.

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Documentation

An important aspect of RDBES is its dynamic nature, addressing multiple data calls. Data can be altered and supplemented at various stages throughout the data call process, even beyond the RCG deadline. Currently, data submitters must fill in an upload log to indicate the completeness of the data. However, as the state of the data can change over time, data submitters need to update the upload log to reflect these changes. Additionally, end users must be informed of these updates, necessitating the compilation of these logs. This process is time-consuming and manual, meeting the short-term needs of RDBES during the transition phase but falling short of long-term requirements due to its labour-intensive and time-consuming nature.

A long-term solution would be to develop an ICES interface where data submitters can indicate data changes. This interface would provide real-time updates to end users. By automating the documentation process, this interface could also include additional functionalities such as automated feedback mechanisms crucial for data quality assurance.

Feedback mechanism

The feedback process should be efficient and straightforward to ensure that end-users' work is not disrupted, and delays are minimized. The short-term solution proposed is:

- Countries should provide contact information for two individuals responsible for data submission.
- When errors are identified, end-users should send an email directly to the data submitters, including an ICES representative in cc to track correspondence, as well as the chair(s) of the subsidiary body.
- If there is no response from the data submitters within XX working days, the NC should be notified.

In the long term, an ICES interface that documents errors and changes in real time could feature a functionality to send an email to the data submitter when an end-user identifies an error, or to the end-user when a change has occurred.

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Data quality system

The ISSG Data quality was tasked to develop a draft data quality report for data submitters. For that purpose, an R markdown script was produced that outputs an html report. However, we have identified alternative options that may better meet the diverse needs of the users. The table below gives an overview and compares the potential systems in addition to the R markdown HTML report.

Table 5.2.1.1: Comparison of different data quality check systems.

System	User	Pros	Cons
R markdown HTML report	Data submitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low cost • Easy to develop • Short term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R knowledge • Dedicated subgroup for maintenance, development • Use is optional • Directed mainly to data submitter

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System	User	Pros	Cons
RDBES automated report	Data submitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automatic • R knowledge not needed • User will have instant access to the report with the data upload 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICES needs to develop it • Funding • Integrating changes might be difficult • Long term • Directed mainly to data submitter
Dedicated working group	Data submitter & end-users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough checks • Could be combined with existing ISSGs/WGs to reduce workload (e.g., Fisheries Overviews) • Checks will cover the data submitter and end user needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Expert capacity • Annual Working Group
R package	Data submitters & end users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checks will cover the data submitter and end user needs • Easily accessible for all users with R knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R knowledge • Dedicated Working Group to develop the package • Dedicated subgroup for maintenance, development • Use is optional • Long term • Expert capacity

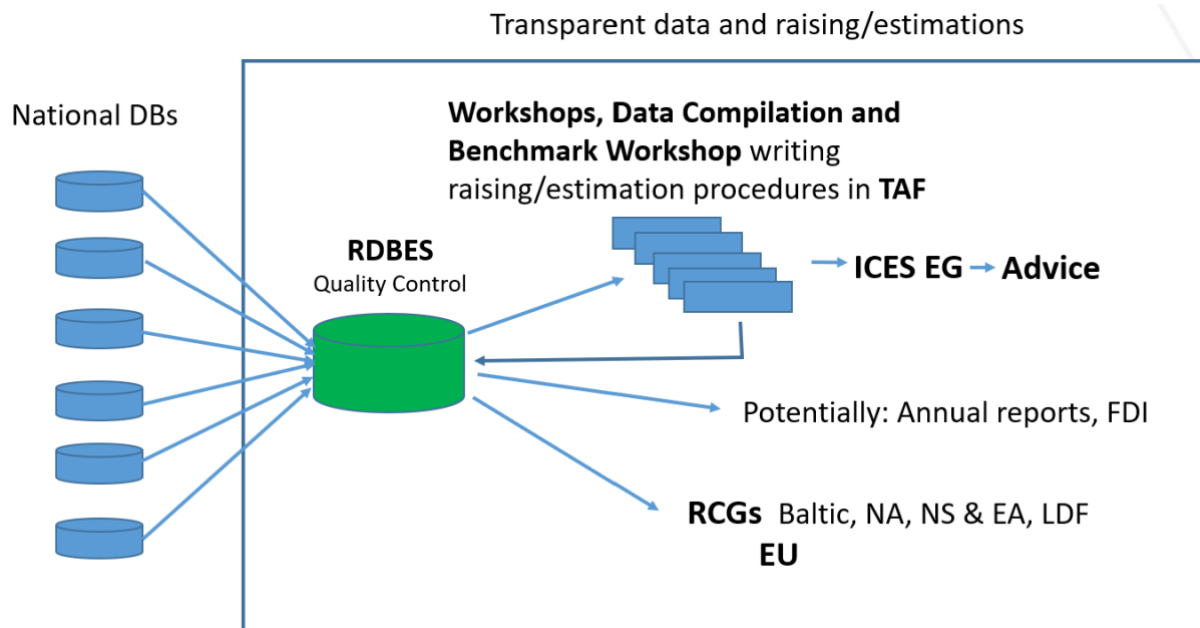
5.2.2 Feedback from ICES RDBES

RDBES structure

The Regional DataBase and Estimation System, RDBES, contain commercial landing, effort and sample data, and it includes bycatch data. The sample data contains estimation information fields, which makes it possible to use the data for statistical estimations of discards and length or age distributions. The RDBES support 13 different hierarchies, which are 13 different table combinations, which reflect the way the samples were taken, this makes the data set very useful. The RDBES is quality controlling the uploaded data against checks at different level, more checks and quality indicators should though be developed. The RDBES makes sure data are standardised, stored, documented and quality controlled. The countries upload detailed data, meaning anonymised data to the RDBES. The RDBES has a security module, which ensure only named users have permission to view and download allowed data. The RDBES delivers data to RCG NANSEA, Baltic and LDF, in the future the plan is to potentially create the annual reports and FDI data. ICES Data Compilation Workshops, Benchmark Workshops, Workshops working on RDBES data, national estimators, stock coordinators and stock assessors can work on RDBES data or hereof estimated data, see the diagram below.

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RDBES Core Group Specification

The Core Group specifies the data model and the documentation. The Core Group is a subgroup of the WGRDBESGOV and the official name is 'RDBES development support group'. The meetings are chaired by ICES Secretariat, and the last 4½ year there have been about 130+ online meetings, where the RDBES have been specified by the Core Group. ICES Secretariat is then according to the specifications developing the RDBES. The RCG NANSEA and Baltic and ICES Secretariat are sending out the RDBES data call. This year the RDBES data model was updated regarding adding 4 optional FDI fields to the unique key for both landing CL and effort CE data.

- CLmeshSizeRange, CEmeshSizeRange
- CLsupraRegion, CEsupraRegion
- CLgeoIndicator, CEgeoIndicator (GEO_INDICATOR)
- CLspeconTech, CEspeconTech

There were also a few field name updates.

ICES Secretariat RDBES Developments

ICES Secretariat have developed a lot of technical functionalities during the last year:

- Changes to the data model,
- Viewing of data,
- Updates of the data screening page,
- Developed a functionality to download sample data across hierarchies,
- Add FDI fields to unique index for file based duplicate data check,
- Add RCG area to download page (roles limitations not developed)
- Synchronisation between RDBES and ICES vocabulary have been further developed,
- Update of the internal ICES AIMS system with upper level upload recording,

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- Conversion of all client razor pages to angular,
- Further development and corrections of earlier developments

Functionalities needed (WGRDBESGOV)

The WGRDBESGOV have identified a list of functionalities which should be developed

- Further needs of the data model,
- Upload log; which explains the completeness of the countries' data upload,
- Recreational fisheries data fully implemented in the RDBES,
- Split of species list,
- Stock definition list module,
- Develop roles further for access, viewing and download of data
- FDI export module,
- API for data export to TAF,
- Improve data viewing summarising for data quality,
- Overview of who can download data, who have deleted data,
- Data quality improvements: Checks e.g. check preventing upload of duplicated landings

Missing funding for developments

At the end of 2024 there is no funding for one of the two development resources on the RDBES, this is very critical, because this will mean that in the future it will take twice the time or more to develop the needed functionalities. There was dialog with EC regarding a special request for short term funding the development of the RDBES for about a year. Unfortunately, the special request was not supported by EC as it stands, because the functionalities are more general needs than just EC needs. Therefore, non-EC countries need to be a part of the special request or funding of the further RDBES development.

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From RDBES to FDI data files

Many of the tables can be produced to a large extent from the RDBES data, if the countries have uploaded data in the optional FDI fields. But it still requires a lot of conversions and calculations, which are not completely specified, between the RDBES codes and the FDI codes, some data:

- are completely the same, like QUARTER, VESSEL_LENGTH
- need a 1:1 conversion, like country codes: FDI 3 alpha codes, RDBES 2 alpha codes
- need a calculation, like for TOTGTDAYSATSEA, (vessel GT (Gross Tonnage)*Days at sea)
- need to be fetched from the Transparent Assessment Framework, like DOMAIN_DISCARDS, DOMAIN_LANDINGS

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RDBES Data License update comment

The RDBES Data License update have been described in more detail in another section, therefore it is only briefly commented upon here. The RDBES Data License are updated to make it clearer and simpler, regarding RDBES data access and signing we have:

- Access, who should have access ← the mentioned groups in the data call: RCGs and ICES EGs
- Who should sign the “Conditions for detailed RDBES data use” agreement ← everybody who get access to the RDBES data.

RDBES workshops in 2024

- Stock coordinators can attend the WKRDDBES_RaiseStock online 10-11 June and 10-11 July, where estimations will be done for the Northeast Atlantic mackerel (mac.27.nea) using R scripts that start from national RDBES data.
 - Chaired by David Currie, Ireland, and Siobhan Moran, Ireland
- National estimators can attend the WKNatEst online 24–28 June, where R scripts will be developed and shared for national estimates of landings, discards and biological data, using the RDBES format.
 - Chaired by Jessica Craig (UK-Scotland) and Ana Ribeiro Santos (UK-England)
- Data submitters and national estimator can attend WKRDDBES-INTRO online 24th – 26th Sep., where they will be introduced to the RDBES data model/format.
 - Chaired by Henrik Kjems-Nielsen, ICES
- Stock coordinators can attend the WGRDBES-StockCoord (dates TBD) to finalise the Regional Catch Estimation Format, RCEF, and develop stock estimation R-functions in RDBESstockCoord package.
 - Chaired by Sofie Nimmegeers, Belgium and Kirsten Birch Håkansson, Denmark
- If stock coordinators/persons have interest and are skilled in writing R scripts, then they can attend the WGRDBES-EST 14th – 18th October Lisbon to work on developing statistical and ratio estimations in R scripts from the RDBES data.
 - Chaired by Ana Cláudia Fernandes, Portugal, and Richard Meitern, Estonia

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The countries’ RDBES data uploads – data call 2024

The table below shows an overview of what type of data the countries have uploaded as a response to the RCG and ICES (RDBES) data call. A ‘Yes’ indicate the country have uploaded the data type, blank means the data have not been uploaded. Green background means the data type was also upload last year. Yellow background means the data type was uploaded this year, and it was not uploaded last year, so this is progress. Orange background means the data type was not uploaded this year, but it was uploaded last year, so this is regression.

Country\Data type	Landing	Effort	Sample	Freq. Meas.	Bio. Var.
BELGIUM	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DENMARK	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
England		Yes			
ESTONIA	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
Faroe Islands	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
Finland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FRANCE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

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GERMANY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Iceland					
GUERNSEY	Yes	Yes			
IRELAND	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
ISLE OF MAN	Yes	Yes			
JERSEY	Yes	Yes			
LATVIA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lithuania	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NETHERLANDS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Northern Ireland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
NORWAY	Yes		Yes		Yes
POLAND	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PORTUGAL	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Scotland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SPAIN	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SWEDEN	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wales	Yes	Yes			

The table shows that all countries except one country uploaded data to the RDBES. On the positive side Faroe Islands uploaded data for the first time and uploaded all 3 main types of data. On the negative side two countries did not upload all expected data types.

5.2.3 Feedback from SG RDBES

During the Technical Meeting a subgroup was established to cover the following topics related to the RDBES:

1. Quality checks for RDBES data. Follow up of the presentation from RDBESGOV ISSG Quality by Karolina Molla Gazi

The subgroup discussed the best way to implement the data quality system presented by the RDBESGOV ISSG, and decided to set up a step-plan:

Step 1: To recommend MS to start running the markdown developed by the RDBESGOV ISSG Quality (CL and CE tables)

The RCG recommends NC to use the markdown to quality check their data and give feedback to the WGRDBESGOV in November. If issues are encountered, NC will be able to resubmit their data (in this case, it is important to notify Henrik about the resubmission)

In order to facilitate the use of the code, the repository where they are stored will be made public and some instructions on how to run the code will be placed in the Readme section of the repository. In addition, a Teams meeting will be held to explain how to run the code and a follow up meeting two weeks later to see how it went.

No funding needed for this step.

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Step 2: To develop a build-in report based on the markdown, that would be automatically generated when the data are uploaded.

This action will result in a much more generalized use of the report, as it will be automatically generated (no R knowledge needed). It needs funding to be developed.

Step 3: To develop a platform for RDBES data communication

This solution will replace the current upload logs, allowing data submitters to report changes in real time, and providing end users with up-to-date information about the data available and their completeness and quality. This step also needs funding to be developed.

2. Procedures for communicating issues found in RDBES data. RCG/ICES.

At present, main users of RDBES data inside the RCGs are the ISSG Overviews and the ISSG Metier and transversal variables. The SG discussed that if an issue in RDBES data is found by these SG, they will give feedback to the RDBESGOV ISSG Quality.

This communication will be improved as the step-plan described in point I (quality checks) is deployed.

3. Documentation of methods used for creating the RDBES data. Suggestion for template from ISSG Metier and transversal variables.

The ISSG on Metier and transversal variables have prepared a template to document the methodology and data sources used to fill in calculated fields of CL and CE files. This type of document is already requested in other data calls (e.g. FDI National Chapters) and it is considered very relevant for end users (e.g. it can be very useful to know more about how the effort data for gillnets is calculated)

The SG recommends WGCATCH, WGBYC to revise the template and provide feedback (which are their needs? does the template fulfil them?). This will be also a task for ISSG SSF and ISSG PETs in the next period. The comments received will be integrated and the final template will be part of the RDBES DC from 2025 on.

ISSG on Metiers and transversal variables will gather all the templates and process the information. The SG discuss that this information could be made public, but it is not decided where. An issue was raised regarding the templates of non-EU countries, which will not be processed by the RCG.

4. Funding

The RDBES is still in development and the WGRDBESGOV is continuously looking for fundings. A special request was sent to the European Commission at the beginning of 2024, to develop some functionalities which had been prioritized in the short term. The Commission answered requesting the participation of third countries in the funding, highlighting that the requested functionalities will serve to the whole ICES community (not only to EU countries). During the SG discussions it was clear that:

There is a need to engage with third countries (UK, Norway, Faroe). For that, we need to identify the key people to approach in those countries.

There is need to explain the situation to ICES, so that they understand the relevance and a more stable solution can be found for the RDBES funding. A long-term solution shall be found, with the participation of all advice requestors. The group also discussed to change the focus from “RDBES development”, to the “development of the ICES data base” (as the RDBES will replace InterCatch in 2027).

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The Commission also explain that the special request can still be useful for exclusive EU functionalities, like the FDI export module.

The idea of a regional project which could be framed for all EU Member States and non-EU countries aiming on regional improvement of the data, was briefly discussed.

5. Conversion module from RDBES to FDI.

The conversion module from RDBES to FDI is a priority for the Commission, however, the group discussed that the RDBES is not ready for this development yet. Firstly, some variables have still to be incorporated in the RDBES data model and a problem with unique keys needs to be solved. Secondly, in order to answer the FDI requests for biological variables, the estimates (number at length, number at age, discards, etc) have to be calculated, and this is not expected to be ready before 2027. Therefore, the SG decides to postpone this development and revise it again in TM 2025.

Countries which are present in areas not covered by the RDBES (like Spain and France) highlight that the conversion module may not be such a relevant tool for them, as they will still need to prepare the FDI Data Call for the rest of areas.

The SG proposes to send a recommendation to NCs, to put resources in the development of the estimates using RDBES data (which are needed for both ICES and FDI) and also to start filling the FDI fields in the RDBES data model (which are optional). In order to avoid hampering the submission of the data needed for AWG, it was suggested that the submission of FDI variables could be done later in the year in a second deadline. In this sense, the SG also highlights that the FDI needs to be taken into account when designing the data call timeline.

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6. Revision of RDBES data license.

The RDBES data license has been simplified and aligned with other Data Calls and data types. The proposal was sent to National Correspondents in April, and their feedback has been gathered in a document which was shared and discussed by the SG.

There are some easy comments and corrections which can be integrated in the document. However, there are two main issues which requires a deeper analysis:

Landings and effort data: All countries agrees that scientific bodies need to be able to use the data in a disaggregated way, but they diverge in the rules proposed for data publication. The Commission informs that the confidentiality rule under the Control regulation (art. 1.1.3) only applies when data is transmitted between MS and the COM, and that when data is transmitted with scientific bodies, national rules apply. However, national rules differ between countries. There is a general feeling that these data are already available in the web (e.g. Eurostat) and ICES is also publishing them in the stock reports. However, some countries reminds that they are not allowed to submit he data if the national confidentiality rules are not ensured. NC need security in this issue.

Sampling data: In the proposed Data License, the rules for the publication of sampling data are more relaxed, but some countries highlight that there is a need to distinguish between non-sensitive (e.g. age, length) and sensitive (e.g. by-catch, discards) sapling data.

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In general, there is a feeling to be running in circles and that there is still a big confusion around this issue. The SG decided to:

- Ask again NCs about their national confidentiality rules (only few countries have answered to the first request)
- Make a presentation about this in the next NC meeting (September)
- Recommend the Commission to set up a Workshop for NC to clarify concepts and find the best solution for the RDBES Data License. Some legal support will be needed in that WK, as many doubts are not in the expertise area of participants.
- Ask ICES about the consequences if somebody breaks the data license rules
- The Data license document will be updated with the comments and discussions of the SG, and it will be sent to participants and NCs.

7. Remaining points: Roles and permissions needed in RDBES system for RCG work (e.g., download); historical RDB data (what to do?)

They will be handled intersessionally.

In addition, the work of the SG will be presented and followed up in the WGRDBESGOV midterm meeting in June.

Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_R02: The RCG recommends NC to use the markdown script developed by WGRDBESGOV to quality check their data and give feedback to the WGRDBESGOV in November.

