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Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF)

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Evaluation of the 2021 Annual Reports for data collection and data transmission issues from 2021 (STECF-22-07)

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2022

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Abstract

Commission Decision of 25 February 2016 setting up a Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries, C(2016) 1084, OJ C 74, 26.2.2016, p. 4–10. The Commission may consult the group on any matter relating to marine and fisheries biology, fishing gear technology, fisheries economics, fisheries governance, ecosystem effects of fisheries, aquaculture or similar disciplines. This report presents the STECF findings based on the Report of the Expert Working Group (EWG 22-07) which was held virtually from 20-24 June 2022, to evaluate MS Annual Reports on data collection for 2021 and the Member States' data transmission to the end users during 2021. The report of the EWG was reviewed by the STECF during its 70th plenary meeting held virtually from 4-8 of July 2021. This was the final submission of Annual Reports under the Data Collection Framework prior to the new EU MAP is coming into effect.

**SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COMMITTEE FOR FISHERIES (STECF) -
Evaluation of the 2021 Annual Reports for data collection and data transmission issues
from 2021(STECF-22-07)**

Background provided by the Commission

Article 11 of the Data Collection framework (DCF) Regulation (EU) 1004/2017 requires Member States to submit to the Commission an annual report (AR) on the implementation of their national work plans (WPs) and requires STECF to evaluate: (a) the execution of the WPs and (b) the quality of the data collected by the Member States. These tasks have been conferred to EWG 22-07 [ToR 1, 2]. In addition, EWG 22-07 was asked to prepare the assessment grid and evaluators' guidance for AR 2022 and onwards [ToR 3], and to check the AR 2022 Excel and Word templates for completeness, in particular the formulas in the Excel file (yellow columns) [ToR 4].

Request to the STECF

STECF is requested to review the report of the STECF Expert Working Group meeting, evaluate the findings and make any appropriate comments and recommendations.

Summary of the information provided to STECF

EWG 22-07 met virtually from 20 to 24 June 2022. As there was just one week between the end of the EWG and the start of STECF PLEN 22-02, the final EWG report was not yet available to PLEN 22-02. The following STECF comments and suggestions are consequently based on discussions amongst STECF members, on a presentation of the outcomes from the EWG 22-07 meeting made by the chairs, and a preliminary draft of the EWG 22-07 report made available to STECF.

STECF comments

TOR 1: Evaluation of 2021 Annual Reports

STECF notes that the 2021 Annual Reports are the last reports to be submitted and evaluated in accordance with the Commission Delegated Decision (EU) 2019/910 and Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/909.

STECF observes that the evaluation of 2021 Annual Reports (ARs) was based on the outcome from the pre-screening exercise and supporting documents such as the guidance documents for AR-WP evaluators and a stand-alone document of assessment criteria.

STECF observes that as in 2021 a two-step pre-screening exercise was carried out in which Member States were asked to address the issues spotted by the pre-screener/EWG and resubmit Annual Reports both before and during the EWG, as necessary. STECF notes that rules concerning the communication with the Member States prior to the meeting were pre-defined stating that all identified issues had to be reviewed by at least two pre-screener before the issue was sent to the Member States. Moreover, the issue types (inconsistencies, formatting issues,

missing tables etc.) initiating a request to Member States for clarification or Annual Report re-submission were also defined before the pre-screening. The communication with Member States both prior and during to the EWG was thoroughly documented for future reference.

STECF observes that 26 Member States were contacted for clarification on various Annual Report sections prior to the EWG. All contacted Member States replied to the requests. Additionally, the Commission re-contacted 23 Member States during the EWG, for clarification on various Annual Report sections from which 22 Member States replied. STECF acknowledges that the two-step approach with early correspondence with Member States allowed for an efficient evaluation of Annual Reports.

STECF further acknowledges that the EWG decided to highlight in the EWG report positive examples that had been identified during the Annual Report assessment, since the effort to produce well-written Annual Reports and to submit additional information does not always come out in the standardised assessment grid.

STECF observes that the overall scores of performance levels by Member States were significantly higher compared to last year with the number of Member States receiving a compliance level score of "YES" increasing from 5 in 2020 Annual Reports to 14 in 2021 Annual Reports. The number of "PARTLY" compliance scores decreased from 3 to 1. The increase in the overall performance is in the majority of cases a result of an increase in the performance from "MOSTLY" to "YES" in the assessment of sections 1E-1H.

STECF agrees with the EWG that the increase in the overall performance between 2020 and 2021 is primarily due to a reduction of Covid-19 related issues such as surveys not being carried out or only partially carried out. Nevertheless, STECF observes that this also reflects a continuous improvement in the process, since the overall performance scores are also substantially higher than their levels prior to the pandemic. STECF considers that the improvement in the overall performance after the pandemic compared to before is most likely due to the two-step "ping-pong" approach allowing immediate solutions of issues both prior and during the EWG. Additionally there has been a general improvement in the quality of the Member States ARs over time.