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_R03: The RCG recommends that ICES WGCATCH, WGBYC review the template developed by the RCG to document the methodology and data sources used to populate the calculated RDBES fields in the commercial landings and effort files and provide feedback.

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_R04: NCs to put resources in the development of the estimates using RDBES data and also to start filling the FDI fields in the RDBES data model.

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_R05: Commission to set up a Workshop for NCs to clarify data confidentiality concepts and find the best solution for the RDBES Data License.

5.2.4 Feedback from the ISSG & SG ‘RDB catch, effort and sampling overviews’

The work performed by the ISSG was presented during the RCG TM and received positive feedback. The following points were highlighted:

- New GitHub repository for RDBES: A new repository was created with the name of “RCG-RDBES-Overviews” <https://github.com/ices-eg/RCG-RDBES-Overviews>. This new repo contains the new code and new functions to produce the overviews using the RDBES data, whereas the old repo

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(<https://github.com/ices-eg/RCGs/tree/master>) will be maintained to conserve the previous work based on the RDB data format.

- The RDBES data extractions were placed in a restricted Sharepoint that only ISSG participants working with the data have access to ([RCG data](#)).
- The group decided to focus on the annual overviews in order to have a complete product finished (instead of several products in progress). The plan for the future is to adapt the previous code so that it can run with the new RDBES format and produce the multiannual overviews and also the sampling overviews.
- The request coming from the ISSG PETs, that was to identify all the at-sea sampling programmes of the MS reported in the RDBES, was answered and a table was made showing the total effort and sampling effort by ecoregion and metier level 6. However, this ISSG highlights that results may not be representative of the whole picture and these data should be interpreted with caution.
- WGBFAS wants to continue using the overviews. Some members of the ISSG are also members of WGBFAS, and therefore the switch to a “self-organized” RDB(ES) overview for the Baltic Sea stocks should be possible until the next meeting.
- BOG has expressed their interest in the overviews and its usefulness not only for benchmarks but also for ongoing AWGs, but they need to evaluate the best way for ICES to take this on.
- This ISSG is also a forum to answer other ISSGs needs. This shall be kept in mind by ISSGs, who can specify what they need for regional coordination (e.g. ISSG ETP request, and species level outputs for RWP analysis)
- The work being developed by this group is very hands-on work and, to complete all the tasks proposed, it's important that R expert participants can be more available to contribute.

ISSG work was also carried out during the TM, in a dedicated subgroup where the feedback received in the plenary was discussed along with the steps for the future work.

The first point of discussion was related to the production of the sampling overviews. The group agreed that it will be important to spend some time planning which data are the most useful for users to explore in a Shiny app. Also, it will be important to organise the work so it can be collaboratively performed between this ISSG's members and the ICES WGRDBES-EST members that are contributing to the development of the RDBESvisualize package. This task will be the focus of the ISSG in the next period.

Some of the end users of the sampling overviews, especially if they are done by stock, are the ICES AWG and Benchmarks. The group decided to create a basic report, kind of a template, based on the WGBFAS overviews already presented in the later years, and include the plots and figures identified as more useful, and where the stocks can be easily changed, to make it available for other AWG. However, the data included in these reports, if produced by the RCG, will only have data from EU countries so, the preparation of the input data for producing the reports, will need to be done by ICES, along with the report itself. This ISSG can give some support, if needed.

There was also the idea that in the future, if ICES can host the Shiny app for the sampling overviews, the information could be directly available for the AWG/Benchmark work. To have this shiny app using the same terms of functioning of the already existing ICES Advice Explorer, could be the way forward, though the whole process would take time until ready.

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The other point of discussion was the preparation of table 2.1 of the RWP. During the RCG TM, the ISSG on the RWP suggested that the ISSG Overviews could take on this task in the future. The group agreed to take over the production of the table using the code already available but only in collaboration with ISSG RWP/code developers.

The name of the ISSG refers to RDB data, which is no longer the data format to be used in the future. The name will be changed to “ISSG on RDBES Catch, Effort and Sampling Overviews”.

Workplan for 2024 – 2025

1. Develop the multiannual fisheries code for producing new reports using the RDBES data format (*will be on hold the next year*)
2. Work on the sampling overviews (Shiny app) - Evaluate the best way to prepare and present the sampling overviews and work collaboratively with the ICES Working Group on Estimation with the RDBES data model (WGRDBES-EST) members that are contributing to the development of the R package RDBESvisualise
3. Improve the annual fisheries overviews
4. Give support to WGBFAS in adapting the previous code to the RDBES format, and other contributions
5. Use the WGBFAS overviews to create a stock template report, with the plots and figures identified as more useful and where the stock can be easily changed. Make it available for other AWG, who will be able to use it and adapt the template to their own needs
6. Convert the Benchmark template to the RDBES data format, document the code and discuss with ICES the way forward
7. Provide input data for table 2.1 of the RWP, in collaboration with ISSG RWP experts that developed the script, and make additional overview of species, if needed.

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Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

No recommendations or decisions

5.2.5 Feedback from the ISSG on "Metier and transversal variable issues"

Feedback from ISSG “Metier and transversal variables” have been presented during the RCG Baltic & RCG NANSEA technical meeting on the 4th June 2024. The ISSG has 15 members and had four 1.5 to 2 hours online meetings during the last year. The main aim of the group is to maintain the list of DCF metiers on level 6 and level 7 developed since 2018 and now used for data calls in ICES and STECF. The ISSG served also, in the last 3 years, as a forum to discuss harmonization of methods used in MS to estimate fishing activity data. The ISSG had 6 tasks during the 2023-2024 period for which main results were presented during the RCG meeting and full details can be found in the ISSG report.

Considering the task I “maintaining métier codes and other reference lists and scripts”, the ISSG discussed and reviewed requests from MS (Malta, Germany, Azores and Norway) and RCGs (LDF and LP). Requesters

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were invited to participate in one online meeting to discuss the requested metier code with the group. Finally, ISSG agreed to add or correct 10 métiers in the métiers reference lists, some other requests were rejected and some others need further discussion in other groups (e.g. RCG LP to include information on School type/FADs in the métiers reference lists level 7). The ISSG updated métier description reports from 2024 RDBES data call and consider that the aims of these metier reports is to assist MS in defining métiers, to help in harmonization/homogenization between MS and also to support end-users when they have to combine métiers for their needs. Further developments are envisaged for the 2024/2025 period on this issue.

The ISSG continues its work regarding “cross-validation” methods following information received from a questionnaire sent out in 2023. Work in this year was devoted to three specific topics with the aim to identify common/standard practices and highlight practices which could have the potential to enhance data quality. Full details are available in the ISSG report. The final aim of this work is to suggest and develop best practice guidelines for cross-validation methods including several data sources to improve the estimates with the objective to enhance fishing activity data quality and completeness. Further work is envisaged for the 2024/2025 period for other topics from the questionnaire not covered this year.

The ISSG also worked on a draft template to document methods used for processing fishing activity data to answer RDBES data call (CE and CL tables). The ISSG suggests that the usefulness of documenting the data in this format should be discussed at the RCG NANSEA & Baltic TM in the planned subgroup on RDBES. The ISSG aims also to continue to follow-up on the development of the fecR package to calculate harmonized/homogenized fishing effort metrics between MS also for SSF fisheries but had to postpone most of the tasks on this issue to next year because of a lack of time and available members.

The ISSG continued to follow the development of an alternative fleet segmentation under RCG-Econ and was in contact with the chairs of the RCG Econ fleet segmentation workshops to get an update on the status of the work. As they were no coordinated actions planned at the moment, the ISSG did not have any specific task on this issue this year. Anyway, the ISSG continue to consider that the two approaches are linked and that a new alternative fleet segmentation should consider the métiers practiced especially for the pre-segmentation step discussed during the workshop. This should be discussed in LM how ISSG could help on this specific issue.

Finally, the ISSG made an overview of the variables that it is required to be able to report in the EU-MAP table 6 and what is optional/mandatory in the existing Control regulation Implementation Act as an input for the new control regulation and specially to suggest revision for the associated Implementation Act.

Discussion during the RCG technical meeting:

Irek (Poland) asked for some clarification about the metiers added in the RCG LDF métiers reference list following a request from Norway. ISSG indicated that the request was for the FAO area 48 (Antarctic-Pacific) and a Norwegian fishery targeting krill. Following this request and after discussion in the group, the métiers “OTM_CRU_16-31_0_0” and “OTM_CRU_>0_0_0” have been added to the RCG LDF métiers reference list following the ISSG establishing principles especially for the mesh size ranges and the target species or group of species codification. Norway also reports to ICES data calls (e.g., RDBES) and can therefore also request metier codes to be added.

Leonie (DGMARE) indicated that it is useful to have feedbacks from the ISSG about the new control regulation and the implementing act. Leonie suggested that the ISSG indicate on which tables they have interest and they could provide feedback.

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Regional Work Plans:

The ISSG has provided text about agreed methods for assigning métier codes and principles for effort calculation for vessels carrying logbooks and for SSF to be added to the future updates of RWPs.

Joel (France) asked how it could be verified that the agreed methods are used by MS, and if this can be used for checking that agreements in the Regional Work Plans are followed. The ISSG indicated that it would be part of the template developed to document methods to answer RDBES Tables CL and CE. Upload logs could also be used to check by MS if the methods are in line with the agreed principles. For the method used to assign métiers to the data, the documentation of methods could also be used as it is one of the questions asked. The ISSG indicated also that the conformity of the métiers codes used by MS are already verified with the métiers reference lists during the data upload process to answer RDBES and STECF FDI data calls.

For the RCG TM to discuss

- 1) Updated Métiers and Species reference lists could be discussed/validated in RCGs (could be followed by a potential new request to the group for 2024/2025 tasks if needed)
- 2) The suggested template to document the methods applied to create the RDBES effort and landings data (CE and CL tables) should be discussed in the RCG NANSEA & Baltic TM in June 2024 in the planned subgroup on RDBES.

Workplan for 2024 – 2025

1. Continue following and evaluating the implementation of the métier codes on a pan-regional level and maintaining métier codes and other reference lists and scripts.
2. Update and further develop métier description report, so that it can produce a multiannual report and can take the RDBES data license into account for making a public report.
3. Continue the analysis of questionnaires sent out in spring 2023, to evaluate the use of cross-validation methods in MS to combine data coming from different declarative sources, the ongoing standard practices and develop, on this basis, best practices guidelines, with a specific focus on the RDBES CE and CL tables.
4. Evaluate eventual feedbacks on the draft template elaborated in 2024 to document methodologies applied to inform RDBES CE & CL tables
5. Continue following up on the development of the fecR package to calculate fishing effort metrics that are harmonized/homogenized between MS.
6. Regarding RCG Econ economic fleet segmentation, the plans for development on this should be discussed at Liaison meeting
7. Potential updates of RWPs to be finalized in 2026 for RWPs 2028-2030

Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

No Recommendation or Decisions proposed.

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5.2.6 Feedback from the ISSG ‘Surveys’

The RCG NANSEA & Baltic 2020 specified the scope of the RCGs regarding surveys as follows:” Given the expectation that survey designs, planning and task-sharing might change in the foreseeable future, RCGs are expected to play a more substantial role in the decision-making process when it comes to budget and/or national implications. The scope of the RCG will continue to focus on the budgetary aspects and national obligations in relation to proposed changes to a survey. It may be needed to rubberstamp and approve the current survey effort by MS to act as a baseline to measure and evaluate future modifications. RCG mandates are described in the respective RoPs, and these cover survey subjects as well.”

Following this scope and as in previous years, the ISSG on surveys aims to underpin the more substantial role of the RCGs regarding the implementation of a wide variety of survey aspects stemming from data collection obligations.

The current chairs of the ISSG on Surveys are Christoph Stransky (DEU) and Sieto Verver (NLD).

The ISSG on Surveys met from February 28th to March 1st 2024 in Lyngby, Denmark and presented its outcomes during the virtual RCG meeting on June 4th, 2024. Core results are formed by prepared cost-sharing decisions for two surveys, identification of the potential form of cost-sharing for other DCF surveys, updates to the draft Regional Workplans for the Baltic, North Atlantic and North Sea & Eastern Arctic (NANSEA) and the monitoring of emerging techniques having the potential to be embedded in common survey designs and practices. The outcomes of the intersessional work are described in report part III, Section 5.

Discussion during the RCG technical meeting:

During the next years, more areas might become inaccessible for trawl surveys, with construction of offshore windfarms and more protected areas as a result of Marine Action Plan where 10% of each habitat type will be strictly protected and 30% protected. The consequences for the DCF scientific surveys, survey data for stock assessments and the possible solutions should be described in the near future. The ISSG reiterated the suggestion for an additional paragraph in the EU-MAP regarding access for scientific surveys appearing in the (EU) Decision 2021/1168 Table I.

Workplan for 2024 – 2025

The work plan for 2024/2025 is almost similar to the previous one. The ToRs have been updated to reflect all tasks and follow-up of the work done in 2023-2024.

1. Renew the multilateral agreements on cost-sharing of the International Ecosystem Survey in the Nordic Seas (IESNS=ASH) and International Blue Whiting Survey (IBWSS).
2. Follow-up on proposals for options to cost-share surveys based on the ISSG work 2023-2024
3. Monitor and discuss implications of the influence of external factors on surveys from a DCF perspective and react when appropriate and requested.
4. Monitor the regionalization process within ICES (e.g. ICES NETSEA) and act as the focal point for RCG contact.
5. Respond to requests, recommendations and proposals addressed to the RCG regarding surveys, including proposals for substantial changes to the design, set-up or other aspects of the survey impacting MS's Work Plan, effort and/or budget allocation, or obligations. Consider requirements to facilitate future review processes.

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6. Review emerging techniques, potentially improving or expanding data collection during surveys. Novel methods are to be considered together with potential effort reduction.
7. Compile some concrete examples where issues with scientific surveys in spatially restricted zones have been encountered and if and how they have been resolved.
8. Potential updates to RWPs to be submitted by October 2026 for RWPs 2028-2030
9. Identify, list and suggest improvements to EU-MAP
10. Follow up on coordination of sampling of VME invertebrate benthic indicator species in surveys.

At least one physical/hybrid meeting is foreseen early 2025 to progress with the abovementioned tasks.

Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_D01: Renewal of cost-sharing agreements for WHB survey 2025 (IBWSS) (DK, DE, ES, FR, IR, NL, SE).

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_D02: Renewal of cost-sharing agreements for IESNS survey (ASH) (DK, DE, IR, NL, SE)

5.2.7 Presentations on examples of surveys in areas where it is not possible to trawl

Reduction of tow duration in bottom trawl surveys – Potential and concerns

Kai Wieland, DTU AQUA Monitoring Hirtshals

Bottom trawl surveys usually use a fixed nominal tow duration, but its magnitude is rarely defined on a clear scientific basis. Attempts to reduce tow duration meets several concerns such as long hauls are needed to capture fish with strong swimming capabilities, short tows may not catch large fish or rare species representatively, and the proportion of the catch taken outside the nominal tow duration (so-called end-effect) is relatively more important for short than for long tows.

Several studies including work conducted during the North Sea IBTS have shown that short tows can be efficient as long tows, there is no significant effect on standardized catch rates (CPUE) or the maximum observed fish length. Furthermore, studies on towing times outside the nominal tow duration revealed variable results and significant vessel effects. Consequently, the end-effect is difficult to quantify and its impact on overall abundance indices is unclear. It has, however, been demonstrated that species richness is lower in short (15 min) than in long (30 min) tows, and this would affect biodiversity indicators.

A newly designed bottom trawl survey would likely adapt short (15 min) tows taking its advantages such as reduced impact on the seabed, lower fuel consumption and CO₂ emission, less fish killed, and less problems to find trawl tracks sufficient for long tows within safety distances to the increasing number of cables, oil and gas installations, and particularly the extension of the area covered by wind parks. A reduction of tow duration is difficult to implement in existing surveys with an inflexible design such as the North Sea IBTS but a gradual implementation over some years should be possible in stratified random surveys such as the Baltic International Trawl Survey.

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Filling the gap: Improving the spatio-temporal coverage of small pelagic fish surveys through modelling approaches

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Abundance indices from fisheries-independent surveys provide key information for fish stock assessment which forms the baseline for a sustainable management of fish resources. Changes in survey effort might lead to loss of information and result in interruptions or increased uncertainty in survey time series. The current approach employed for surveys of Baltic pelagic clupeids and other pelagic fish surveys coordinated by ICES to impute missing spatial strata involves using the area-corrected average abundance of the higher-level subdivision management unit (baseline approach). The baseline method does not consider stratum-specific effects and can only be applied when subdivisions are partially covered. To impute abundance estimates of missing strata, we applied three alternative modelling approaches: Linear mixed-effects models (LMMs), Gradient Boosted Trees (XGBoost) and Generalized Additive Models (GAMs) alongside the baseline approach. Our results suggest that modelling abundance variations across strata, as possible in the LMM and XGBoost, improved the estimate compared to the baseline approach, especially if data gaps were small, i.e., comparable to the annual variations in survey coverage. When gaps were larger, performance of models relying on explicit spatial strata deteriorated, while the spatial GAM still consistently performed well and could be applied even when full subdivisions were missing. In conclusion, employing advanced data imputation techniques can enhance the robustness of abundance indices. This work is currently written up in a manuscript and submitted soon.

5.2.8 Feedback from the ISSG on 'Electronic Monitoring Technologies'

Compared to the previous session in 2022/2023, few things have progressed in this ISSG, owing to a very late general meeting of the subgroup in April 2024. Nevertheless, contacts with other ISSGs and ICES Working Groups were established intersessionally to start a more active coordination between the groups and be better at delimitating the prerogatives of each ISSG/WG. The inventory of data collection technologies used in different member states (MS) continued during this session and was updated with new initiatives.

During the annual RCG technical meeting, the importance of active collaborations between groups with similar interests was emphasised and the outcomes of the recent (in May 2024) collaboration meeting with representatives from WGCATCH, WGTIFD, WGMLEARN, WGBYC, and ISSG EMT was discussed. The topic of AI/ML model development for fisheries – both in terms of monitoring and compliance – including training data availability, privacy, and sharing was discussed in length during that meeting. Each group has specific interest and/or needs in this field, and all agreed that besides the importance of having such regular cross-group meetings, we must collectively keep an eye on the results from some current ongoing EU projects producing new AI-based solutions for the fisheries sector in the coming years (e.g. Optifish, Everyfish, Marine Beacon). The same collaboration meeting also explored the needs to streamline some of the work between groups to avoid duplication, e.g. regarding EM/ET inventories. WGTIFD informed that they sent a questionnaire to all their members about this and that they will take over this inventory task in the future. RDBES and integration of EM/ET data (including potential new data with the Control Reg) was also discussed. A short summary of this meeting was presented at the RCG technical meeting in June 2024. The current collaborations and cross-groups meeting (especially outside the DCF) were positively received and regular meetings with WGCATCH, WGMLEARN, WGBYC, and WGTIFD are planned to continue.

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The relevance of starting a dialogue between ISSG EMT and RCG Large Pelagics was mentioned and, to start up an active collaboration, the ISSG EMT chairs will be invited to a follow up meeting in June 2024 to discuss how to collect/store/share/use EM data from pelagic vessels (including from research vessels). On this topic, several RCG group members mentioned the interest to initiate partnerships between fisheries institutes to complement data collection onboard RV with EM and start collecting and labelling imagery data of catches to train detection/classification open-access or shared models that would be beneficial to all. It was agreed that a workshop could be organised by ICES in the coming year to kick start this work in the NANSEA and Baltic regions.

The EMT chairs also reported that including genetic tools in the ISSG EMT is likely not the best solution and reiterated the need for considering whether this topic should be integrated to another ISSG or become one in its own rights.

Finally, the EMT chairs mentioned that 2 MS (LV and FR) are still missing representatives in this subgroup.

Workplan for 2024 – 2025

1. Start the inventory of labelled data owned by the MS that could be used now or in the future for training identification/classification models.
2. Continue the discussion and examination of the possibilities that these labelled data are shared between MS without breaching privacy and ownership concerns.
3. Continue the inventory of data collection technologies used in different member states: e.g., electronic monitoring (EM), Machine Learning development, electronic measuring boards.
4. Continue the discussion on the elaboration of a methodology to collect and annotate pictures and/or video footage of catches (fish, shellfish, and other organisms) onboard research vessels that may be used for the development of machine learning algorithms for species identification/classification.
5. Potential updates of RWPs to be finalized in 2026 for RWPs 2028-2030

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Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_R06: RCG recommends ICES to organise in 2024/2025 a workshop to establish the needs in terms of data acquisition, storing, and sharing for developing and implementing AI to review data from electronic monitoring (EM) sources, and particularly to complement data collection onboard RV with EM.

5.2.9 Presentation of “Integrating genetic sampling into Data Collection - from utopia to reality” by Naiara Rodríguez-Ezpeleta

Although genetic data can provide very relevant and valuable information for fisheries assessment such as stock delimitation and identification, biomass estimation, sex determination, age estimation, forecasting changes, trophic interactions, species distribution, spawning behaviour and IUU fishing control, the reality is that genetic information is not being used at its full potential to inform fisheries management. It should be noted than in this presentation, the focus was on tissue sampling for genetic analyses (useful among others for population

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connectivity, Close-kin Mark Recapture, epigenetic ageing, sex determination) and that eDNA and stomach content DNA were left aside.

The FishGenome project produced a roadmap where they presented three scenarios (conservative, plausible and large-scale), ranging from not using genetic data at all (conservative) to developing a routinized programme to incorporate genetic sampling in most research surveys (large-scale). Here, I argue that whereas the conservative scenario is denying evidence, the large-scale scenario is close to utopia and most likely not very practical as it would lead to millions of samples to be collected with no specific purpose. This entails important logistic problems, mostly related to sample conservation, archiving and inventorying. I propose that a desired scenario is a midpoint between the plausible scenario (where only a few stocks have genetic data collected, such as for example the current case of herring) and the large-scale scenario.

Two examples of practical situations are shown. In the case of the European hake, there is clear evidence that the current stock delimitation is in the middle of an area of high mixing (Manuzzi et al. unpublished) thus claiming for a redefinition of stocks, for which a regular monitoring is required in order to determine the special movements of the species. Here, the assessment working group did not provide a clear recommendation but simply encouraged the researchers to continue exploring the demographic connectivity of the species. In the case of the bluefin tuna, the genetic analyses showed the need for a genetic stock identification tool and provided one based on SNP markers. This tool is used in the current assessment and management of bluefin tuna. The difference of both cases is that the first was research driven and the second was end-user driven.

The strategic pillars for the implementation of genomic-based approaches in fisheries stock assessment (as defined in the FishGenome roadmap) are evaluated and it is concluded that while the genetic approaches are ready, there is a need to translate the potential of them to stock assessment and at the same time, there is a need that geneticists understand the process of stock assessment and its requirements. Once this is achieved, stock assessment groups will be able to requests genetic analyses when needed, and only then. Yet, these requests will be of limited value if no financial and economic aspects are considered. Ultimately, governance and other policies should allow the agile execution of these requests as long as they are well argumentized and do not interfere with other obligatory activities.

Workplan for 2024 – 2025

During the meeting in 2023, it was discussed if the creation of a new ISSG based on genetics was needed, but it was suggested that this might result into a replication of an already existing ICES WG (WGAGFA, chaired by Naiara Rodríguez-Ezpeleta). Instead, Naiara Rodríguez-Ezpeleta suggested tying to include the genetics into other ISSG such as the stomach sampling ISSG (stomach content DNA), the EMT ISSG (environmental DNA) and ISSG surveys (tissue sampling). A colleague from AZTI, Oriol Canals, is part of the ISSG on stomach sampling and Naiara Rodríguez-Ezpeleta has attended the EM and Survey ISSG. The discussion during the 2024 meeting continued and while it seems quite clear that the stomach DNA should go into the ISSG stomach sampling as another method to analyse stomach content, it is not so clear where eDNA and tissue sampling should go. eDNA is an approach that is much farther to be ready for implementation into stock assessment (although progress is being made) and should perhaps be left as something to have an eye on for the moment. Regarding tissue sampling, one year after the discussion

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about the need of a new ISSG for genetics or not, there have been some progress and thinking, and during 2024, it was discussed that it seems now time for such a proposal.

A dedicated ISSG on genetic sampling would help the objective of better coordinate genetics, assessment and survey experts so that the need for assessment, potential of genetics and sampling logistics can be considered when requests from assessment working groups arrive. These requests can be examined and studied by the group before being discussed in plenary so that a more informed decision can be made.

Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

No proposals for recommendations or decisions.

5.2.10 Integration of new methods in data collection

In the RCG NANSEA & Baltic Technical Meeting of 2024 a session was held about the introduction of new methods in the Data Collection Framework. This session followed a presentation about “Integrating genetic sampling into Data Collection: from utopia to reality” by Naiara Rodriguez-Ezpeleta from AZTI from Spain, and a presentation about “Questionnaire on sampling of benthic species identified as VME-Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems indicators, according to EU-MAP section 4” by Mette Schiønning from DTU Aqua from Denmark.

In the session about new methods in the Data Collection Framework, the RCG NANSEA & Baltic Chairs presented a summary of methods that are currently being developed and that are being used in an experimental manner either directly in the DCF or in projects / studies / initiatives related with this topic but not within the DCF.

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Method	Information / Data provided	Relevant in the context of the DCF	Novelty of the method	Use in the context of the DCF	ICES WG	Notes
Population genetics (study of genetic variation within and among populations, using different markers)	Population structure / Definition of stocks	Basis for national sampling plans -> Stock assessment	“Classical” method	Widely used	WGAGFA - Application of Genetics in Fisheries and Aquaculture	
DNA barcoding (specimen identification using short, standardized segments of DNA)	Species identification	Basis for national sampling plans -> Stock assessment	“Classical” method	Widely used	WGAGFA - Application of Genetics in Fisheries and Aquaculture	
eDNA metabarcoding (barcoding of environmental)	Species occurrence	Surveys -	Research & Development - Advanced state	?	WGAGFA - Application of Genetics in	non-invasive; no fishing needed; species

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Method	Information / Data provided	Relevant in the context of the DCF	Novelty of the method	Use in the context of the DCF	ICES WG	Notes
DNA in water and/or sediment in a manner that allows for the simultaneous identification of many taxa within the same sample)	Species abundance	-> Stock assessment	Research & Development - Further behind	?	Fisheries and Aquaculture	identification in acoustic surveys
eDNA metabarcoding (barcoding of environmental DNA in water and/or sediment in a manner that allows for the simultaneous identification of many taxa within the same sample)	Species occurrence	Surveys -	Research & Development - Advanced state	?	WGAGFA - Application of Genetics in Fisheries and Aquaculture	non-invasive; no fishing needed; species identification in acoustic surveys
	Species abundance	-> Stock assessment	Research & Development - Further behind	?		
Close-kin mark-recapture (CKMR) (kinship relationships determined from genetic samples)	Population abundance and other demographic parameters (e.g. population trend, survival rates, connectivity)	Stock population size -> Stock assessment	Research & Development	?	WGAGFA - Application of Genetics in Fisheries and Aquaculture	
Epigenetic clocks (<i>Chronological age estimators built from DNA methylation</i>)	Age	Stock age distribution - > Stock assessment	Research & Development	?	WGAGFA - Application of Genetics in Fisheries and Aquaculture	non-invasive / non-lethal
Artificial Intelligence Models (AI models based on otolith images that have been previously annotated - i.e. aged)	Age	Stock age distribution - > Stock assessment	Research & Development	?	WGBIOP - Biological Parameters; WGMLEARN - Machine Learning in Marine Science	lower otolith reading time and observation error

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Method	Information / Data provided	Relevant in the context of the DCF	Novelty of the method	Use in the context of the DCF	ICES WG	Notes
VMS / AIS	Direct Vessel geographical position	-> Control purposes	“Classical” method	Widely used	WGSFD - WG on Spatial Fisheries Data	
	Indirect Estimate fishing location and effort	- Fishing effort in space and time -> Stock assessment	Research & Development	Widely used	WGSFD - WG on Spatial Fisheries Data	
EM - Cameras onboard	Catch species identification (including PETS)	PETS frequency of occurrence & Estimation of PETS bycatch rates -> PETS “assessment”	Research & Development - Advanced state	Experimental / Pilot, and Implemented	WGTIFD - Technology Integration for Fishery Dependent Data	manual -> AI
	Catch species size measurement (including PETS)	Discards weight estimation and length distribution -> Stock assessment;	Research & Development - Further behind	?		

Method	Information / Data provided	Relevant in the context of the DCF	Novelty of the method	Use in the context of the DCF	ICES WG	Notes
EM - Cameras onshore	Landed species identification	Scientific landings / Validation of official landings -> Stock assessment	Research & Development - Advanced state	Experimental / Pilot, and Implemented	WGTIFD - Technology Integration for Fishery Dependent Data	manual -> AI
	Landed species size measurement	Length distribution -> Stock assessment	Research & Development - Farther behind	Experimental / Pilot, and Implemented		

The purpose of the summary was to provide this overview to Member States and to provide a baseline for discussion on three main aspects:

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Why:

- In which aspects does the DCF most need our could most benefit such new methods?

When:

- Should new methods be incorporated already when they are in experimental / pilot stage, or only when consolidated?

How:

- Is a process of validation needed for including new methods in the DCF? And what will be the pathway/process? (e.g. within methodological WGs such as WGCATCH, WGMLEARN, WGAGFA, WGBIOP, or within stock assessment benchmark, or others).
- Adequate description of methods used in the NWP is needed for transparency, replicability, coordination, funding. And should this be done in Text Box 1b of Test studies? Or in Text Boxes applicable to the data in question? (e.g. 2.2. Biological sampling, 2.6 Surveys).

After this presentation there was a discussion on the relevance of such new methods. The emphasis of the discussion was on the need to have the new methods contributing to where the DCF and end users could most benefit from them. However, such an exercise has not been made yet. It was also highlighted that with such new methods there needs to be also an adaptation of how data are used by expert groups and end users. In what concerns genetics, there was a discussion on whether a new ISSG should be created, but it was decided not to move forward at this moment as there was no general strong support, because of the concerns raised above where new data/methods are needed, what they could accomplish, and how data could be used. However, the general understanding was that the topic should be picked up with emphasis in the existing ISSG that are closely related to it. The same applies for the other methods (other than genetics).

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5.2.11 Questionnaire on the sampling of benthic invertebrate species, identified as a VME indicator according to the EU-MAP section 4.

In the EU-MAP (2021/1167) section 4.1 it is stated that “Data shall be collected on occurrences (as a minimum the weight and/or the numbers of individuals per species, depending on the appropriate unit for a particular species) “...” and invertebrate benthic species identified as a VME indicator. Such data shall be recorded during scientific observer trips on fishing vessels, or by the fishers themselves, using logbooks or other appropriate means. Where these data are insufficient for end-user needs, other complementary methods and observations shall be used, based on the scientific knowledge available, including risk assessments.”

At the RCG TM virtual day, the results from a short questionnaire were presented to provide an overview of how the MS are dealing with the sampling of the benthic invertebrate species, identified as VME indicator species. The aim was to obtain some inputs on what the different MS do, and if sampling potentially could be coordinated. The questionnaire was shared with participants a week prior to the physical meeting in Bremerhaven, which resulted in the following responses:

- 10 MS responded to the questionnaire (i.e. Belgium; Denmark; Finland; France; Germany, Ireland; Latvia; Poland; Spain and Sweden)

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- Most member states do not follow a programme dedicated to the collection of VME species. As the only country, however, Germany has a dedicated VME bycatch protocol for the observer programme on commercial vessels.
- However, several member states collect data on VME species as a part of other survey programmes (e.g. IAMS, IGFS, UWTV and IBTS).
- As for the specific data collection of VME species, the taxa are either sampled to class level or to the lowest level possible, depending on the MS.
- Most member states also do not follow a dedicated VME sampling protocol, but use other survey programme protocols. Consequently, no comprehensive sampling guide including the species mentioned in ‘A suggestive list of deep-water VMEs and their characteristic taxa’ (ICES, 2020) does not seem to exist.
- However, Ireland has created a report ‘Evaluation of VME Species Bycatch Data’ that lists many of the species from the Suggestive list.
- Ireland is currently also the only (responding) member state that provides data to the ICES VME database (also see WGDEC). Other MS reports VME in DATRAS.
- Some member states expressed an interest in incorporating a VME collection programme in future projects or the interest of a more transnational approach to VME collection: “We would be very happy to coordinate between MS on this topic.”

During the TM it was mentioned that sampling of benthic invertebrate species had been initiated during observer trips, but it eventually resulted in a lot of confusion among the observers. Instead, it was suggested to conduct dedicated VME species sampling on scientific surveys, only. In addition, the MS further agreed that it would be beneficial to have a common repository to share the local/national species identification guides. It was further agreed to contact the chair of EOSG to address all the survey groups within ICES.

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Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

Recommendation to ICES survey WG

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_R07: RCG NANSEA and Baltic would like to ask the survey groups (EOSG) if benthic VME species are sampled according to the survey protocol and if a species ID manual exist for the area (maybe national). Please forward the materials to ISSG Survey chairs.

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5.3 ToR 3 Review the impact of management measures on data collection

Below updates on new control regulation and Marine Action Plan are summarised.

5.3.1 Feedback from Commission on New Control Regulation (EU 2023/2842)

The revision of the control regulation 1224/2009 concluded 5 years after the initial Commission proposal in 2018 was agreed on 22 November 2023 as 2023/2842 and entered into force in January 2024. The next step is the implementation with some provisions applying immediately, other provisions after 6 months, 2 years and 4 years or in 2029/2030. The revision of the regulation was a complex process as it encompassed the amending of 6 Regulations, including EFCA, IUU and SMEFF in addition to 1224/2009. COM presented the main changes in the revised Control Regulation which include:

- Full digitalization of tracking & catch reporting for all catching vessels, including obligations for small scale, recreational & fisheries without vessel;
- New tools for the control of the landing obligation with REM/ CCTV and continuous monitoring of engine power;
- Traceability along the supply chain for all fisheries and aquaculture products being fresh, frozen, processed & imported;
- Harmonisation of the sanctioning system;

The main changes for small vessels include electronic catch reporting, which is mandatory for all catching vessels (logbook, landing declaration, transshipment declaration), with timelines of January 2026 for 12-15m vessels with no more derogations and January 2028 for vessels below 12m, whereby all catch reporting documents will be electronic (takeover declaration, sales note, transport documents) with no more paper. The Tracking of fishing vessels will apply to 12-15m from January 2026 with no more derogations and from January 2028 for vessels below 12m. However, MS can grant derogations for vessels below 9m until 2030. The data in the logbooks will have new and more precise data with the obligation for all EU vessels (also **outside** EU waters) + EU and non-EU vessels in EU waters to report unique fishing trip identification numbers, common fleet register (CFR)/vessel identification number. For vessels \geq 12m the reporting will include time of catches, information per fishing operation (“haul by haul”) and reporting of lost gears. Reporting of **sensitive species** will have consistency with the Technical Measures Reg. (Art 6(8)) and requires the following legal references to consider:

- PROHIBITED SPECIES (Annexes II and IV of Directive 92/43/EEC, Annex I of Regulation (EU) 2019/1241, Council Regulation (EC) 1967/2006, Council Regulation (EU) 2021/91, Regulation (EU) 2022/109, and applicable RFMOs legislation)
- MARINE MAMMALS (Annexes II and IV of Directive 92/43/EEC, and applicable RFMOs legislation)
- MARINE REPTILES (Annexes II and IV of Directive 92/43/EEC, and applicable RFMOs legislation)
- SEABIRDS (Annex I and Article 4(2) of Directive 2009/147/EC, and applicable RFMOs legislation)
- OTHER SENSITIVE SPECIES (Annexes II and IV of Directive 92/43/EEC, and applicable RFMOs legislation)
- + Directive 2008/56/EC (MSFD)

Reporting of sensitive species will require additional information on incidental catches of sensitive species. For catches of sensitive species referred to in Art 10(1), 10(2) & 11(1) of the TM, it will include the quantities in Kg live-weight, or, where appropriate, no. individuals and whether injured, dead or released alive.

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The revised control regulation also includes new rules for **fishing without a vessel**. This applies to all commercial operators fishing without a vessel, e.g. shell gathering, spare fishing, fishing from the shore. It requires operators to record their catches electronically once a day & submit data to MS. Member States record catch data & submit the records to COM before the 15th of each month (as for all other catch and effort data). These obligations will enter force 4 years after entry of the regulation.

For recreational fisheries, the new regulation requires electronic recording of catches by fishers from January 2026 for species subject to Union conservation measures, such as seabass in the Atlantic, cod and salmon in the Baltic, BFT, SWO). Recreational fishers must use an electronic system to register and report their catches every day. In the future, Member States will also need to collect data for all species covered by fishing opportunities, a multiannual plan and/or subject to the landing obligation. Coastal Member States are required to collect data on catches from recreational fisheries using their own methodology and report these data to COM once a year. The use of electronic catch recording will be expanded by 1/1/2030 to species subject to fishing opportunities, multiannual plans or the landing obligation, when the scientific advice from STECF, ICES or equivalent scientific bodies indicates that recreational fishing is having significant impact on mortality. This will include fisher registration and catch electronic recording. The Commission will update the list of species and frequency of reporting through Implementing Act.