Covid-19 consequences for the data collection in 2021.

STECF observes that the Commission requested Member States to clearly highlight any deviation from the Work Plan due to Covid-19 in their Annual Reports. This was suggested by EWG 20-18 and endorsed by PLEN 21-01. Based on the input received, the EWG evaluated the Covid-19 consequences on data collection in 2021 by Annual Report modules. STECF observes that the extent of impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the sampling intensity of the biological variables and the field operations related to the collection of biological data (sections 1A,1C, 4A, 4C) was largely country-specific, ranging from high impact to little or no impact.

STECF observes that among the difficulties that Member States have faced were the refusal of vessel owners to allow observers to embark onboard fishing vessels, travel restrictions that prevented observers accessing vessels, and the implementation of social distancing rules that affected laboratory work.

STECF observes that a similar situation was observed with Annual Report sections 1D, 1E, 1F and 1GH. For section 1D (Recreational fisheries), three Member States were impacted severely (even though nine Member States had issues with Covid-19). For section 1E (Anadromous and catadromous species data collection in fresh water), two Member States were impacted severely (even though five Member States had issues with Covid-19). For section 1F (Incidental by-catch), eight Member States identified that sampling was severely impacted. A further five Member States referred to section 4A for comments. These were not always easy to identify as relating directly to section 1F. For section 1GH (Research surveys), 11 Member States reported Covid-19 related issues.

STECF observes that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, several Member States reported that Pilot Study 3 on the collection of employment data by education type and nationality was extended and that Pilot study 4 for the collection of environmental data was not implemented.

STECF notes that the EWG did not observe any impact of Covid-19 on the implementation of WP 2021 Annual Report sections 2A (Fishing activity variables), 5A (Quality assurance framework for biological data), 7A (Planned regional and international coordination), 7B (Follow-up of recommendations and agreements) and 7C (Bi- and multilateral agreements) as reported by Member States.

STECF observes that Member States made attempts to mitigate the problems as far as practicably possible. In most cases, on-board sampling was replaced by on-shore sampling or market sampling. Additional sampling was also conducted in the time periods when lower restrictions were in place to compensate for the periods of closure. Other measures taken by the Member State included self-sampling (ITA, DNK, IRL) and the pilot use of "FishMetrics" (PRT). This is a system of automatic/remote image acquisition of landing boxes during sales.

TOR 2: Evaluation of DCF data transmission (DT) issues

STECF observes that as for the Annual Reports, the DT issues were subject to a pre-screening assessment prior to the EWG final assessment. The pre-screeners were requested to run a first assessment of the issues and prepare draft comments. In order to ensure harmonisation and consistency, four EWG experts revised all issues for consistency after the sub-group assessments were finalised.

STECF observes that in total 257 DT issues, from 5 data calls in 2021 and 3 end users were reported in the DTMT. The number of DT issues was lower, compared to issues raised in the previous year (555 issues last year). However, STECF reiterates that the numbers of DT issues between years are not fully comparable. This is because the end-users may report issues at different levels of aggregation. Moreover, in some years, certain data issues are being evaluated in more depth by request of the Commission. Additionally, various EWGs may raise additional issues with respect to certain data calls. Lastly, not all end-users report data issues each year and certain data calls (e.g., Aquaculture, Fish Processing) are not issued each year.

STECF observes that 129 DT issues were related to "COVERAGE", 125 to "QUALITY" and 3 to "TIMELINESS". STECF further observes that out of the 257 DT issues, 92 issues were classified as "SATISFACTORY" and 56 as "UNSATISFACTORY". Additionally, 109 issues were assessed as "FOLLOW-UP NEEDED" as the comments from the Member State and end-user were either contradictory or the Member State comments were unclear. Issues concerning historical data acknowledged by the Member State and stated to be fixed and resubmitted were assessed as "FOLLOW-UP NEEDED". When the issue was concerning data collection and not data transmission, it was assessed as "UNSATISFACTORY".

STECF observes that 118 DT issues were reported for the Mediterranean and Black Sea of which 13 were "UNSATISFACTORY" issues. These related to failures concerning data collection and not data transmission. They were of low severity and non-recurrent.

STECF observes that for the Fleet Economics data call (60 issues in total), 26 DT Issues were "zero" values reported by Members States where confirmation was required whether the zero value is a missing value or not. These were all finally assessed as "SATISFACTORY".

STECF observes that the FDI data call resulted in 47 issues. Of these, 2 were "UNSATISFACTORY" issues as they were of high severity involving missing and erroneously reported data (coverage and quality). The other 20 issues were assessed as "SATISFACTORY".

STECF acknowledges that the EWG also made suggestions to improve the handling of DT issues by the experts and end-users. The STECF agrees that a screening of the DT Issues should continue to take place before the EWG starts, together with the pre-screening of Annual Reports.

STECF notes that objective assessment criteria for the evaluation of DT issues are crucial for an objective assessment, and it is important that the current guidelines are fit for that purpose. STECF observes that the evaluation of DT issues, as specified in the guidelines, is based on whether the work of the EWG or end-user was significantly hampered due to the data issue. In that case, the assessment rating is "UNSATISFACTORY". If the severity is low and it is a non-recurrent issue, expert judgement is relevant to assess the severity.

STECF recognises that for certain data issues there is still uncertainty as regards to the assessment criteria. STECF agrees that these issues should be further addressed in STECF plenary as was previously done in PLEN 19-01 and PLEN 21-02. In order to facilitate these discussions, the EWG drafted a decision tree that could be used as the basis for these discussions, which STECF acknowledges as a good starting point.

TOR 3: Prepare the assessment grid and evaluators' guidance for AR 2022 and onwards

STECF observes that in order to review and prepare an assessment grid and guidance for the evaluation of the Annual Reports 2022 and beyond, the EWG based its work on a draft stand-alone document for Annual Report evaluation that had been prepared by EWG 20-18. This was provided to the EWG as a background document. The EWG elaborated further on the document by addressing the following issues:

- Setting the scene for the evaluation process and the basic principles of evaluation.
- Guidance for pre-screening.
- Overview of automatic checks during submission and expert pre-screening.
- Guidance for the screening by experts for each table and text box.

STECF notes that the EWG was not able to finalise the guidance documents within the given time of the EWG. STECF agrees with the EWG that this would need to be further elaborated and finalised during the EWG 22-18 on the evaluation of National Work Plans in October 2022.

TOR 4: CHECK THE AR 2022 TEMPLATE (EXCEL AND WORD FILES)

STECF observes that ToR 4 was addressed by each sub-group during the EWG. After guidance by the focal point from MARE, priority was given to checking for inconsistencies in the formulas inserted in the Excel files. STECF acknowledges that the formulas in the Annual Report 2022 template were modified where necessary.

STECF conclusions

STECF concludes that the EWG addressed all the ToRs appropriately in the given time frame and endorses the report and the related documents. STECF suggests that the outstanding work to complete ToR 3 on the assessment grid and guidance for evaluation of the Annual Reports for 2022 and beyond be completed by EWG 22-18.

STECF concludes that the communication with Member States prior to the start of the EWG and during the EWG session (two-step "ping-pong") is a positive development in the feedback process with the Member States. This has led to a significant number of issues being identified and addressed prior to the meeting following from the pre-screening process. This early communication process allows for more time to evaluate improvements in the quality of the Annual Reports during the EWG and has also contributed to the increase in the overall performance of Member States.

STECF concludes that the extent of impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sampling intensity of the biological variables and the field operations, related to the collection of biological data was largely Member State specific. STECF further concludes that the pandemic affected the performance of the pilot studies, causing delays in their completion. In general, STECF concludes that the Covid-19 effects remained apparent in the 2021 Annual Reports but to a lesser degree than in 2020.

STECF concludes that all DT issues that are not marked as "SATISFACTORY" are followed up by the Commission, in communication with the Member States and end-users.

STECF concludes that suggested improvements of the guidelines for assessing DT issues should be addressed in the next autumn or spring plenary.

STECF concludes that the formulas in the Annual Report 2022 template were checked and corrected where necessary by the EWG and can be applied in the new Annual Report template.

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REPORT TO THE STECF

EXPERT WORKING GROUP ON Evaluation of the 2021 Annual Reports for data collection and data transmission issues from 2021 (EWG-22-07)

Virtual meeting, 20-24 of June 2022

This report does not necessarily reflect the view of the STECF and the European Commission and in no way anticipates the Commission's future policy in this area

1. INTRODUCTION

The assessment of Annual Reports (ARs) on data collection in 2021 and data transmission issues (DT issues) raised in relation to data calls in this year were carried out by the STECF Expert Working Group (STECF EWG 22-07) 20-24 of June 2022.

Under the process of evaluation and approval of the outcomes of the Work Plans (WP), the European Commission is legally bound to consult STECF on the execution of the WPs approved by the Commission and the quality of the data collected by the Member States (MS) in accordance with Article 11 of Regulation (EU) No 2017/1004¹.

2021 Annual Reports are the last reports to be submitted and evaluated in accordance with the Commission Delegated Decision (EU) 2019/910 and Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/909. Annual Reports referring to 2022 will instead be submitted and evaluated based on Commission Delegated Decision (EU) 2021/1167 and Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/1168.

The EWG meeting was held as a virtual meeting using Microsoft Teams as a platform. In total 30 independent experts attended the meeting. The list of participants is included in Section 8.