Implementation & timeline are as follows: In the short term of 6 months, the development of IT tools will commence for the small-scale fisheries and recreational fisheries. In the medium term of 2 years, the existing implementing act will be reviewed (e.g. Logbook) and new detailed rules (e.g. on control of the external fleet, on recreational fisheries) will be adopted. In the long term, i.e. 4 years, detailed rules on remote electronic monitoring, traceability, and fishing without a vessel will be adopted. For recreational fisheries, ICES/STCF will be consulted to define the list of species for electronic catch reporting.

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Follow up discussions included questions on the application of data types for SSCF (Small Scale Coastal Fisheries) and the frequency of reporting for vessel tracking of SSCF as well as the end of derogation of catch reporting <50kg. Concerns were raised by scientific experts on the obligations for recreational fisheries, as they consider mandatory reporting might reduce the quality of scientific data collected under the DCF if Member States reduce resources for the DCF. COM reiterated that the DCF requirements for recreational fisheries remain and that scientists should assess the two data streams for data quality.

RCG ISSG feedback on existing Control Regulation Implementation Act (EU 404/2011)

After being informed that the Control Regulation Implementation Act will be revised over the next years, the RCG was asked by the Commission to point at sections or issues in the existing Implementation Act (EU 404/2011) that are of specific interest in relation to the DCF work. As detailed below, the annexes X and XI specifying the logbook reporting and the article 22 specifying the frequency of position transmission are of specific interest to the DCF work.

A general comment highlighted by ISSG SSF is that the declarative forms/software should be adapted to the SSF and passive gears as for example to allow for reporting of the soaking time of the gear.

Gear dimensions

The variables that are listed in EU-MAP (2021/1167) table 6 on fishing activity variables, and mandatory to be able to report according to the EU-MAP have been compared with the existing Control Regulation Implementation Act (EU 404/2011) **annex X and XI**. In Annex X, data elements to report in logbooks are listed on trip, gear and fishing operations level, and it is specified if they are mandatory or optional. Under the

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information on gear, it is specified that gear dimensions are optional, and a reference is made to column 2 of Annex XI.

The optional gear dimensions mentioned in Annex XI includes the following parameters, which are listed as mandatory to be able to report according to the EU-MAP:

- For gillnets and entangling nets the length and height of the nets
- For pots and traps the number of pots shot each day
- For hooks and lines the total number of hooks/lines shot each day

These gear dimensions are of high importance to be able to make estimates of by-catch of sensitive species, which is in line with Marine Action Plan.

In addition, in annex X the fishing time is listed as optional. The hours fished is also listed in EU-MAP as optional, and is often derived from other data sources, e.g., position data, but would be valuable to have as mandatory.

For passive gears, the soaking time is an important measure of the gear effort, and soak time of nets is also in the list of variables in the EU-MAP table 6. The setting and hauling of passive gears, including position and time should be registered in the logbooks, and it should be possible to link (e.g., with a common id) between the setting and hauling of passive gears to infer the soaking time. It is not clear in which section of the current implementation regulation this is specified.

Frequency of transmission of vessel positions

In the existing Control Regulation Implementation Act (EU 404/2011) the frequency of transmission of VMS positions are specified in **Article 22** on Frequency of data transmission, and it is stated that each MS shall ensure that its FMC receives the position of the vessel at least once every 2 hours.

In the new control regulation (EU 2023/2842) VMS is replaced by the term 'vessel position data', which is not necessarily transmitted by satellite tracking devices, but could also use other technologies to transmit the vessel position data. It is stated that MS should be able to track all fishing vessels, including those that are less than 12 m in length overall, and should receive position data from them at "regular and sufficiently short intervals", and article 9 is providing some further detail, but the position frequency is not specified.

According to ICES WKSSFGE02 the optimal frequency of position transmission to be able to identify the fishing activities of different types of gears, including bivalve dredges, gillnets, longlines and pots and traps in the small-scale fisheries, depends on the specific métier and fishing patterns (fishing event duration, complexity), but it was concluded that a conservative approach would be a frequency between 30 and 60 seconds, to be able to detect e.g., setting, hauling, length of nets and soaking time from the position data.

The introduction of transmitting position data for all vessels and in higher frequency is also in line with the Marine Action Plan as it supports the evaluation of benthic impacts of fisheries and with higher frequency of positions, the impact assessments can be made at a finer scale.

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NANSEA BALTIC_2024_R08: When control regulation Implementation Act is being reviewed, RCGs should be consulted when discussing the current Annexes X and XI, and article 22.

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5.3.2 Feedback from Commission and RCG chairs on Marine Action Plan

Commission:

The **EU Action Plan for protecting and restoring marine ecosystems** aims to connect the environmental and fisheries policies to contribute to the delivery on the objectives of the Biodiversity Strategy, as well as current obligations under both fisheries and environmental legislation. Detailed presentations were provided to the RCG in the previous year with a focus on the main action which are relevant to the DCF:

- By the end of 2023, under EU environmental and fisheries law, define objectives and specific data needs for each sea basin to monitor the impact of fishing on ecosystems and carbon sequestration, involving authorities at regional level as appropriate, and then allocating sufficient funds for these activities.
- By the end of 2024, submit updated national DCF work plans to improve data collection planning and efforts, including in relation to by-catch of sensitive species and impact of fishing on the seabed.

The Commission - DG ENV led the definition of objectives and specific data needs and requested ICES to provide advice on appropriate bycatch monitoring systems to fulfil the requirements of Nature directives and the MSFD. The advice was released in April 2024 and was based on the ICES workshops on appropriate sampling schemes for Protected Endangered and Threatened Species bycatch (WKPETSAMP2 and 3) (also see section 5.4.6). At the RCG technical meeting, COM presented feedback from DG ENV and DG MARE in relation to the knowledge chapter and the DCF relevant actions on improved bycatch monitoring as follows:

- The issue of bycatch remains Commission's priority, as stated in the marine action plan.
- Full implementation of existing environmental and fisheries legislation is essential, as well as close cooperation of respective authorities in Member States.
- The Commission is enforcing relevant rules on monitoring (and prevention) of bycatch under the Habitats Directive (ongoing infringements against 7 MS-SE, FR, ES, NL, BG, PT, IT) but also providing support through LIFE and Horizon (LIFE CIBBRINA project, 3 Horizon projects).
- It is also supporting MS through requests for scientific advice, such as the ICES advice on bycatch monitoring and the review of MS monitoring programmes.
- As stated in the recent ICES advice and by STECF, monitoring of bycatch is largely insufficient in all MS and needs to be improved.
- It is the decision of the Member States and their environmental and fisheries authorities together, how to achieve this and which role the DCF should play. The Commission encourages to make full use of the DCF as it already has well established regional cooperation structures (this is also advised by ICES).
- The Marine Action plan asked MS to improve their monitoring programmes and update their national work plans. At the special group, COM would like to hear their plans to improve monitoring programmes and to follow up on ICES advice, including but not only on how to achieve the recommended coverage of fishing effort.
- The Commission remains available to facilitate the work, including through the special group under the marine action plan.

The second meeting of the Special Group on the Marine action plan meeting was scheduled one week after the RCG technical meeting 2024 and provided an introduction to the ICES advice on bycatch monitoring and the following guiding question to MS *"In light of ICES advice, which concrete actions do you intend to take to fulfil the obligations stemming from the Common Fisheries Policy rules, the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive?"*.

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Follow up discussions included a question on the legal nature of the action plan and the required details in the road map. The RCG hopes for an improvement in the interaction of the different players and a better dialogue to discuss limitations of the DCF and expectations under the Marine Action Plan. The RCG chairs participated in the previous workshops on funding and eel and reported to the group the main outcomes. They will join the Joint Special Group on 18/6/2024 as observers.

RCG Chairs:

At the RCG NANSEA & Baltic meeting of 2024, the RCG Chairs presented their feedback resulting from their participation as invited observers in a series of meetings organized by the COM after the RCG NANSEA & Baltic Technical Meeting of 2023 and Technical Meeting of 2024. Additionally, feedback from a meeting held after the RCG NANSEA Technical Meeting of 2023 is also included here in the report, even though the meeting had not yet occurred before the RCG NANSEA Technical Meeting of 2023.

1st meeting of the “Joint special group in support of the Marine Action Plan”, held physically and online on October 6th, 2023:

From what was presented and discussed at the meeting, the RCG NANSEA & Baltic Chairs would like to highlight the following aspects:

- The Marine Action Plan does not represent a legislative instrument, builds on existing legislation, and is a means to contribute to achieving the 2030 Biodiversity Targets.
- By March 2024, each Member State is to submit roadmaps on what is in place and what is needed considering the objectives submitted by the Member State to the 2030 Biodiversity Targets. The roadmap can include elements pertaining to: any relevant stakeholder; research and innovation; national and regional elements; short and long term elements.
- In 2024, the Commission will look at the roadmap and progress made by Member States considering the 2030 Biodiversity Targets.
- In 2024, MS are to work regionally.
- At the end of the meeting, invited observers could make an intervention, and Chairs of RCG NANSEA & Baltic took the opportunity to ask for clarifications on concerns that had been expressed by MS in the Technical Meeting of 2023:
 - By how much more are MS expected to improve monitoring of incidental bycatch?
 - If it is expected that MS will improve monitoring of incidental bycatch, and if there is no additional funding, then prioritization needs to be made
 - Relevant fishing effort data should be reported, and this should be ensured in the revision of the Implementing Act of the Control Regulation
 - Use of electronic monitoring is a possible means for increasing monitoring of incidental bycatch, one which requires large research and coordination efforts

Workshop on Financing the Marine Action Plan, held online on April 12, 2024:

From what was presented and discussed at the meeting, the RCG NANSEA & Baltic Chairs would like to highlight the following aspects:

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A series of presentations was made that identified and summarized the eligible EU funding mechanisms as well as some currently open calls. Moreover, for each mechanism, one ongoing funded project was presented. The mechanism is: EMFAF, Horizon (Missions, Horizon, Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership), LIFE Programme, Financial Instruments, Interreg Europe.

Workshop on Rebuilding the European eel stock and sustainability of sectors: silver eel capture and release, held online on April 24, 2024:

RCG NANSEA & Baltic Chairs were invited to participate as observers and extended this invitation to Chairs of ISSG Diadromous Fishes.

From what was presented and discussed at the meeting, the Chairs of the ISSG Diadromous Fishes would like to highlight the following aspects:

- Silver eel trap and transport refers to catch of silver eels during downstream migration in front of hydropower plants, weirs or dams to prevent mortality from turbine and make escapement to the sea possible.
- The workshop focused on sharing experiences from Member States regarding silver eel trap and transport, as well as options for using these actions as a mitigation measure for the recovery of the eel stock.

After the RCG NANSEA & Baltic Technical Meeting of 2023 and before the publication of the Report, a second meeting of the “Joint special group in support of the Marine Action Plan” was held.

2nd online meeting of the “Joint special group in support of the Marine Action Plan”, held physically and online on June 18th, 2024:

From what was presented and discussed at the meeting, the RCG NANSEA & Baltic Chairs would like to highlight the following aspects:

Several Member States have already submitted the roadmaps and one has made them public. Making roadmaps public is desirable.

A presentation was made by Simon Jennings, about “ICES advice on trade-offs between reducing the extent of mobile bottom-contacting gear (MBCG) disturbance to seabed habitats and potential costs to fisheries”. In the future, there is room for improvement of this type of work, e.g. since economic part could not be more advanced, it was not considered if peripheral areas are patchy or continuous, frequency of transmission of VMS data limits the analysis, vessels below 12m are not represented, and methods could be benchmarked. This advice was prepared as a response to an EU request. This advice was prepared based on the outcome of a series of ICES workshops (WKSSFGE02, WKTRADE4, WKD6ASSESS, WGFBIT, WKSTAKE).

A presentation was made by Henn Ojaveer, about “ICES advice on sensitive species by-catch monitoring”. This advice was prepared as a response to the EU request on appropriate bycatch monitoring systems at Member State level and regional coordination. This advice was prepared based on the outcome of WKPETSAMP2 and WKPETSAMP3. After the presentation, Henn Ojaveer referred also to the ICES recurrent



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advice based on the outcome of WGBYC meeting of 2023, as well as to special request advice (1st and 2nd) on Bay of Biscay common dolphin, and special request advice on Baltic harbour porpoise.

A second presentation was made by Henn Ojaveer, about “ICES advice on innovative gears”. This advice was prepared as a response to the EU request on innovative gears for potential use in EU waters and their impacts. This advice was prepared based on ICES workshops WKING, WKING2.

A presentation was made by the European Environment Agency on “Fisheries management measures in Natura 2000 sites and other marine protected areas in the EU”. This presentation made a summary overview of the results of a call for information from Member States. The questions asked to Member States had been:

1. Is fishing identified as a pressure within the site?
2. Level of implementation of the necessary fisheries management measures?
3. Type of measures: national, EU, or both.
4. Is bottom fishing prohibited in the site?

At the end of the meeting, invited observers could make an intervention, and Chairs of RCG NANSEA & Baltic took the opportunity to ask for clarifications on concerns that had been expressed by MS in the Technical Meeting of 2023:

There is a need for a dialogue between the COM (DGMARE and DGENV) and Member States about what could be a possible compromise between what the Commission expects from Member States and what the Member States are able to implement.

Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_R09: RCG recommends to establish a dialogue between the COM (DGMARE and DGENV) and Member States about the expectations from the Marine Action Plan and what is possible under the DCF.



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5.4 ToR 4 Development and implementation of Regional Workplans (RWP)

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

- Feedback from ISSG Regional Work Plans
- Feedback from ISSG 'Case study of fisheries for small pelagics in the Baltic'
- Feedback from ISSG & SG 'Case study freezer trawler fleet exploiting pelagic fisheries in the Northeast Atlantic'
- Feedback from ISSG 'Towards a regional sampling plan - Case Study of the trawl fishery in Iberian Waters'
- Feedback from ISSG 'Evaluation of the data collected for the SSF at EU level'
- Feedback from ISSG 'Identification of case studies for PETS bycatch monitoring'
- Feedback from ISSG 'Diadromous species'
- Feedback from ISSG 'Recreational fisheries'
- Feedback from ISSG 'Regionally coordinated stomach sampling'

5.4.1 Feedback from ISSG & SG 'Regional Work Plans'

Summary of progress of the ISSG activity in 2023-2024, and discussions during the RCG technical meeting.

If relevant, include progress relating to RWPs.

The agreed plan for 2023-2024 was followed-up at every stages:

- After RCG TM in June 2023
 - The RWP Baltic 2025-2027 and RWP NANSEA 2025-2027 was updated following the TM discussions and agreements and the version V0.5 was sent to RCG chairs for **consultation** by MS (7 July 2023).
 - Most of the feedbacks made by MS were taken into account and a new version "VI" was ready early September.
- After the DM in September 2023
 - The ISSG RWP met on the 5th October to follow up and thereafter, the approved version of RWPs was sent to RCG chairs for transmission to STECF for evaluation (October 2023).
- After STECF and EU evaluation in November 2023
 - ISSG RWP met on the 6th December to set up a plan for taking care of STECF suggestions and a new version of RWPs was sent out 7 February 2024
 - The amended versions of RWP NANSEA, Baltic were sent to RCG chairs for **consultation** and were collectively approved during the NC March 2024 meeting.
- After NC meeting in March 2024
 - ISSG/RWP took care of including the most updated version of the Table 1.3 in the RWPs and focused on updating the Table 2.1 for the reference years 2021-2023

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- The RWPs NANSEA and Baltic were up for another round of **consultation** for validating the new Table 2.I
- Feedbacks from MS were taken into account for the sending of both RWPs to EU at the end of May 2024

Following topics were discussed during RCG/TM, subgroup work:

Linkage between NWPs and RWPs. The legally binding document is the NWP, which means that RWP is only binding if it is referred to in the NWP. The work completed (AR) is reported only at national level, which will then logically follow both the NWP and RWP.

The group discussed and suggested a common approach to harmonise the description in the NWP text boxes on the linkage to the RWPs. A template on NWP 2025-2027 text was developed to guide MS on how the linkage of NWPs to RWPs should be made. The layout of the Template had to take the IT platform constraints into consideration. Also, the decision taken earlier that text should not be doubled, means that only reference to text in RWPs are included in NWPs. The template is stored on the sharepoint and should be used when preparing the NWPs for the period 2025-2027.

The question on **how to react when a MS does not follow the provisions of a RWP**, either by not referring to it in the WP or propose an altered version, to be discussed and addressed in the RCG Rules of Procedure

Agree on the Table 2.I setting,

Progress has been made during the intersession 2023-2024 on the creation of the Table 2.I thanks to two experts, one on developing the R script in the form of an R library and positioned on a publicly available GitHub, the other on updating and cleaning the input files to run the code for the reference years 2021-2023.

The stock list (based on Table I of the EU Delegated Decision) was fully updated with the corresponding TAC & Quota coding to match with the sending of the FIDES file by DG-MARE and new checks on area coding was also performed, after feedbacks from MS during both 2024 consultation (March and May 2024).

It has to be noted that, Table 2.I landings were, for the first time, derived from the RCG datacall and the use of RDBES. The two consultations with MS on the contents of the Table showed a strong appreciation and very few errors were spotted.

The TM considered the demands for addition or split of stocks emanating from the MS feedbacks, due to unavoidable evolution of targeted species and/or management areas for some species, departing from the list given in Table I of the EU-MAP Delegated Decision (EU 2021/1167). There was a consensus to consider acceptable that Table 2.I proposed by the RCGs may drift away from the Table I of the EU Regulation if fully justified by end-users. It was the opinion of the TM that further work should be carried out to formally list these additions and/or modifications of management areas before modifying the entries of the Table 2.I. In the meantime, **MS were recommended to add lines in NWP 2025-2027 Table 2.I for additional species that are not in Table I (EU 2021/1167) but identified by end user needs including sardine 7e, loligo 4, 7d and pollack 4, 3a**

Considering the importance of the work for RCGs and all MSs, involvement of more experts to cover different regional and stock specificities would be welcome. **It was suggested that the further development of the R script should be given to the ISSG and sampling and fishing effort overviews.** By doing so, it would enable the RCG to update and propose a new Table 2.I at each TM to help those MSs willing to update their NWPs, without having to revise the RWPs.

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Clarification on the process of drafting a RWP

Developing a Regional Work Plan (RWP) involves a structured process. This process begins with establishing a clear mandate for drafting this RWP within the Regional Coordination Group (RCG), followed by the assignment of experts from each involved member state to form an Intersessional Subgroup (ISSG) on the RWP. This subgroup will have two years to draft the RWP and present the progress to the RCG annual meeting and NCs for consultation and finalization, after which this final draft will be sent to the Commission for approval. Figure 5.4.1.1 gives an overview of the different steps for drafting the RWP and the following paragraphs provide details on each of these steps in generic transcript of the years and the example for RWP 2028-2030 between parenthesis.