The evaluation of ARs and DT issues was undertaken by subgroups to which experts were allocated according to their expertise. Prior to the EWG assessment, Member States' ARs for 2021 and the majority of DT issues raised in response to 2021 data calls underwent a pre-screening process. All pre-screening was undertaken by experts under contract to DG MARE.

1.1 Terms of Reference for EWG-22-07

EWG 22-07 is requested to:

ToR 1 & 2: Evaluate AR and DTi for 2021

1. Evaluate Member States' AR on the implementation of their WPs in 2021, submitted to the Commission by 31 May 2022.
2. Evaluate the data transmission issues (DTi) reported by end users for data calls launched during the year 2021.
3. For each MS and each region, evaluate Covid-19 consequences for the data collection in 2021, based on information provided in the AR.

EWG 22-07 will report the findings to the plenary meeting of the STECF, which will take place 4-8 July 2022.

EWG 22-07 will work on the ARs submitted by Member States, the DTi uploaded on the Data Transmission Monitoring Tool (DTMT), and the results of the pre-screening, following relevant guidance documents.

The Commission may address additional requests to EWG 22-07 in relation to specific issues that arise from the pre-screening exercise.

Prior to the EWG 22-07 meeting, a pre-screening of Member States' ARs will be undertaken through a series of ad-hoc contracts. The pre-screeners will use a grid for the evaluation of ARs (provided as background document 2 and used in previous assessment (EWG 21-09), the

¹ REGULATION (EU) 2017/1004 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 May 2017 on the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the common fisheries policy and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 199/2008 (recast).

guidance for AR-WP evaluators (provided as background document 4)), and a stand-alone document of assessment criteria (provided as background document 3).

To improve efficiency of the final STECF assessment, pre-screeners will signal issues that can be fixed by the MSs before EWG 22-07 starts. The MS will provide explanations and resubmit the ARs if necessary. The following rules will apply to the prior communication:

- All identified issues will be reviewed by at least two experts before being sent to the Member States.
- The issues will be collated and reviewed together with the Commission. Following this filtering exercise, the Commission will relay issues with AR submissions to Member States at the end of the pre-screening exercise.
- The issues can relate to inconsistencies, formatting issues, missing tables, missing explanations in the text boxes, misplaced information, wrong references etc.

For data transmission issues, EWG 22-07 is requested to focus on the issues from 2021, recorded in the DTMT:

- DTi from the Fleet Economics data call (59 issues reported)
- DTi from the Med&BS (118 issues reported)
- DTi from FDI (47 issues reported)
- DTi from Fish processing (11 issues reported)
- DTi from ICCAT (tbc issues reported)
- DTi from ICES (tbc)
- DTi from IOTC (tbc).

The experts are requested to use the DTMT guidance (version July 2021) for the evaluation, and to provide feedback to the guidance if needed.

ToR 3: Prepare the assessment grid and evaluators' guidance for AR 2022 and onwards

EWG 20-18 produced a draft stand-alone document for AR evaluation (background document 9). No assessment grid has been drafted yet. EWG 22-07 is requested to prepare an assessment grid for evaluation of AR 2022 that will be submitted in June 2023, and to revise and finalise the stand-alone document for AR evaluation.

EWG 22-07 is requested to cover all AR sections in the assessment grid and stand-alone document, and apply harmonised criteria across the AR sections (e.g. commercial vs. recreational; biological vs. socio-economic; fisheries dependent vs. independent).

ToR 4: Check the AR 2022 template (Excel and Word files)

EWG 20-18 produced draft WP/AR templates. In July 2021 COM published WP Excel and Word templates for MS to submit the work plans in 2021. The AR Excel templates have not been finalised in 2021. Most content of the [AR Word template](#) is included in the Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/39, published in January 2022.

EWG 22-07 is requested to check the AR 2022 Excel and Word templates for completeness, in particular the formulas in the Excel file (yellow columns). Once approved by STECF, the templates will be published in the DCF website.

EWG 22-07 report

The report of the EWG 22-07 should contain the following:

1. At the EU (and regional) level:
 - a) An overall evaluation of the execution of data collection, including an estimate of the performance of Member States, major issues and recurring issues across Member States. The overall evaluation should also aim to highlight any deficiencies in data collection in relation to end user needs at the regional level in order that such

deficiencies can be taken into account in planning future regional work programmes. A separate section on Covid-19 consequences in the data collection activities should be included per each region (ToR 1 & 2).