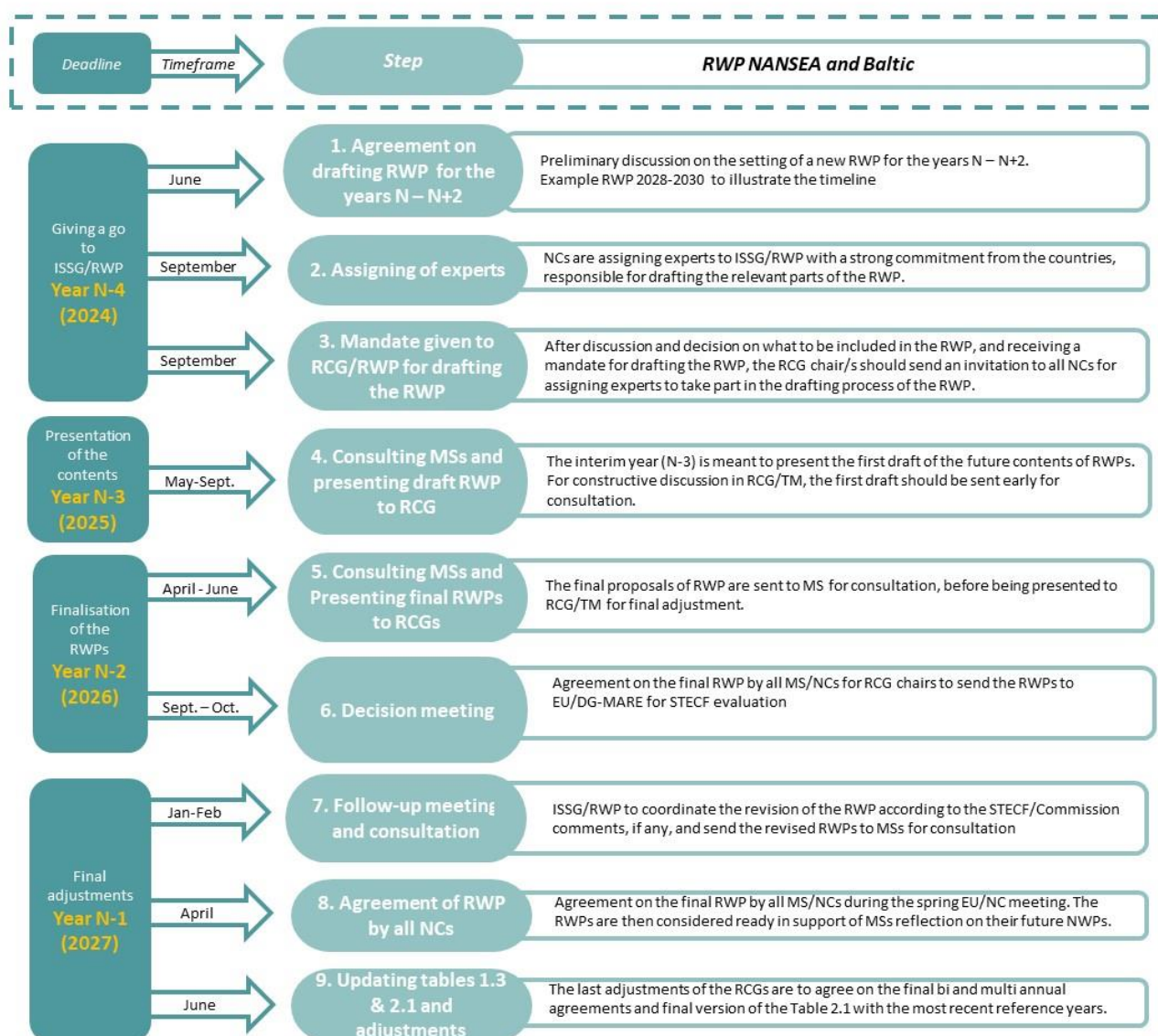


Figure 5.4.1.1: Scenario for the decision-making structures for developing the Regional Work Plans (RWP).

Step 1. Agreement on drafting a new RWP for the year N till N+2: The discussion to prepare a RWP starts in the RCG/TM with sufficient time for a clear timeline of action. As an example, the preparation of the next RWP 2028-2030 has been agreed at the RCG/TM 2024, thus 4 years in advance.

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Step 2. Assigning experts to ISSG/RWP: NCs should assign experts from their respective countries to be responsible for the relevant parts of the RWP. The RWP can be structured in a table, with each NC including the name of the person from their country who will be in charge of filling in their section.

All the experts listed in this table will be ISSG responsible for the drafting of the RWP. Once this list of experts is ready, an online or physical meeting of the ISSG can be organized to agree on the timetable for completing the RWP.

Step 3. Mandate given to RCG for drafting a new RWP: The RCG need a decision to initiate the work on a new regional work plan by consensus. This decision should be based on a clear description of what exactly will be included in the RWP and give mandate to ISSG/RWP to coordinate the implementation of the activities.

Step 4. Consulting MSs and presenting the draft RWP to the RCG: During the first inter-session after the decision, a draft proposal of the RWP need to be developed by ISSG/RWP, proposed and discussed within MSs by consultation. The feedback of this consultation will help preparing the discussions during the subsequent RCM/TM

Step 5. Consulting MSs and presenting the final RWP to the RCG: During the second inter-session, the RWP will enter into its last year of development for an evaluation by STECF in the autumn session. Like in step 4, the final version of the RWP will need to be sent to MSs in advance with sufficient time for a thorough evaluation and feedback. Discussions in the RCG/TM may lead to further adjustments during the summer and before the DM. In this case, a consultation of MS before the DM will be needed.

Step 6. Decision meeting: The final version of the RWP is approved by NCs. The RCG chairs should send the final draft and set a date (within two weeks) for reaching an agreement on the approval of the final RWP by all NCs. Once a final agreement by consensus is reached, the RCG chairs should send the final draft of the RWP to the Commission/STECF within a week (in September/October) for evaluation and approval. STECF should indicate if the version of RWP evaluated is considered validated without or with pending amendments to consider or if the RWP needs to be resubmitted in June the following year.

Step 7. Follow-up meeting and consultation: Soon after the STECF evaluation, ISSG/RWP should set up a meeting to coordinate the response to the STECF comments and suggestions. If these comments and suggestions lead to amendments of the RWP, then ISSG/RWP must propose an amended version for consultation in timely manner before approval at the spring EU/NC meeting.

Step 8. Agreement of RWP by all NCs: The spring EU/NC meeting is the last occasion to approve the amended version of RWP after STECF comments. In the case that STECF indicated that their evaluation was complete and RWP considered validated, this last approval signals the possibility to use the proposed RWP for the development of the NWP for the same period.

Step 9. Updating Tables 1.3 and 2.1 and some last minor adjustments: The RCG/TM following the final approval by STECF and NCs is the occasion to update the bi and multi annual agreements (Table 1.3) and the landings statistics and quota shares (Table 2.1) using the most recent reference years. This final version may be discussed in STECF June meeting as a follow-up of their suggested amendments. The RWP is then the official version considered completed and fully validated.

Nomination of a new co-chair

Els Torrele will be the new co-chair in ISSG RWP replacing Joel Vigneau.

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Workplan for 2024 – 2025

The proposed tasks to be conducted during the intersession 2024-2025 is as follows:

- Consider feedback from STECF evaluation in June 2024, knowing that a final validation of the RWP 2025-2027 is expected including minor edits, if any. In the later case, the ISSG/RWP will do the correction. A plenary meeting of the ISSG will be scheduled early July to address the pending issues.
- Support MS in linking the NWP to RWPs
- A roadmap for developing the RWP 2028-2030 is going to be developed in relation to all ISSGs contributing to RWPs. A plenary meeting of the ISSG will be scheduled after the submission of the NWP 2025-2027 to start planning the activities and their timelines. The main goal of this meeting will be to clarify achievements needed for TM June 2025 and TM June 2026 to meet the deadline of October 2026
- How to include bilateral agreements in NWP tables 2.1 and 2.5. Is it the MS sampling or the vessel flag country that reports the sampling scheme?
- Consider how to use new methods (e.g., genetics, EMT) to reach end-user needs on regional level.

Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_D03: MS to agree to start working on the development of RWPs 2028-2030

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_R10: MS to add lines in NWP (2025-2027) Table 2.1 for additional species that are not in Table 1 (EU 2021/1167) but identified by end user needs e.g., sardine 7e, loligo 4, 7d, pollack 4, 3a

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_R11: For species identified in the RWP exceeding the 25% threshold rule (eg cod in the Baltic and plaice in 4,7d), all MS contributing to the catches should indicate "Y" for coverage for length sampling and biological variables in table 2.1 in the NWP (2025-2027) and make every effort to ensure sufficient sampling for end user needs (including ad-hoc sampling).

5.4.2 Feedback from ISSG Small pelagic in the Baltic Sea

RCG Baltic has been a case study to development of a regional sampling programme in the Baltic Sea on small pelagic fisheries. The case study has been conducted for several years with in-depth analyses on how a regional sampling programme for small pelagics could be established. The pelagic fisheries target western Baltic herring, central Baltic herring, herring in Gulf of Riga and sprat. At this stage the last herring stock in the Baltic the Bothnia Bay herring has not been included.

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The ISSG has in 2023-2024 worked to update the documentation needed to frame a RWP into table 2.5, the text box 2.5 and the annex I.I. Only one online meeting was conducted in the ISSG in February 19th 2024, and progress on the tables and text were made by correspondence after the meeting. The main issue during the meeting was to develop common understanding of the variables in table 2.5 and how to interpret them as well as update the Annex I.I with the newest data.

During the technical meeting in June 2024 several issues were discussed.

Misreporting issue: There has been several reports on misreporting between sprat and herring in the Baltic Sea, it has however not been straightforward for MS to get access to the control data behind the reports. It was during the technical meeting decided to write a support letter from the RCG NANSEA& Baltic and ICES to the national authorities on providing access to control data for the national scientist conducting the data upload to ICES. In the REBES format there is a possibility to upload official landings and scientific landings, given the scientist the opportunities to conduct correction in respect to misreporting if information is assessable. It was further discussed that there has been an attempt to correct landings historic data for sprat and herring but only one MS were able to do this before the benchmark. As it is very difficult to correct historic data it was further decided that the main focus would be to improve the quality of the present and future sampling and to a lesser degree to look further in the historic data.

Workplan for 2024 – 2025

1. Continuing RWP on small pelagic which will be implemented in 2025.
2. Continue to work on table 2.5, text box 2.5 and annex I.I
3. If possible, still having focus on the possible misreporting between sprat and herring, how can we improve?
4. Update and adjust the RWP on small pelagic to archive the best possible compliance between all MS
5. Start working on RWP table 2.2 on sampling of biological variables to be included in RWP 2028-2030, to be submitted by October 2026.

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Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_R12: For RCG and ICES to write a joint support letter that will be sent from ICES to NCs to achieve access for MS to control data, which should then take contact to national control agencies to obtain access to control data that can support MS in submitting scientifically adjusted landings weights for RDBES ICES WGs.

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_R13: RCG recommends that both the scientific landings and official landings to be mandatory in the RDBES format.

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5.4.3 Feedback from ISSG ‘Case study freezer trawler fleet exploiting pelagic fisheries in the Northeast Atlantic’

The primary aim of this ISSG is to propose a statistically robust regional sampling scheme for the European pelagic freezer trawler fleet where both the monitoring of the pelagic target species and the incidental bycatches are taken into account. The current sampling of the fleet, which is largely Dutch owned and operate under the flags of the Netherlands, Germany, France, UK (England), Poland, and Lithuania is conducted by the Dutch and German research institutes. The aim of the sampling is to collect biological information of the target species and monitor incidental bycatches. While there exists an element of cooperation, at present the national sampling schemes differ in extent and methodology and there is no formal arrangement or harmonization.

So far, simulation studies have been conducted to investigate annual sampling coverage for a suite of preselected stocks, and a sampling protocol was developed and tested during three pilot studies. The three pilot studies targeting herring (Pilot Study 2022), blue whiting (Pilot Study 2023), both carried out by the Dutch research institute, and mackerel (Pilot Study 2024), carried out by the German institute, indicate the feasibility of executing the developed common harmonized protocol during the observer trips on-board the freezer trawlers. However, the pilot studies also showed that the methodology in processing the age samples was not always practically feasible. In order to extend to the entire fleet, the protocol needs to be further developed and tested.

Workplan for 2024 – 2025

The following tasks have been identified during the RCG meeting in 2024 for the attention of the ISSG in 2024/25:

1. Further develop the harmonized protocol for sampling the EU freezer trawler fleet
2. Identify, conduct and evaluate a NLD and DEU pilot study for the same species*area combination during the 2nd half of 2024
3. Run the NLD market sampling programme executing its current protocol simultaneously with the NLD observer programme executing the harmonized protocol for sampling the EU freezer trawler fleet during the 2nd half of 2024
4. Develop harmonized raising methodology for conducted sampling of the EU freezer trawler fleet
5. Working towards a regional sampling plan to be integrated into the next RWP 2028-2030

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Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_RI4: Identify and conduct two pilot studies in 2nd half of 2024 conducted by both NLD and DEU for the same species*area combination.

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_RI5: In order to ensure a smooth transition in catch sampling for assessment purposes by the NLD, it is recommended that the NLD market sampling programme executing its current protocol runs simultaneously with the NLD observer programme executing the harmonized protocol for sampling the EU freezer trawler fleet for a substantial period of time.

5.4.4 Feedback from ISSG ‘Towards a regional sampling plan - Case Study of the trawl fishery in Iberian Waters’

Progress during 2023-2024

The main tasks proposed for 2023-2024 (as well as for the following years) in the RCG and its report of 2023 were:

I. June 2023–May 2024 and June 2024-May 2025 (starting in April 2024):

- update allocation of sampling effort to ports based on recent data from trawl fisheries in the Atlantic Iberian waters
- define the sampling plan to be implemented in the pilot study and prepare changes/additions to contracts

II. June 2025-May 2026 and June 2026-May 2027 (calendar year of 2026):

- implementation of the pilot study

III. June 2026-May 2027 and June 2027-May 2028 (starting in April 2027):

- analysis of the results of the pilot study (data for 2026, available in April 2027).
- define future steps.

The work developed in 2023-2024 is presented in detail in Part III of this report. Here we present a summary:

Task I. update allocation of sampling effort to ports based on recent data from trawl fisheries in the Atlantic Iberian waters

Due to lack of the availability of time of the participants in the ISSG, this task was postponed and will be developed in 2024-2025.

Task II. Define the sampling plan to be implemented in the pilot study and prepare changes/additions to contracts

The ISSG report from 2022 explained that “scenarios S35 and S55 from project FishPi2 could not be implemented in all the ports planned” and presented the type of limitation in each port. In 2023-2024 these limitations were

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reassessed, and none are solved or expected to be solved in 2023-2024, and will need to be re-evaluated in 2024-2025.

Additional Task. Questionnaire on expected industry refusal rates to foreign landings

Sampling of foreign landings would be one of the main novel aspects achieved with the regional sampling plan. In preparation for the implementation of the pilot study, IEO is implementing an in situ survey simultaneously with the national sampling plan of Spain. Given that there is no precedent for sampling foreign landings, the objective of this survey is to estimate the number of trips foreign landings likely to be chosen for sampling in a future pilot study, as well as to anticipate possible industry refusals to sampling.

This inquiry is being implemented in 2024 and results will be considered in 2024-2025.

Workplan for 2023 – 2024

I. July 2024-May 2025:

- analyse results of the survey on foreign landings implemented by IEO in 2024.
- update allocation of sampling effort to ports based on recent data from trawl fisheries in the Atlantic Iberian waters
- define the sampling plan to be implemented in the pilot study and prepare changes/additions to contracts
- consider and conceptually prepare the inclusion of the data from the regional sampling plan into the RDBES.

II. June 2025-May 2026 and June 2026-May 2027 (calendar year of 2026):

- implementation of the pilot study

III. June 2026-May 2027 and June 2027-May 2028 (starting in April 2027):

- analysis of the results of the pilot study (data for 2026, available in April 2027).
 - define future steps.

Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

No proposals for recommendations nor decisions.

5.4.5 Feedback from ISSG ‘Evaluation of the data collected for the SSF at EU level’

Summary of progress of the ISSG activity in 2023-2024:

The work of the sub-group focused exclusively on the possible impact of the new EU Control Regulation and possible improvements on SSF data. With this objective in mind, a specific document was elaborated in

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conjunction with ICES WGCATCH, highlighting both the potential improvements but also some concerns related to the implementation of this regulation.

Among the potential improvements the following points were highlighted as green lights:

- **Full digitalization** for vessels with e-catch reporting which should be an improvement for data quality and completeness as long as well adapted recording software is developed.
 - However, adapted declarative forms for the SSF are recommended.
- **Removal** of the less **50kg** derogation.
- Implementation of **geo-localization** (tracking devices)

However, the implementation calendar for the tracking devices to be installed needs to be considered:

- 2026 vessels 12-15m
- 2028 vessels 9-12m
- 2029 derogations for vessels below 9m

In addition:

- Proposed temporal **resolution of geo-localization data** could be not adapted to the SSF specificities.
 - High temporal resolution (at least every 1' or 30") for SSF to estimate adequate fishing effort metrics

Although mandatory reporting systems under the Control Regulation could provide more information, this is not always related to better quality data. The subgroup remains highlighting and recommending to Member States the development of specific sampling programmes to monitor the activity of the SSF. When data collected under the Control Regulation was compared to the data collected from specific sampling programmes in EU projects as fishPi, it was demonstrated how in the case of the SSF, misreporting of some catches was detected, both in kilos, but specially in the number of species reported.

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Workplan for 2024 – 2025

The following tasks for the period 2024-2025 were adopted:

1. Input for EU Control Regulation/Implementation Act with focus on SSF and follow up of Member States implementation in collaboration with other RCG ISSGs.
2. Review template for documenting RDBES CE and CL data proposed by ISSG Metier and transversal variables with focus on SSF.

Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

Nor proposals or recommendations

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5.4.6 Feedback from ISSG ‘Optimization of ETP (PETS) bycatch sampling’

Summary of progress of the ISSG activity in 2023-2024:

During this period a lot of initiatives and demands happened at the same time under different contexts that are related to Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP) species bycatch.

Of these initiatives, the main ones were carried out through two ICES Workshops, the Workshop on appropriate sampling schemes for protected endangered and threatened species bycatch (WKPETSAMP 2 & 3). From the work carried out within these two WKS, an Advice was also issued by ICES on appropriate bycatch monitoring systems at Member States level and regional coordination. The aim of these WKS was to generate improved insights into how aspects of sampling design may impact the precision and accuracy of bycatch estimates and the detection probability of bycatch events, but also, how sampling coverage (percentage of monitored fishing operations) impacts the precision of bycatch estimates and how this is dependent on the bycatch probability. With this objective in mind, work was carried out on an extended simulation model, SCOTI, developed by WGBYC at ICES. Several real case studies and raw data were used. The aim of these case studies was also to try to make them representative of the different fisheries, considering the sampling coverage, their probability of bycatch in these ETP species, different fishing gears used, etc. The main outcomes from these two workshops were discussed during the technical meeting emphasising the most related points of interest to the RCGs.

In addition, the ISSG followed up of the New Control Regulation. The ISSG agreed the possible potential improvements considering ETP species data collection. Under these potential improvements the following ones were considered as the most relevant:

- Improvement in effort data for passive gears due to the installation of geolocation devices on most of the fleets in the following years.
- Improvement of effort data for SSF
- Implementation of Electronic Monitoring on some ETP high-risk fisheries

However, the different implementation phases under this regulation need to be considered in relation to these improvements.

Another issue considered during this period of time was how the role of this subgroup is playing with the main end-users. Collaboration and coordination with the main ICES expert groups dealing with bycatch issues is extensive, as most of the members of this ISSG are members of these groups (e.g. WGBYC, JWGBIRD, WGMME). It is also extensive in terms of participation in the main European projects related to bycatch issues (e.g. Life CIBBRINA, Marine Beacon, REDUCE). However, contact with other end-users is even more limited (e.g. OSPAR, NGOs) and the ISSG will try to reinforce in some way this coordination and communication.

Finally, it should be noted that the ISSG included an Annex in the specific report of this subgroup, where an update was made of the most relevant information to be taken into account by the Member States when planning and developing their sampling programmes for these ETP species (e.g. risk assessment of fisheries, priority list of species by ICES ecoregion, best practices, etc.).

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Workplan for 2024 – 2025

The following tasks for the period 2024-2025 were adopted:

1. Input for Control Regulation/Implementation Act with focus on ETP species bycatch and Member States implementation follow up in relation to New Control Regulation.
2. Support in relation to Marine Action Plan (DCF work plans to improve data collection, sampling plan and coverage efforts in relation to by-catch of sensitive species).
3. Regional Work Plan development in relation to ETP species sampling programmes.
4. Review template for documenting RDBES CE and CL data proposed by ISSG Metier and transversal variables with focus on ETP species bycatch

Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

Nor proposals or recommendations

5.4.7 Feedback from ISSG ‘Diadromous Fishes’

ISSG Diadromous Fishes discussed issues and topics raised by participating experts or that were derived from RCG-related work and ICES EG workshops and meetings. Data used in assessments, end-user needs and data storage on ICES servers as well as opportunities for regional work plans were topics of high priority.

The most relevant ICES end-users (WGNAS, WGEEL, WGBAST and the GFCM eel project) gave updates on their current state of play as well as informal feedback on data needs in current assessments. The structure and capabilities of the EU & ICES-hosted Databases (RDBES, Dattras, RDBFis) were presented and discussed to centrally store DCF-collected data for diadromous species. Also, the newly accepted EMFAF funded project DIASPORA was presented and outcomes from the project will be implemented continuously. Regarding Regional Work Plans, members volunteered to lead the work for RWP’s for eel, salmon, and sea trout, respectively, for the next multi-annual plan timeframe 2028-2030 (deadline to submit to ISSG RWP is October 2026). In addition, an update on recreational fisheries data of diadromous fishes and how updates to the fisheries control regulation applies to recreational fisheries was given by the current chair of the ISSG Recreational Fisheries. A questionnaire regarding MS recreational fisheries data collection of diadromous fishes in marine and inland waters was sent to MS and the outcome from it is aimed at improving rec. fish data collection (in particular to build up more cooperation between WGEEL, WGFRS & ISSG recreational fishes). A question regarding sampling of genetic data in line with DCF was brought forward to ISSG Diadromous, which can currently be done by referring to the genetic test study in the 2025-2027 RWP’s.

After the ISSG Diadromous Fishes presentation to the RCG, a comment was raised that expertise on “eel” is missing in the ISSG Recreational Fisheries, and input and commitment was hence asked for. ISSG Diadromous Fishes will take this request further to WGEEL. A question was raised regarding eel age data, whether it shall be collected and whether it is used. The answer is that age data is currently being collected by some MS, it is currently mostly not used, but it might be used in some national assessments, and it could be needed for future

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updated models in international assessments by WGEEL. A comment was made that the Stock Information Database (SID) system could be used to provide feedback and highlight issues with data received from data submitters. ISSG Diadromous fishes will forward this information to the relevant EGs. Regarding adding DCF related matters to the generic ToRs of relevant ICES EGs, RCG concluded that they will formulate an official request to ICES to do this.

ICES EGs cannot directly provide official feedback to ISSGs, as they have strict rules of procedure and only take tasks from ACOM or their respective clients (e.g. NASCO). ISSG Diadromous Fishes proposes RCG to consider ways to add DCF related matters to the generic ToRs of relevant ICES EGs.

ICES Expert Groups are among the most important end users of the DCF. The data collection is largely end-user oriented, which is why their direct feedback is needed in many cases. In the context of the development of regional work plans, which aims to establish regionally harmonized approaches to data collection for supra-regional assessment, it became apparent that ICES end-users cannot be easily consulted by DCF coordination groups, as ICES working groups have clear rules of procedure and take over their tasks from ACOM or their respective clients (e.g. NASCO). The RCG Baltic and RCG NANSEA would therefore like to request ICES to include DCF-related matters in the general terms of reference of the relevant ICES EGs (WGEEL, WGBAST, WGNAS). There is an obvious need to discuss DCF-related issues on diadromous fishes in the relevant ICES groups, e.g., (but not limited to) methods and requirements for data collection and storage, and to formulate regional work plans.

Workplan for 2024 – 2025

The work plan for 2024/2025 builds on the previous work and ToRs and will hence follow-up on the progress made in 2023-2024:

1. Work towards strengthening direct exchange with ICES EGs regarding data needs and data use (by adding DCF matters as reoccurring ToR in relevant ICES EG's, see below).
2. Work towards better inclusion of Med&BS region in ISSG tasks (coordination/harmonization of DCRF, DCF, GFCM). As a first step, this could be achieved by having relevant Med&BS region representatives attending the ISSG Diadromous Fishes meeting.
3. Draft Regional Work Plans (RWPs as an underlying “backbone” of national work plans) for better harmonization in diadromous data collection (WGNAS, WGBAST, and WGEEL). Members have been appointed to lead the work for RWP's for eel, salmon, and sea trout, respectively, for 2028-2030, to achieve this goal.
4. RBDES and databases – continued discussion and information on updates.
5. Improve recreational fisheries data collection for diadromous species (especially eels) in different regions in cooperation with WGEEL, WGFRS & ISSG Recreational Fisheries. This will be achieved by using outcomes from questionnaire sent out by ISSG Diadromous Fishes to members of WGRFS.
6. Use outcomes from the DIASPORA project to improve DCF data collection, RWP work, etc.

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Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_R16: In the context of diadromous fishes data collection, RCG recommends ICES to include DCF-related matters in the general terms of reference of the relevant ICES EGs (WGEEL, WGBAST, WGNAS).

5.4.8 Feedback from ISSG 'Recreational fisheries'

1. Candidate regional sampling plans for RWPs identified but no progress made to produce a table. The list of candidate species is however growing and is currently encompassing: western Baltic cod, Baltic salmon, North Sea cod, pollack, northern sea bass, blue marlin, bluefin tuna, bigeye tuna, albacore, yellowfin tuna, blackspot seabream, southern seabass, white seabream, red porgy, thornback ray, dusky grouper and Mediterranean parrot fish. It was also discussed to create a regional sapling plan for RWP on "sharks and rays" to assist data collection on these species.
2. The new Control Regulation (2023/2842) is introducing mandatory registration for sea anglers and mandatory electronic documentation and daily reporting of recreational catches from 10.01.2026 onwards. However, there are limitations to the mandatory registration and reporting of data. Only those fishers should register that are fishing for species subject to Union conservation measures that apply specifically to recreational fishing (quotas, catch limits and daily catches), i.e. Baltic salmon, western Baltic cod, sea bass IVa, pollack, bluefin tuna etc. Further MS are asked to specify the survey methods used within the EUMAP and to report this data to the Commission for the previous year. There are many opportunities but particularly threats and challenges associated with the introduction of the mandatory catch reporting for recreational fisheries: poor data quality, incomplete registries of sea anglers, fragmentation of data due to several reporting options, deteriorating participation of sea anglers, declining compliance and a threat to the continued funding of EUMAP recreational fisheries data collection are the main issues to be aware of.
3. A comprehensive species list separated by sea regions has been developed by the Workshop on Recreational Fisheries in Stock Assessments (WKRFSa) to prioritize species both for data collection and stock assessments. The list is currently being evaluated by national experts and will be presented later this year.
4. The RDBES is expected to make progress in incorporating recreational fisheries data from now until the end of 2025 (in the list of RDBES priorities, but depending on funding of the RDBES).
5. The EUMAP allows the registration of new mandatory species as required by end-users. As part of the 2024 benchmark for plaice in the Baltic Sea, the inclusion of recreational plaice data in the assessment was evaluated and considered a necessary and useful addition. Only German data were available, for SWE & DNK no data were available because currently not collected.
6. ISSG Recreational Fisheries is recommending to RCG Baltic to include plaice as mandatory species for recreational fisheries data collection in the Baltic Sea. However, during the discussion at the Technical Meeting it was suggested to consider multispecies surveys instead of adding single species to the data collection.



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Workplan for 2024 – 2025

The following tasks for the period (2024-2025) were adopted:

1. Develop Regional Work Plans to be finalized in 2026 for RWPs 2028-2030.
2. Control Regulation follow up: impact on recreational fisheries data collection
3. Present final list of species from VKRFSA.
4. RDBES Core group support in the development of the RDBES to incorporate recreational fisheries data.
5. Pan regional cooperation with RCG Med & BS, RCG LP, RCG ECON, ISSG Diadromous, WGRFS, ICCAT.

Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

Nor proposals or recommendations

5.4.9 Feedback from ISSG ‘Regionally coordinated stomach sampling’

Pierre Cresson presented the outcomes of the ISSG “Regionally coordinated Stomach Sampling” during the technical meeting on June 4th. These outcomes correspond to the TORs for the past year

- 1- Incorporate mackerel in Q1 in the sampling plan and update numbers: such an update represent an expected additional number of 513 individuals to be collected, with varying numbers depending on the countries
- 2- Convince decision makers to allocate financial resources: this is a crucial question. More than 7 000 stomachs have been collected since the start of the collection in 2022 (2024 Q1 numbers were not available at the time of the group).
Some countries have started to analyse stomach based on their good will and assuming future finance, whether analysing the stomachs they collected, or sending stomachs to other countries and paying for it. Nonetheless, this situation cannot last. Notably, as some countries wait for this decision to start the analysis, they start to lack freezer space, and stomachs may be degraded in case of technical problems
- 3- Coordinate stomach sampling and analysis program: Sampling coordination is up and running, notably through annual exchanges with IBTSWG. Analysis is ready to be coordinated, as long as it becomes mandatory. We also need to strengthen our discussion with WGSAM, whose members will be the main end users of stomach content data.
- 4- Follow up with ICES datacentre regarding data storage: ICES datacentre representative presented the last work done on the database. The database could host data produced by stomach analyses, but storage cannot be considered mandatory as long as stomach analysis is not mandatory and supported by dedicated funding. In addition, some adjustment may be needed, as variables the ISSG consider



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useful, like the type of prey measurement, are not present in the current version of the database and may be added

- 5- Consider how stomach content DNA can be coordinated: this topic was largely discussed during our group. We reached the conclusion that, even if DNA-based method have undeniable merits, it may not be suited to a routine monitoring of stomach content designed to inform fisheries indicators for two main reasons: (i) current technical limitations of DNA based methods preclude from the production of the data requested in fisheries management models (e.g. quantitative descriptors of the diet or determination of prey life stage). (ii) DNA based methods require a level a cleanliness, to avoid genetic contamination of the samples, that cannot be reached in a context where limited time and space onboard and ethical issues require combining all samplings (otoliths, sexual maturity and stomachs) on the same individuals.
- 6- Involve third countries: Analysis of stomach numbers (whether collected or expected) demonstrated that third countries represent an important contributor of the total stomach number. An agreement on how to keep them involved should be reached to avoid losing such an important piece of information.

In addition, we faced an issue on a discrepancy between the number of stomachs proposed in the rolling scheme and the actual number of stomachs collected. We consider important to remind that numbers in the rolling scheme are only **expected numbers**, based on a reference period, and that fluctuations of abundance may lead to variations of actual numbers of stomach collected.

Discussions following the presentation at the technical meeting were mostly about:

- The creation of a new sampling program in the Baltic. A specific discussion on this matter took place during the RCG plenary at Bremerhaven on June 11th.
- The need to push for the decision regarding stomach analysis, notably to secure position for technician with expertise in prey identification, and avoid observer bias, notably for degraded items.
- Building on the tour de table done during RCG meeting last year to estimate national capacities to analyse stomachs.

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Stomach sampling in the Baltic Sea, subgroup meeting on June, 11, 2024

Region-wide coordination of stomach sampling is relevant only for piscivorous fish species. In the Baltic Sea this mainly comprises the fish species cod, whiting, turbot, brill, salmon, and sea trout. Potential end users of such data in the Baltic region are WGSAM and WGECOBAL. However, mortality of piscivorous fish species is presently considered to be historic low given the narrow size range of cod, historically low cod abundances and the fact that environmental factors like increasing temperature, hypoxia and changes in the food web structure are assumed to be the major drivers of change in productivity of the commercially used fish stocks in the Baltic Sea ecosystem in recent time.

Presently, stomachs are only sampled for cod according to the BITS manual. An estimated 3500 stomachs are sampled by MS each BITS, i.e. 7000 stomach per year. This is likely a case of considerable oversampling. The group discussed different scenarios to reduce oversampling of cod stomachs while still ensuring a proper spatial coverage and maintenance of the time series of cod stomach data as well as the continuity in the expertise of stomach sampling and analysis in the institutes.

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For Baltic cod, the recommended sample scheme comprises continued sampling during each BITS, however, with the following changes:

- 1) In ICES subdivisions where cod are presently rather rare, i.e. SD 21, 22, 27, 28, 29, 30, stomachs of all slaughtered cod should be sampled.
- 2) In ICES subdivisions where cod are presently still abundant, i.e. SD 23, 24, 25, 26, the numbers of sampled stomach can be reduced. One haul per ICES rectangle should be sampled with 1 fish per 1 cm length class.

This is the minimum number to be sampled. Member states are free to sample more if considered useful. It may be considered in the future to have a “pulsed intensification” of the cod stomach sampling, e.g. an intensified sampling every 5 years, depending on the development of the cod stocks.

Whiting in the Baltic Sea is considered a population appendix of the whiting stock from the Kattegat/Skagerrak region. A thorough stomach content analysis was done from samples collected between 2011 and 2013 (Ross et al. 2016, 2018) and stomach content data from 400 whiting stomachs collected by Germany in 2020 and 2021 were uploaded to the ICES stomach database. However, there is no stock assessment of whiting in the Baltic and the group did not identify a need for additional sampling in the next years.

Turbot is a relatively rare, piscivorous flatfish species. It is a data limited stock without a quota. The species occurs regularly, though rarely in the BITS catches. The feeding ecology in the Baltic Sea is largely unknown. To fill this gap in region-wide knowledge, the group recommended to start to **sample gastro-intestinal tracts of all turbot caught during a BITS. Sampling the gastro-intestinal tract means: remove the entire gastro-intestinal from the oesophagus to the anus and put it into a plastic bag.** The reason for this is that in flatfishes, food items may be distributed more widely along the digestive tract, and not only in the stomach sector.

Brill is also a piscivorous flatfish species, but even more rare than turbot. A sampling was not considered useful at this stage.

Salmon and sea trout are rarely caught by the BITS or by acoustic surveys, so the regionally coordinated fisheries-independent surveys are unable to contribute samples to a stomach sampling of these two anadromous species.

Efforts of a and SD 24 would be required. The BITS stations in SD 22 and SD 24 are mainly fishing stations below 20 m stomach sampling of plaice were discussed because plaice is presently the most abundant demersal species in the western Baltic Sea, but fish are in poor condition. This idea was, however, rejected. To provide the information needed to properly understand the contemporary ecology of plaice in the area e.g. on species distribution, seasonal depth use and diet composition, a dedicated monthly, depth-stratified scientific sampling campaign in at least SD 22 water so that the strata 0-10 m and >10-20 m would not be covered properly.

Implementation

Based on the outcomes of the work in task 5 of the ISSG, WGBIFS will be contacted when agreements regarding stomach sampling in the Baltic have been made. It will be attempted to **start** the recommended changes to the BITS-related stomach sampling already in the **Quarter 4 BITS of 2024, if agreements have already been made.** Otherwise, the updated sampling scheme may be implemented in the 2025 BITS.

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The MS will try to ensure work-up of the stomachs in due time (either by work-up in national labs or by arranging analysis e.g. in Latvia or Poland) and upload of the stomach content data to the ICES stomach data base, considering the recommendation from the North Sea stomachs samplings and from the recent SANOPA CINEA project. Uncertainties linked to the ICES stomach database will hopefully be cleared until next year.

In 2025 the recommendations from this meeting will be re-evaluated.

Literature

- Ross SD, Gislason H, Andersen NG, Lewy P, Nielsen JR 2016. The diet of whiting *Merlangius merlangus* in the western Baltic Sea. *Journal of Fish Biology* 88, 1965–1988, doi:10.1111/jfb.12959
- Ross SD, Nielsen JR, Gislason H, Nielsen A, Andersen NG 2018. Growth and food consumption of whiting *Merlangius merlangus*, DOI: 10.1111/jfb.13763

Workplan for 2024 – 2025

1. **Update the data format description** in the RCG stomach sampling manual to match the updated ICES stomach database format.
2. **Communicate with WGSAM** on the end-user needs/ define the needs and the purpose of the data.
3. **Update the reference period** for the expected stomachs (new reference period: 2019 to 2023) and update the expected stomach numbers by species over the 5-year rolling scheme.
4. Potential updates of RWPs to be finalized in 2026 for RWPs 2028-2030.
5. Work on regional sampling plan stomachs sampling and analysis in the Baltic

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NANSEA BALTIC_2024_RI7: MS participating in IBTS to incorporate not only stomach sampling but also stomach content analysis in the national work plans.