- b) EWG 22-07 comments on assessment grid and guidance for 2022 AR – June 2023 assessment exercise (ToR 4); with assessment grid and guidance in annexes to the report
- c) Final 2022 AR Excel (with formulas) and Word templates in annex to the report

2. For each Member State:

a) With regard to ARs:

- i. An overall evaluation of whether the Member State executed its data collection activities in accordance with its agreed WP for 2021. A separate section on Covid-19 consequences for data collection activities should be included per each MS.
- ii. A detailed evaluation of the AR, based on the AR evaluation grid provided by the Commission, which will already include the result of the pre-screening exercise. The completed grid should highlight:
 - any persistent or recurring issues regarding *execution* of data collection activities;
 - any persistent or recurring issues regarding *reporting* of data collection activities;
 - all issues that may require the Commission to take remedial action (request for resubmission of the AR or clarification of specific issues). The Commission will seek clarification from Member States on any issues raised during the EWG meeting and feedback from Member State should be evaluated by the EWG during the meeting. The EWG is not required to evaluate feedback from Member States received after 23 June (one day before the EWG meeting ends);
 - any issues that are 'for information' only.
- iii. A summary list of follow-up actions to be addressed by Member States at the end of the EWG.

b) With regard to DT issues:

- i. An overall evaluation of Member State performance, of main DT issues per end user/data call and of recurring issues by Member State.
- ii. An evaluation of Member States' responses via the Data Transmission Monitoring Tool online platform to issues raised by end users of scientific advice (i.e. the STECF, RCGs, ICES and RFMOs to which scientific data is provided by Member States) in relation to data calls issued in 2021. The EWG is requested to evaluate DTi in terms of content by closing issues which have been clarified and highlighting outstanding issues (recurrent and or having an important impact on the activity of a stock assessment working group and the quality of the assessment etc.). The data sets affected shall be underlined.
- iii. Identify in the evaluation per Member State the comments which require a reaction from Member State (draft a summary list) and those points which are for information only.

Following review and endorsement by the STECF plenary in July 2022, all resulting documentation (annual report evaluation and summary list of follow-up actions and evaluation of data transmission issues and summary list of points requiring reaction) will be communicated to Member States by DG MARE.

1.2 Structure of the report

The different sections of the report correspond to the terms of references. Section 2 includes the evaluation of Member States Annual Reports (TOR 1) and section 3 the evaluation of DT issues (TOR 2). Section 4 refers to the preparation of the assessment grid and evaluators' guidance for AR 2022 and onwards (ToR 3). The checking of the AR 2022 template for completeness was carried out within the subgroups and is covered in Section 2.

To ease navigation and comprehension, an overview of the structure of Member States Annual Reports is given in Table 1 below.

Table 1 - Sections of Member States Annual Reports (ARs).

Sections of Member States Annual Reports	
1A	List of required stocks
1C	Sampling intensity for biological variables
1D	Recreational fisheries
1E	Anadromous and catadromous species data collection in fresh water
1F	Incidental by-catch of birds, mammals, reptiles and fish
1G	List of research surveys at sea
1H	Research survey data collection and dissemination
2A	Fishing activity variables for data collection strategy
3A	Population segments for collection of economic and social data for fisheries
3B	Population segments for collection of economic and social data on aquaculture
3C	Population segments for collection of economic and social data for the processing industry
4A	Sampling plan description for biological data
4C	Data on the fisheries by member state
5A	Quality assurance framework for biological data
5B	Quality assurance framework for socioeconomic data
6A	Data availability
7A	Planned regional and international coordination
7B	Follow-up of recommendations and agreements
7C	Bi- and multilateral agreements

1.3 Pre-screening prior to the EWG

Prior to EWG 22-07, 13 independent experts were contracted by DG MARE to pre-screen Annual Reports and Data Transmission Issues that had been reported in the Data Transmission Monitoring Tool (DTMT) referring to data calls in 2021. Only DT issues commented by the Member States in the DTMT were pre-screened.

To undertake the pre-screening exercise the pre-screeners were requested to use the updated evaluation grid for pre-screeners along with all relevant background documents such as the stand-alone document of assessment criteria for the evaluation of Annual Reports and DTMT guidance.

The outcome from the pre-screening of ARs and DT issues was made available to the EWG in the AR evaluation grid template and in an Excel sheet extract from the DTMT, respectively. As in the previous year, Member States were contacted to address issues identified by the pre-screeners in the ARs prior to the start of the EWG 22-07 meeting.

2. TOR 1 EVALUATION OF MEMBER STATES ANNUAL REPORTS FOR 2021

2.1 Setting the scene

2.1.1 Formation of subgroups and pre-screening of Annual Reports

The assessment of Annual Reports was undertaken by subgroups to which experts were allocated according to their expertise. In each subgroup one expert was identified as a group facilitator. Each subgroup was tasked with the assessment of different sections of the AR.

Table 2 – Allocation of AR sections by subgroup and expertise. *Section 6A was assessed by each subgroup for the relevant sections.

AR sections	Subgroup	Expertise	Subgroup facilitator
1A, 1C, 4A, 4C, 6A*	Subgroup 1	Biology	Ivana Vukov
1D, 1E, 1F, 1G, 1H, 6A*	Subgroup 2	Biology	Fabio Grati
2A, 5A, 6A*, 7A, 7B, 7C	Subgroup 3	Economics and Biology	Edvardas Kazlauskas
3A, 3B, 3C, 5B, 6A*	Subgroup 4	Economics	Irina Davidjuka

The evaluation results are provided in the evaluation grids per Member State (Electronic Annex 1 EWG-22-07 - Evaluation of ARs per MS) and in the EU overview table (section 2.2.1). An overview of the EWG findings by subgroups is provided in section 2.2.3.

To improve the efficiency of the assessment of Annual Reports, pre-screeners signalled issues to Member States prior to the start of the EWG. This gave Member States the chance to provide explanations and resubmit the Annual Reports if necessary before the start of the EWG. The following rules applied to the prior communication:

1. All identified issues were reviewed by at least two experts before being sent to the Member States;
2. The issues were collated and reviewed together with the Commission. Following this filtering exercise, the Commission relayed issues with AR submissions to Member States at the end of the pre-screening exercise;
3. The issues related to inconsistencies, formatting issues, missing tables, missing explanations in the text boxes, misplaced information, wrong references etc.

To facilitate communication between experts and the Commission, all comments were incorporated in an Excel file. The Excel file included pre-screener comments to Member States, feedback from Member States, EWG experts' comments to Member States, and Member States feedback, allowing two rows of communication with the Member State in a coordinated and structured way.

Table 3 – Labelling of the Excel file for the ping pong process.

MS
Pre-screener to EWG
MS reply
MS EWG
MS reply to EWG

First questions to Member States were sent immediately after the pre-screening exercise and prior to the EWG so that replies and resubmission of ARs from Member States were possible before the meeting. During the meeting the experts continued to work in the assessment grid filled out by the pre-screener. In the case experts found remaining major issues in the AR submissions the Commission contacted the Member State on the second day of the meeting and asked for clarifications and/or re-submission of AR files by the fourth meeting day (the usually called “ping-pong” process). Only major issues which needed urgent actions for resubmission or clarification, and which were essential to evaluate the ARs, were sent to the Member States. The ping-pong process in two steps worked well and the communication with the Member States prior to the EWG resulted in fewer issues to be addressed during the EWG.

Prior to the EWG, 26 Member States were contacted for clarification on various AR sections all of them replied. During the EWG 23 Member States were contacted from which 22 Member States replied, which led to the improvement and finalisation of the assessments. The questions for the Member States and related responses by AR sections have been documented for future reference (COM internally, as in previous years).

2.1.2 Background Information

To carry out the evaluation of the AR’s, the EWG was provided with access to supporting information such as the results from the pre-screening in the AR evaluation grid, the ARs and WPs for all Member States.

2.1.3 Tools and criteria for the assessment

As in previous years, the EWG agreed that the STECF assessment provided in the AR evaluation grid need to be clear and self-explanatory. It is also necessary that the evaluation is carried out coherently across subgroups so that the results are comparable and transparent.

A standalone document, listing assessment criteria that facilitates for a more consistent and less subjective evaluation, was used as a basis for the assessment. The assessment criteria are available in Annex 2 and include a set of agreed rules with the aim to increase consistency in the responses from different evaluators.

As in previous evaluation the categories NO, PARTLY, MOSTLY and YES were used to judge AR achievements. Sections of the AR that is not relevant for the Member State to provide information

on (i.e. the Member State is under the threshold for data collection) are marked with NOT APPLICABLE (NA). In addition to these categories the EWG discussed introducing the category UNASSESSABLE (UA) in future evaluations. This category should refer to sections of the AR where the information provided does not allow for an assessment in the given year, e.g. the reported study is not yet completed.

Table 4 – Performance levels for the assessment of Annual Reports.

% of achievement	Classification
<10%	NO
10-50%	PARTLY
50-90%	MOSTLY
>90%	YES

It was also agreed that the overall performance by Member States is based on expert judgement and no fixed assessment criteria can be set since the sections of the AR do not carry the same weight within the overall performance. However, as a general guide (in addition to table 4 above) for the overall performance the EWG agreed that two MOSTLY can still generate a YES and if one section has been assessed as NO the overall performance can only be MOSTLY, PARTLY or NO.

In case of the land-locked countries the overall assessment can only be Non applicable (NA) if no regular data collection is undertaken or PARTLY/MOSTLY/YES if there is data collection.

As no weighing of sections is applied in the EU overview the EWG agreed that the overall performance by Member States is only for illustrative purpose and that Commission and Member States primarily should refer to the assessment of each section in the AR evaluation grid.

2.2 Results

2.2.1 EU Overview

The overall evaluation shown in Table 5 is the summary evaluation of each Member State based on the traffic light system in Table 4 above. The overall evaluation by Member State was agreed upon by the EWG in plenary.