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_RI8: RCG recommends to start sampling gastro-intestinal tracts of all turbot caught during BITS survey.

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_RI9: RCG recommends that Baltic NCs assign experts to the ISSG 'Stomach sampling' to work on a regional plan for stomachs sampling and analysis in the Baltic.

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

During this year's meeting, progress has been made under ToR 5 as follows:

- Feedback from ISSG & SG 'National Correspondents'
- Feedback from the RCGs Secretariat
- Review the process made in the RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic in 2023-2024
- ISSGs for season 2024-2025

5.5.1 Feedback from ISSG & SG 'National Correspondents'

Summary of progress of the ISSG activity in 2023-2024, and discussions during the RCG technical meeting.

The ISSG NC met during RCG ECON 2024 [6th June 2024] to discuss pan-European contributions to the RCG Secretariat. While taking into account the current funding support through the EU granted SECWEB 2.0 project, the remaining costs need to be distributed amongst the MS, following the distribution key as developed in the SECWEB project. Progress was made during RCG ECON, yet not all NC's were present and the main issue remaining concerned the different procurement and financial rules in some MS, preventing efficient allocation of budgets for the secretariat.

At the 2024 RCG NANSEA & Baltic TM, the ISSG reconvened to address this topic while the MS missing earlier were present as were most other MS. The general principle of cost-sharing was re-iterated and a decision to cost-share was formulated and proposed for decision at the 2024 decision meeting.

In conclusion:

- All MS have confirmed that they agree with the cost sharing for funding the RCGs Secretariat in 2024-2025.
- The group agreed to make a decision during the September 2024 Decision Meeting based on the text document drafted during the RCG NANSEA & Baltic 2024 technical meeting, please see enclosed the revised version of the document in Annex III. The decision is made by consensus.
- The document is not to be called a multilateral agreement, but rather a NCs agreement.
- Based on this decision, MS will reference this agreement in every relevant National or Regional Workplan, this should provide a sufficient legal basis to facilitate national contributions.
- The funding of the RCGs Secretariat is eligible for DCF funds.

Further, the ISSG monitored the progress concerning the RWP, but no ISSG specific response or action was needed in this phase. Most NCs are somehow involved (or represented) in the RWP ISSG or related and though this, the NCs points of view in the processes is usually well secured.

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Workplan for 2024 – 2025

1. Finalize short term (2024-2025) financing of RCG Secretariat
2. Set up a model for a long term (2026 and onwards) solution of financing the RCG Secretariat
3. Monitor progression of further RWP developments towards the 2028 update
4. If needed, identify potential improvements to the current EU-MAP and collate suggestions
5. Discuss potential cost-sharing of surveys based on the input of ISSG Surveys
6. Discuss new data collection needs (Marine Action Plan, MFSD, Nature 2000 directives etc.)

Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_D04: To collectively cover the total MS contribution to the total costs of the RCG secretariat in 2024-2025.

MS involved: all

Details on the decision: See Annex III

5.5.2 Feedback from the RCGs Secretariat

The objectives of the RCGs Secretariat during the period have been the following:

- To carry out the basic regular activities of the RCGs Secretariat as they were agreed as an outcome of the SecWeb project (January 2021 – end of February 2023).
- To manage the financial plan and specific conditions of the funding with the MS and the EC
- To help the financial viability of the RCGs Secretariat by preparing and submitting a proposal under CINEA EMFAF-2023-PIA-FisheriesScientificAdvice. The proposal for the Project 101156582 — SECWEB 2.0

From March 2023 until the end of February 2024 the RCGs Secretariat was run by Fundación CETMAR with the financial support of the Member States, and a service contract, for a specific set of activities, by the European Commission.

The work carried out involved the development of the following activities; Management of the regular correspondence with all RCGs; Maintenance of basic protocols and procedures; Maintenance of virtual working spaces (on CETMAR MS teams environment); Updates and formatting of documents and templates; Maintenance of website, newsletter, and social media; Promotion and support to registration to the RCGs SHs database; Generation of new support/guidance documents; Preparation support, attendance and reporting to all RCGs TMs, DM and LM; Support to 5 consultation processes; Support to ISSG activities (7 ISSGs); Regular meetings with RCGs chairs (under request); Management of funding sources (contractual procedures with MS and EC, reporting, invoicing, etc); Preparation and submission of SECWEB 2.0.

During this period the RCGs Secretariat achieved the following specific outcomes:

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- The RCGs Secretariat delivered support services to all the RCGs and 7 ISSGs
- The communication tools and platforms were maintained and updated
- From the activities under the Service Contract by the EC:
 - o Support the preparation, accomplishment and reporting of the LM
 - o The following guidance / hand over documents were produced:
 - [Discover Regional Coordination Groups for Fisheries Data Collection](#)
 - [RCGs Secretariat Functions and working protocols](#)
 - [Regional Coordination Groups. Virtual repositories and working spaces. An overview](#)
 - [Compilation of common documents formats](#)

New outputs are available at the RCGs website in a new section that is currently under development (<https://www.fisheries-rcg.eu/secretariat/>).

- SECWEB 2.0 project proposal was successfully submitted and granted for funding, and the contract signed to start in June 2024.

Workplan for 2024 – 2025

RCGs Secretariat regular activities

- Support to RCGs meetings preparation and reporting
- Addressed partly through SecWeb2.0 (~74%)

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SECWEB 2.0 project implementation

The SECWEB 2.0 project aims to improve the online working environment, tools, and services of the Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs) Secretariat for the RCGs community.

Enhance the effectiveness of the RCGs Stakeholders Database through the systematization / automation of frequent processes:

- DB systematic update – e.g. alert system
- Connection with registration to meetings and events and consultations processes
- Validation of appointed experts by NCs

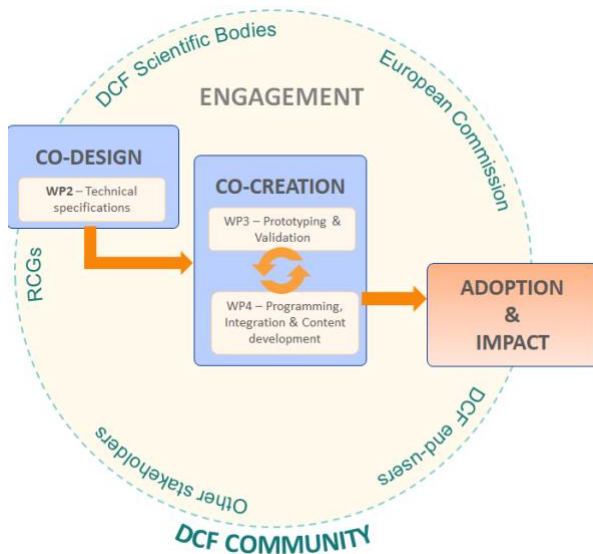
Develop new web-based tools and content sections enabling better regular interactions processes:

- e-Library
- Consultation processes.
- Follow up of RCGs recommendations and decisions.
- Direct channel/forum for the end-users of the RCGs work.
- Some flexibility to adapt to requests (in the project scope)

The Secretariat will promote the involvement of policy stakeholders, scientists, and concerned end-users in co-design and co-creation efforts to deliver value added products and content.

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Through SECWEB 2.0 actions it is expected that RCGs gain efficiency in their interactions and with this, enable further capacity to respond to their commitments regarding improved data quality, increased stakeholder participation, enhanced scientific advice, and better-informed fisheries management decisions.

Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

NANSEA BALTIC_2024_D04: The decision concerning the funding of the RCGs Secretariat 2024- 2025 is addressed under the ISSG National correspondents.

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5.5.3 Review the process made in the RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic in 2023-2024

During the RCG NANSEA & Baltic TM 2024, feedback on ISSG work 2023-2024 was presented by ISSG chairs, issues discussed by the RCG and tasks agreed for work during 2024-2025. In addition, presentations were made by the Commission and ICES. Updates were given on the RDBES developments and presentations were made regarding genetics sampling and survey methods that could be used when increasingly areas will not be accessible for survey vessels.

Part of the work at the TM was done in subgroups for discussions on Regional Work Plans, RDBES in relation to RCG work, NCs discussions included setup of funding of the RCG secretariat, the ISSG Overviews met to discuss the work for the next ISSG season, and the ISSG Stomach sampling met to discuss stomach sampling in the Baltic Sea.

Since the current ToRs (see section 3) are valid for 2022-2024, new ToRs for 2025-2027 are proposed below. A focus should remain on where it is beneficial to include or invite third countries or representatives of other RCGs to ISSG work or sessions during the RCG NANSEA & Baltic Technical Meeting.

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New ToRs suggested for RCG NANSEA & Baltic 2025-2027

1. Improve the alignment between data collection and end-user needs (by region)
 - Communication with end-users, follow up on recommendations.
2. Implement and maintain data quality in data collection
 - Documentation of QC procedures, Fisheries overviews, sampling overview, follow implementation and development of RDBES, incorporating new methods in data collection.
3. Assess impact of new legislation on data collection
 - control regulation, marine protected areas, etc.
4. Revision and update of Regional Workplans
 - Revise existing and include new agreements.
 - Follow up in table 2.1 species
5. Propose ways to improve the regional coordination and feedback on regional issues
 - Governance, continue the support by RCG Secretariat in developing and adopting tools and procedures for regional cooperation and coordination.

Milestones and work plan for RCG NANSEA & Baltic 2025-2027

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	Year 1 (2025)	Year 2 (2026)	Year 3 (2027)
End-user Needs	<i>Fine tune dialogue & assess additional needs</i>	<i>Fine tune dialogue & assess additional needs (cont.)</i>	<i>Fine tune dialogue & assess additional needs (cont.)</i>
	RCG role in Benchmarks	RCG role in Benchmarks	RCG role in Benchmarks
	Cont. review end-user needs	Cont. review end-user needs	Cont. review end-user needs
	Exchange of recommendations	Exchange of recommendations	Exchange of recommendations

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	Year 1 (2025)	Year 2 (2026)	Year 3 (2027)
Data Quality	<i>Use of RDBES</i>	<i>Transition to RDBES, electronic data capture</i>	<i>Transition to RDBES, electronic data capture</i>
	<p>Work on data quality of RDBES data for RCG purposes</p> <p>Work on procedures relating to data quality (communication between end-users and data submitters)</p> <p>Documentation of methods used for RDBES data by MS</p>	Follow data from revised Control Regulation	Follow data from revised Control Regulation
Regional Sampling Plans	<i>Review & progress</i>	<i>Review & progress</i>	<i>Finalise</i>
	Review potential regional sampling plans that can be added to RWP 2028-2030	Finalise and agree on operational proposals for regional sampling plans to be forwarded to the regional work plan 2028-2030	Refine text and content for adoption
Regional Work Plan	<i>Set up basic structure, test procedure</i>	<i>Enhance structure, review procedure</i>	<i>Finalise</i>
	Prepare for RWP 2028-2030	Finalize and agree on RWP 2028-2030, to be submitted by October 2026	Incorporate agreed sampling regional plans in NWP

5.5.4 ISSGs for season 2024-2025

Based on intersessional work 2023-2024, 14 different ISSGs presented their results during the Technical Meeting. There was a separate session to discuss next year's ISSGs, and it was decided to keep the ISSGs 'Data Quality' and ISSG 'Optimized and Operational Sampling Plans' on hold.

The set-up of working intersessional again proved to be successful in achieving the goals to make regional coordination efficient on a regional scale. The suggested next steps for the different ISSGs are presented in this report and have been endorsed by the RCG Baltic and RCG NANSEA. In total 15 different ISSGs are suggested to work actively on tasks within their topic in 2024-2025. The overview of the suggested ISSGs for the next period is presented below (Table 5.5.1). The ISSGs will be presented at the NCs Decision meeting to agree on the ISSGs to work during the season 2024-2025 and ensure that experts and manpower are assigned to the ISSG work. As the NCs are allocating manpower for the ISSG work in their budgets, it is also expected that the ISSG chairs will call for meetings to work on the tasks.

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To address the issue that not all ISSG chairs are very familiar with the RCG NANSEA & Baltic setup and role, a new initiative for 2024 is that the RCG NANSEA & Baltic chairs will call all ISSG chairs for a meeting in November to present the outcomes of the Liaison meeting and Decisions meeting taking place in September, present the year wheel, where to find information, guidance documents etc (e.g. on). The different roles of ICES and RCGs will be explained, referring to the Mandates and Remits document. Some suggestions on how the ISSG meetings can be organized will also be presented, as there are different approaches (physical meeting/1-2 days focused online meetings/shorter regular online meetings e.g., once or twice per month). ISSGs can also announce meeting dates to be published at the calendar at the RCG website. In addition, some topics are of interest of several ISSGs, e.g., new Control Regulation, analysis of position data etc., so the coordination between ISSG will be discussed. It has been discussed if Genetic methods should have a separate ISSG, and currently the topic is split between ISSG Surveys, ISSG EMT and ISSG Stomach, the best way to deal with this topic will also be brought up at this meeting. Similarly, the meeting will also address the possible inclusion of the topic of new methods and the topic of VMEs indicator species in existing ISSGs. ISSG chairs could also consider if involvement of third countries in the ISSG work would be of benefit and/or if third countries should be invited to their Technical Meeting presentation.

Table 5.5.6.1. ISSGs overview for season 2024-2025

TOR	Topic	ISSG	ISSG short name	ISSG chairs
TOR 1	End-users and RCGs	End-user and RCG interaction	End-user and RCG	RCG chairs
TOR 2	Data Analysis and Quality	RDBES catch, effort and sampling overviews	RDBES overviews	Ana Cláudia Fernandes, Lucia Zarauz
		Métier and transversal variable issues	Métier/transversal	Sébastien Demeneche Josefine Egekvist
		<i>Data Quality</i>	<i>Quality</i>	<i>On hold</i>
	Regional Database	Electronic Monitoring Technologies	EMT	Gildas Glemarec Pieter-Jan De Temmerman
		ICES WGRDBESGOV		Els Torreele, Lucia Zarauz
TOR 4	Regional Work Plans	Regional Work Plans	RWP	Maria Hansson Els Torreele
	Diadromous Fishes	Diadromous Fishes	Diadromous	Josefin Sundin Simon Weltersbach Marko Freese
	Surveys	Surveys	Surveys	Sieto Verver Christoph Stransky
	Regional Sampling plans	<i>Optimized and Operational Regional Sampling Plans</i>	<i>Umbrella</i>	<i>On hold</i>
		Case Study on the trawl fishery in Iberian Waters	CS Iberian Waters	Rita Vasconcelos
		Case Study on freezer trawler fleet exploiting pelagic fisheries in the NEA	CS pelagic freezer trawler	Harriet van Overzee Jens Ulleweit

RCG NANSEA AND RCG BALTIC 2024 REPORT - Part I

Progress report on ToRs and workplan

TOR	Topic	ISSG	ISSG short name	ISSG chairs
		Case study on fisheries for small pelagics in the Baltic	CS small pelagics Baltic	Katja Ringdahl Marie Storr-Paulsen
		Evaluation of the data collected for the SSF at EU level	SSF	Estanis Mugerza
		Optimisation of ETP bycatch sampling	ETP	Estanis Mugerza Christian von Dorrien
		Regionally coordinated stomach sampling	Stomach sampling	Pierre Cresson Matthias Bernreuther
		Recreational fishery	Recreational	Harry Strehlow Ekeko Bachiller
TOR 5	Governance	National Correspondents	NC	Anna Hasslow Anja Boye Sieto Verver

Proposals for Recommendation and Decisions

NANSEA BALTIC 2024_D05: Agree on proposed ISSGs to work during season 2024-2025 and ensure that experts and manpower are assigned to ISSG work.

5.6 ToR 6 AOB

Regarding the visibility of the RCG work, the website maintained by the RCG Secretariat www.fisheries-rcg.eu is giving a good overview of RCG activities. In addition, news can be advertised on the website, and meetings, including ISSG meetings can be added to the RCG calendar for a better overview and visibility of the work. RCG members and ISSG chairs are encouraged to keep an eye open for good stories and developments during the TM or from ISSG work that could be highlighted as a news item.

There are sections on ISSG work, which needs input from ISSG chairs to be maintained. Also, news can be advertised on X (<https://x.com/fisheriesRCG>).

RCG NANSEA AND RCG BALTIC 2024 REPORT - Part I

Conclusions

6 Conclusions

The setup of the combined back-to-back RCG NANSEA & Baltic Technical meeting is working well, and will be continued. The approach is to have the ISSGs reporting back as basic of the RCG NANSEA and on basis of the presentations discuss relevant recommendations and decisions. Where more time is needed for discussions, subgroups are set up during the physical technical meeting. It is working well to have one day virtual meeting for presentations, and four days physical meeting with more possibilities for discussions. During the physical meeting, it was possible to connect remotely for participants not able to attend and presenters.

The ISSG setup works well and makes it possible for a wider group of experts to contribute to the RCG work, and forms the basis of the RCG NANSEA & Baltic. A new initiative is that in November 2024 the RCG chairs will invite ISSG chairs for a meeting to prepare for the 2024/2025 ISSG work.

The RCG work is supported by the RCG Secretariat, supporting the work of the RCG chairs and taking care of communication and maintenance of the fisheries-rcg.eu website.

During the 2023/2024 term, the RCG NANSEA & Baltic made several major achievements, including the submission of the first Regional Work Plans for 2025-2027 and shifting from RDB to RDBES data call. The upcoming work includes reference of the National Work Plans to Regional Work Plans, preparing for updated Regional Work Plans for 2028-2030 and following the implementation of New Control Regulation and Marine Action Plan.

7 Next meeting

The RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic 2024 meeting will be followed up with the RCG Liaison Meeting and Decision Meeting for NCs (24-26 September 2024).

Preliminary dates and venue for the next RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic TM are 10-13 June 2025 in Lysekil, Sweden, for the physical meeting and 3 June 2025 for the virtual one-day meeting.

The chairs for the RCG NANSEA 2025 are Josefine Egekvis (Denmark) and Rita Vasconcelos (Portugal); for RCG Baltic 2025 Vilda Griūnienė (Lithuania).