Table 5 – Summary of the assessment of Member States 2021 Annual Reports. *Land-locked Member States.

	AUT*	BEL	BGR	CYP	CZE*	DEU	DNK	ESP	EST	FIN	FRA	GRC	HUN*	IRL	ITA	LTU	LVA	MLT	NLD	POL	PRT	ROU	SVK*	SVN	SWE			
Overall Performance	M		M		M		M				M	M			M				M	M		M		NA	NA			
1A-1C	NA				NA						M	M							M	M				NA	NA			
1D	NA		NA	NA	NA		M				M								M					NA	NA			
1E	NA		NA	NA	NA		M	M			M	P			NA				NA					NA	NA			
1F	NA				NA										M										NA			
1G-1H	NA				NA		M	M				NA													NA			
2A	NA				NA		M					M							M						NA			
3A	NA				NA						M				M				M							NA		
3B	M	NA		NA					NA				M			NA			M		NA		M			NA		
3C	NA			NA	NA						NA									NA		NA				NA		
4A-4C	NA				NA																					NA		
5A	NA				NA		M																		NA	M		
5B																										NA		
5C																										NA		
6A																										NA		
7A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y
7B	NA	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	M	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y
7C	NA	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y

The EWG reiterates the conclusion from EWG 19-09 that sections 7A, 7B and 7C are not included in the overall assessment by Member States because there are no reference lists of meetings, recommendations or bi- and multilateral agreements. The EWG evaluated sections 1A to 1C as one section as it was agreed by the EWG 20-08.

The overall scores of the performance level by Member States was significantly higher compared to last years. The number of AR sections that received a compliance level score of YES increased from 5 for 2020 ARs and from between 6 and 8 in the ARs of 2018-2020 and finally to 14 for 2021 ARs.

The increase in the overall performance is in the majority of cases a result of an increase in the performance from MOSTLY to YES in the assessment of sections 1E-1H. The EWG agreed that the increase in the overall improved implementation of the Work Plan, specifically in sections 1E-1H, compared to 2020 ARs is mainly due to a reduction of serious covid-19 related issues i.e. in 2020 a number of surveys were not executed at all or only partly executed. The Member States have also linked table 1 and 4 to a greater extent or provided this in the ping-pong in the assessment of 2021 ARs. Furthermore, the EWG considers that the improvement in the overall performance after the pandemic compared to before, is most likely due to the two step ping-pong approach that has allowed Member States to resubmit information twice if needed and a general improvement of the ARs over time.

Overview tables on the MS DCF performance for the years 2010-2019 can be found in the following STECF reports; STECF12-01²; STECF-OWP-12-05³; STECF13-14⁴; STECF14-13⁵, STECF15-13⁶, STECF16-12⁷, STECF 17-07⁸, EWG STECF 18-10⁹, EWG 19-09¹⁰, EWG 20-08¹¹ and EWG 21-09¹².

² Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries. Analysis of the DCF Annual Reports for 2010 (STECF-12-01). 2012. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, EUR 25250 EN, JRC 69389, 251 pp.

³ Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries. Evaluation of MS Annual Reports for 2011 of the DCF (STECF-OWP-12-05). 2012. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, EUR 25450 EN, JRC 73248, 239 pp

⁴ Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Evaluation of 2012 MS Technical Reports under DCF (1) (STECF-13-07). 2013. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, EUR 26090 EN, JRC 83658, 183 pp.

⁵ Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Evaluation of 2013 MS DCF Annual Reports & Data Transmission (STECF-14-13) 2014. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, EUR 26811 EN, JRC 91550, 257 pp.

⁶ Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) Evaluation of 2014 MS DCF Annual Reports & Data Transmission (STECF-15-13). 2015. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, EUR 27410 EN, JRC 96975, 287 pp.

The detailed evaluation template for each Member State is presented in the electronic annex of this report (EWG-22-07 Electronic annex 1 - Evaluation of ARs by MS).

2.2.2 Overview of Covid-19 impact per section

The Covid-19 impacts on the different sections of the Annual Report per Member State is summarised under the overview of reporting and execution of the 2021 WP by Member State (Annex 3). An additional question was included to address the effects of Covid-19 on the deviations and issues and the responses were compiled in a table by section and Member States together with the overall assessment achieved by the Member States (Electronic Annex 2 – Covid overall consequences per MS).

2.2.3 Results by subgroups

As in previous years each subgroup considered and provided answers to sub-group specific questions related to the AR assessment and supporting documents. For the first time, the EWG agreed this year to highlight positive examples identified during the AR assessment as well written ARs, additional information provided etc. do not always stand out in the assessment grid.

The questions provided to the subgroups were:

1. Overall performance of the Member State on your sections.
2. Overall, what were the four major issues that arose in your evaluation? How would you resolve these?
3. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the execution of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?
4. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the reporting of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?
5. Any good examples to highlight?
6. Any Covid-19 impacts?