RCG NANSEA AND RCG BALTIC 2024 REPORT - Part I

Annex I: List of participants

Annex I: List of Participants

Name	Institution	MS	Role
Alba Domínguez Hernández	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	ESP	RCG expert
Ana Cláudia Fernandes	IPMA - Instituto Português do Mar e Atmosfera	PRT	RCG expert, ISSG chair
Anaïs Roussel	DGAMPA	FRA	NC
Anja Gadgård Boye	DTU Aqua	DNK	NC
Anna Hasslow	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management	SWE	NC, ISSG chair
Antanas Kontautas	Klaipeda University	LTU	RCG expert
Christoph Stransky	Thünen Institute of Sea Fisheries	DEU	NC, ISSG chair
Cristina Rosa	Ministerio do Mar. Direção-Geral de Recursos Naturais, Segurança e Serviços Marítimos	PRT	NC
David Espino García	IEO - CSIC	ESP	RCG expert
Didzis Ustups	Institute of Food Safety, Animal Health and Environment BIOR	LAV	NC
Els Torreele	ILVO Marine	BEL	NC, ISSG chair
Eros Quesada	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences	SWE	RCG expert
Estanis Mugerza	AZTI	ESP	RCG expert, ISSG chair
Florent Renaud	IFREMER	FRA	RCG expert
Gildas Glemarec	DTU Aqua	DNK	RCG expert, ISSG chair
Hans Jakob Olesen	DTU Aqua	DNK	RCG expert
Harriet van Overzee	Wageningen Marine Research	NDL	RCG expert, ISSG chair
Harry Strehlow	Thünen Institute of Sea Fisheries	DEU	RCG expert, ISSG chair
Helen McCormick	Marine Institute Ireland	IRL	RCG expert
Henrik Kjems-Nielsen	ICES	ICES	End user
Ida Ahlbeck Bergendahl	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences	SWE	RCG expert
Iga Gaca	National Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Poland	POL	RCG expert
Inesa Blakunova	Klaipeda University	LTU	RCG expert
Irek Wojcik	National Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Poland	POL	NC
Irina Jakovleva	Fisheries Service under MoA	LTU	RCG expert
Isabel Bruno	IEO - CSIC	ESP	RCG expert
Jan De Haes	ICES	ICES	End user
Jens Ulleweit	Thünen Institute of Sea Fisheries	DEU	RCG expert, ISSG chair
Jette Fredslund	ICES	ICES	End user
Joël Vigneau	IFREMER	FRA	RCG expert, ISSG chair

RCG NANSEA AND RCG BALTIC 2024 REPORT - Part I

Annex I: List of participants

Name	Institution	MS	Role
Jolita Nečiūnienė		LTU	RCG expert
Joni Tiainen	LUKE	FIN	RCG expert
Jose Lorenzo	IEO - CSIC	ESP	RCG expert
Josefin Sundin	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences	SWE	RCG expert, ISSG chair
Josefine Egekvist	DTU Aqua	DNK	RCG chair, ISSG chair
Kai Wieland	DTU Aqua	DNK	RCG expert
Karolina Molla Gazi	CVO-WUR	NDL	RCG expert
Karolina Wikström	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences	SWE	RCG expert
Katariina Kurina	Estonian Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture	EST	NC
Katarzyna Krakówka	National Marine Fisheries Research Institute	POL	RCG expert
Kirsten Birch Håkansson	DTU Aqua	DNK	RCG expert
Laura Lemey	ILVO	BEL	RCG expert
Lauri Saks	Estonian Marine Institute	EST	RCG expert
Lehtinen Heikki	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	FIN	NC
Leonie O'Dowd	European Commission	COM	DG MARE
Linda O'Hea	Marine Institute, Ireland	IRL	NC
Lotte Worsøe Clausen	ICES	ICES	End user
Lucia Zarauz	AZTI	ESP	RCG expert, ISSG chair
Maciej Adamowicz	National Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Poland	POL	RCG chair
Maksims Kovšars	Institute of Food Safety, Animal Health and Environment BIOR	LAV	RCG expert
Maria Hansson	SLU Aqua	SWE	RCG expert, ISSG chair
María Pérez	CETMAR	ESP	RCGs Secretariat
Marie Storr-Paulsen	DTU Aqua	DNK	RCG expert, ISSG chair
Marko Freese	Thuenen Institute of Fisheries Ecology	DEU	RCG expert, ISSG chair
Melissa Dufлот	European Commission	COM	DG MARE
Mette Kjellerup Schiønning	DTU Aqua	DNK	RCG expert
Monika Sterczewska	European Commission	COM	DG MARE
Naiara Rodríguez-Ezpeleta	AZTI	ESP	
Nicolas Sturaro	European Commission	COM	DG MARE
Pierre Cresson	IFREMER	FRA	RCG expert, ISSG chair
Redik Eschbaum	University of Tartu, Estonian Marine Institute	EST	RCG expert
Rita Vasconcelos	IPMA - Instituto Português do Mar e Atmosfera	PRT	RCG chair, ISSG chair

RCG NANSEA AND RCG BALTIC 2024 REPORT - Part I

Annex I: List of participants

Name	Institution	MS	Role
Ruth Fernandez	ICES	ICES	End user
Sébastien Demanèche	IFREMER	FRA	RCG expert, ISSG chair
Sébastien Mayot	Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle	FRA	RCG expert
Sieto Verver	CVO-WUR	NDL	NC, ISSG chair
Stanislovas Jonusas	European Commission	COM	DG MARE
Stefanie Haase	Thünen Institute of Baltic Sea Fisheries	DEU	RCG expert
Susana Naranjo Fernández	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	ESP	RCG expert
Susana Rivero	CETMAR	ESP	RCGs Secretariat
Susanne Tärnlund	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences	SWE	RCG expert
Sven Stötera	Thünen Institute of Baltic Sea Fisheries	DEU	RCG expert
Tim Plevvoets	ILVO	BEL	RCG expert
Uwe Krumme	Thünen Institute of Baltic Sea Fisheries	DEU	RCG expert
Vilda Griūnienė	Ministry of Agriculture of Republic of Lithuania	LTU	NC

Group photo, Bremerhaven



RCG NANSEA AND RCG BALTIC 2024 REPORT - Part I

Annex II: RCG NANSEA & Baltic meeting agenda

Annex II: RCG NANSEA & Baltic meeting agenda

AGENDA

RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic

Virtual Meeting 4th June, Physical Meeting 11-14 June 2024 Bremerhaven (BRUSSELS TIME)

Teams meeting Link: 4th June https://teams.microsoft.com/join/19%3ameeting_OTdhNmQ2ZDQtYmQzYS00YjY1LWEwM2EtNzdmZDQ1YzFiOTRl%40threaad.v2/0?context=%7b%22id%22%3a%22c785584c-4ef3-4fe1-ad35-a5150562e05a%22%2c%22oid%22%3a%22252f3b14-7027-4b52-a912-61ed35e72427%22%7d	Report in folder on sharepoint https://community.ices.dk/ExternalSites/datacollection/Regional%20coordination%20meetings%202017/rcgnansea/_layouts/15/start.aspx#/SitePages/HomePage.aspx
11th-14th June https://teams.microsoft.com/join/19%3ameeting_0b3bMmJlZTZlNGY4MS00ZmIhLWFiOTRlZmM0MTIhMTQ5Yi%40threaad.v2/0?context=%7b%22id%22%3a%22c785584c-4ef3-4fe1-ad35-a5150562e05a%22%2c%22oid%22%3a%22252f3b14-7027-4b52-a912-61ed35e72427%22%7d	

Time (CET, Brussels Time)	Duration	Topic	TOR	Presenter	Rapporteur If not specified, presenter is also rapporteur	Doc No
Tuesday 4 June						
09.00	60 min	IT testing and check-in				
10.00	30 min	Welcome and introduction Welcome, house rules, adoption of the agenda, format of the report, notification of AOB. Update on RCG chairs activities since last year		RCG chairs		01a
10.30	15 min	ISSG Endusers	ToR 1	RCG chairs		02
	15 min	Q&D				
11.00	30 min	Coffee break				
11.30	45 min	ISSG RWP	ToR 4	Joel/Maria		03
	15 min	Q&D				
12.30	15 min	ISSG Surveys	ToR 2	Sieto/Christoph		04
	15 min	Q&D				
13.00	60 min	Lunch				
14.00	15 min	ISSG Regionally coordinated stomach sampling	ToR 4	Pierre/Matthias		05
		Q&D				
14.30	15 min	Case Study on the trawl fishery in Iberian Waters	ToR 4	Rita		06
14.45	15 min	Introduction to questionnaire on sampling of benthic species identified as VME indicators, according to EU-MAP section 4.	ToR 2	Mette Kjellerup Schiønning		
15.00	15 min	ISSG Metier and transversal variables	ToR 2	Sébastien/Josefine		07
	15 min	Q&D				
15.30	30 min	Wrap-up, Questions and introduction to subgroup work in physical meeting in Bremerhaven		RCG chairs		01b
16.00		End of the day				

RCG NANSEA AND RCG BALTIC 2024 REPORT - Part I

Annex II: RCG NANSEA & Baltic meeting agenda

Time	Duration	Topic	TOR	Presenter	Rapporteur If not specified, presenter is also rapporteur	Doc No
Tuesday 11 June						
09.30	30 min	<i>IT testing and check-in</i>				
10.00	30 min	Welcome and introduction House rules, facilities etc., adoption of the agenda, format of the report, notification of AOB		Christoph/RCG chairs		01c
10.30	15 min	Feedback from Commission/STECF	ToR 1	COM: Leonie/Monika		08
	15 min	Q&D				
11.00	30 min	<i>Coffee break</i>				
11.30	15 min	ICES presentation	ToR 1	ICES: Lotte		09
	15 min	Q&D				
12.00	15 min	Follow up on recommendations and decisions from 2023	ToR 1	RCG chairs		10
	15 min	Q&D				
12.30	30 min	Buffer time				
13.00	60 min	<i>Lunch</i>				
14.00	15 min	RDBESGOV presentation	ToR 2	Els/Lucia		11
	15 min	Q&D				
14.30	15 min	RDBES presentation	ToR 2	ICES: Henrik		12
	15 min	Q&D				
15.00	15 min	Introduction to subgroups		RCG chairs/SG chairs		01d
	15 min	Presentaton WGRDBESGOV ISSG Quality		Karolina Molla Gazi		
15.30	30 min	<i>Coffee break</i>				
16.00	90 min	SG: RDBES				
		SG: RWP			Focusing on how to refer to RWP in NWP	
		SG: ISSG Stomach				
17.30		<i>End of the day</i>				

RCG NANSEA AND RCG BALTIC 2024 REPORT - Part I

Annex II: RCG NANSEA & Baltic meeting agenda

Time	Duration	Topic	TOR	Presenter	Rapporteur If not specified, presenter is also rapporteur	Doc No
Wednesday 12 June						
08.30	30 min	<i>IT testing and check-in</i>				
09.00	30 min	Closing yesterday: feedback from subgroups		RCG chairs/SG chairs		
09.30	15 min	ISSG CS on fisheries for small pelagics in the Baltic	ToR 4	Rie/Katja		13
	15 min	Q&D				
10.00	15 min	ISSG CS freezer trawler in the NEA	ToR 3	Harriet/Jens		14
	15 min	Q&D				
10.30	15 min	Presentation SecWeb 2.0	ToR 3	Susana		15
	15 min	Q&D				
11.00	30 min	<i>Coffee break + group photo</i>				
11.30	15 min	ISSG Overviews	ToR 2	Ana/Lucia		16
	15 min	Q&D				
12.00	30 min	Examples on survey methods in areas where it is not possible to trawl - Improving survey coverage through modelling approaches (Stefanie Haase)	ToR 2	Stefanie Haase Kai Wieland		17
12.30	15 min	Buffer time				
	15 min					
13.00	60 min	<i>Lunch</i>				
14.00	15 min	ISSG PETS	ToR 4	Estanis	Uwe	18
	15 min	Q&D				
14.30	15 min	New control regulation: Discussion wrap up from ISSGs	ToR 4	RCG chairs/COM		19
	15 min	Q&D				
15.00	15 min	Marine Action Plan	ToR 5	RCG chairs/COM/DG-ENV		20
	15 min	Q&D				
15.30	30 min	<i>Coffee break</i>				
16.00	90 min	SG: RDBES (continued)				
		SG: Overviews				
		SG: NCS				
		SG: RWP				
17.30		<i>End of the day</i>			Focusing on Table 2.1	

RCG NANSEA AND RCG BALTIC 2024 REPORT - Part I

Annex II: RCG NANSEA & Baltic meeting agenda

Time	Duration	Topic	TOR	Presenter	Rapporteur If not specified, presenter is also rapporteur	Doc No
Thursday 13 June						
08.30	30 min	<i>IT testing and check-in</i>				
09.00	30 min	Closing yesterday: feedback from subgroups		RCG chairs/SG chairs		
09.30	15 min	ISSG Diadromous	ToR 4	Marko/Josefin/Simon		21
	15 min	Q&D				
10.00	15 min	ISSG EMT	ToR 2	Gildas/Pieter-Jan		22
	15 min	Q&D				
10.30	15 min	Presentation: Integrating genetic sampling into Data Collection – from utopia to reality	ToR 2	Niara		23
	15 min	Q&D				
11.00	30 min	<i>Coffee break</i>				
11.30	15 min	Introduction of new methods in data collection	ToR 2	RCG chairs		24
	15 min	Q&D				
12.00	15 min	ISSG Recreational	ToR 4	Harry		25
	15 min	Q&D				
12.30	15 min	ISSG SSF	ToR 4	Estanis		
	15 min	Q&D				
13.00	60 min	<i>Lunch</i>				
14.00	30 min	Discussion on next years ISSGs		RCG chairs		
14.30	30 min					
15.00	30 min					
		Buffer time SG RWP SG RDBES			SG RWP focusing on: - update the definition on drafting of RWP - Roadmap for intersessional work 2024-2025 - Nomination of a new co-chair - follow up on tasks for NCs (finalisation of Table 1.3, NANSEA, update on RoP on MS not following the RWP)	
15.30	15 min	<i>Coffee break</i>				
15.45		Off-Plenary Time - Report writing - ISSG work on R&D - Wrap-up preparation				
17.00		<i>End of the day</i>				
18.30		Social Event "Salondampfer HANSA"				

RCG NANSEA AND RCG BALTIC 2024 REPORT - Part I

Annex II: RCG NANSEA & Baltic meeting agenda

Time	Duration	Topic	TOR	Presenter	Rapporteur If not specified, presenter is also rapporteur	Doc No
Friday 14 June						
08.30	30 min	<i>IT testing and check-in</i>				
09.00	120 min	Wrap up of the TM: - Main outcomes, conclusions and take-home messages by ISSG and TM SG - Review and finalize Recommendations and Decisions 2024 - How to register participants for ISSGs - RCG 2025: venue and chairs - ISSG work 2024/2024 - Report parts I, II and III		RCG chairs	RCG chairs	01e
11.00	30 min	<i>Coffee break</i>				
11.30	90 min	<i>Wrap up of the TM (continued)</i>		RCG chairs	RCG chairs	01f
13.00		<i>End of the meeting</i>				

RCG NANSEA AND RCG BALTIC 2023 REPORT - Part I

Annex III: Details on the decision between the National Correspondents
on funding of the RCGs Secretariat 2024-2025

Annex III: Details on the decision between the National Correspondents on funding of the RCGs Secretariat 2024-2025

Details on the decision between the National Correspondents on funding of the RCGs Secretariat 2024-2025

September 2024

Having regard:

EU Regulation 2017/1004 stipulating that each Member State shall ensure that its national correspondent has a sufficient mandate to represent its Member State in the regional coordination groups referred to in the regulation.

The 2022 decision by the NC's to agree on the principle of implementing a long-term secretariat in support of the work of all RCGs.

Regulation 2017/1004 article 9.1 stipulating that MS shall coordinate their data collection activities within the same region.

Regulation 2017/1004 article 9.2 stipulating the establishment of Regional Coordination Groups for marine regions.

The establishment of the Regional Coordination Group for Economic affairs, overarching all marine regions and including all EU landlocked Member States.

The outcomes of the EU co-funded project SECWEB.

The acceptance of EU project SECWEB 2.0 and by this accepting CETMAR as the service provider.

The continued wish for uninterrupted secretarial support of the RCG work.

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Having acknowledged:

That the total activities of the Secretariat can't be executed in full without the support of the MS.

The distribution key for the cost sharing is based on the MS's total EMFAF budget 2021-2027 as well as the MS's membership of the respective RCGs form the basis for the MS's contribution to the funding. Reference to SECWEB project describing the distribution key for the cost sharing <https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/d/dcf/annex-19-ensuring-future-operation-and-funding>

To reference this agreement in every relevant National or Regional Workplan.

The following Member States have agreed to collectively cover the total MS contribution to the total costs of the RCG secretariat in 2024-2025: BEL, BGR, CZE, DNK, DEU, EST, IRL, GRC, ESP, FRA, HRV, ITA, CYP, LVA, LTU, HUN, MLT, NLD, AUT, POL, PRT, ROU, SVN, FIN, SWE.

Distribution key:

RCG NANSEA AND RCG BALTIC 2023 REPORT - Part I

Annex III: Details on the decision between the National Correspondents on funding of the RCGs Secretariat 2024-2025

Application of the selected model for the distribution key leads to the following costs by MS by year:

	Annual contribution by MS according to the total EMFAF budget for the period 2021-2027	Annual contribution by MS according number of RCGs in which each MS is participating	TOTAL MS annual contribution (€)
BEL	152	463	615
BGR	321	756	1077
CZE	113	154	268
DNK	759	714	1473
DEU	800	937	1737
EST	368	937	1305
IRL	538	686	1224
GRC	1417	979	2396
ESP	4233	1511	5743
FRA	2142	1288	3430
HRV	921	979	1900
ITA	1958	1202	3160
CYP	145	979	1124
LVA	510	937	1446
LTU	231	937	1168
LUX	0	0	0
HUN	142	154	297
MLT	82	979	1062
NLD	370	686	1056
AUT	25	154	180
POL	1936	937	2872
PRT	1430	909	2339
ROU	614	756	1370
SVN	90	756	847
SVK	58	154	212
FIN	271	405	676
SWE	438	714	1152
			40.125

RCG NANSEA AND RCG BALTIC 2023 REPORT - Part I

Annex III: Details on the decision between the National Correspondents on funding of the RCGs Secretariat 2024-2025

Duration and governance:

This agreement covers funding for secretarial activities not covered by SECWEB 2.0 in support of the RCGs in 2024 and 2025. Substantial changes to legal and/or financial obligations automatically lead to a review of this agreement. Duly justified, participating Member States may request a review as well. This agreement is pan regional by nature and is governed by the collective of National Correspondents, operating as the Intersessional Subgroup of National Correspondents under the remit of the RCGs.

Invoices should be sent by CETMAR to the MS concerned before November 1 of the respective year. Individual MS and CETMAR shall cooperate to establish the required documentation for the respective MS if needed. CETMAR shall report the activities executed during the previous term to the RCGs yearly.

Activities:

The activities covered under secretarial activities comprise at a minimum of:

A full-time dedicated Secretariat support service for the RCGs enables a consistent approach to administering RCG activities, facilitates communication, and enhancing 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.

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