Subgroup 1

⁷ Reports of the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Evaluation of DCF 2015 Annual Reports & Data Transmission to end users in 2015 Quality assurance procedures (STECF-16-12); Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg; EUR 27758 E; doi:10.2788/352294.

⁸ Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Evaluation of DCF 2016 Annual Reports & Data Transmission to end users in 2016 & preparation for the new assessment of Annual Reports and Data transmission (STECF-17-10). Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2017, ISBN 978-92-79-67482-2, doi:10.2760/036445, JRC107502.

⁹ Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Evaluation of DCF 2017 Annual Reports (STECF-18-10). Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018, ISBN 978-92-79-79393-6, doi:10.2760/03593 JRC112750.

¹⁰ Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Evaluation of the 2018 Annual Reports for data collection and Data Transmission issues (STECF-19-09). Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2019, ISBN 978-92-76-09518-7, doi:10.2760/434566, JRC117489.

¹¹ Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Evaluation of the 2019 Annual Reports for data collection and Data Transmission issues (STECF-20-08). Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020, ISBN 978-92-76-20803-7, doi:10.2760/661005, JRC121415.

¹² Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Evaluation of the 2020 Annual Reports for data collection and Data Transmission Issues (STECF-21-09). Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2021, EUR 28359 EN, ISBN 978-92-76-40590-0, doi:10.2760/288263, JRC126126.

The EWG considered that the work done by the pre-screeners was essential for an efficient evaluation by EWG. During the EWG, experts performed assessment of Member States Annual Report sections 1A/1C and 4A/4C and related information in section 6A taking into consideration pre-screeners comments and new issues which became apparent during evaluating resubmitted ARs. In order to establish a consistent approach, the AR for one Member States was evaluated by the whole group; and afterwards AR reports were allocated among pairs of experts by sections. The Annual Report tables and text boxes were compared with MS Work Plans for 2020-2021 or revised Work Plans for 2021 (<https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/wp/2020-2021>, and <https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/wp/2021>). Outstanding issues were discussed by the subgroup and compiled in a common file *Feedback for MS* (seven Member States for section 1A-1C, and five Member States for section 4A-4C). All Member States replied to the EWG concerning feedback required for each item mentioned in the sections. The Member States replies were considered by the EWG, and final AR assessment were provided by the subgroup.

Few issues were clarified for a consistent approach:

- Sections 4A/4C: In cases where Member States did not include strata with no planned sampling coverage in Table 4A, as according to AR guidelines, the EWG considered this should not affect overall evaluation for section 4A/4C.
- Sections 1C/4A: Regarding comparability of information on length measurements between Tables 1C and 4A, the EWG considered that it is not an issue in case data is not aligned because length measurements in Table 4C may include more species than are planned for sampling in Table 1C.

Overall, the EWG considered that most Member States correctly applied the AR Guidelines and that the quality of ARs has generally increased compared to previous years' reports. In order to highlight positive examples, the EWG discussed cases where Member States managed to mitigate negative effects of external factors which have negatively affected sampling and other positive examples, based on the following principles:

- Examples of enhanced regional or bilateral coordination
- New and innovative methods to mitigate external factors affecting commercial sampling (like increased self-sampling, online applications etc.)
- Examples where Member States adapted sampling scheme/methodology to better assess impact of fisheries on marine ecosystem which can contribute to fulfil other requirements of related EU legislation.

1. Overall performance of the MS on your sections.

Of the Member States in your sections how many were YES, Mostly, Partly, No based on the evaluation criteria below? Please list the country and indicate your evaluation:

Subgroup 1	Sections	Yes	Mostly	Partly	No	NA	Sum
	1A, 1C	21	0	0	0	5	26
	4A, 4C	22	0	0	0	4	26

2. Overall, what were the four major issues that arose in your evaluation? How would you resolve these? Make recommendations.

Some Member States did not transfer the exact information from adopted Work Plans to AR Tables according to the AR Guidelines, or edited Tables 1C and/or Tables 4A/4C, which significantly affected the evaluation. According to Article 3 of Commission Implementing Decision EU) 2018/1283: "When compiling the annual report, Member States shall not edit any of the values in the Table or Text Boxes that originate from their accepted work plans, with the exception of: Tables 1H, 2A, 3A, 3B."

The ping-pong system based on the pre-screening was again considered a good addition to the meeting because some issues could be resolved during the EWG. However, based on the different expertise or experience of the pre-screeners the evaluation and comments differ individually making it difficult by the EWG to make a decision on the relevance of pre-screeners comments. EWG considered that, going forward, better coordination between pre-screeners evaluating same sections is needed.

The EWG had difficulties to evaluate Table 4A in relation to non-sampled strata. Some Member States have not included or reported the fishing activity not covered by the sampling design, which is a recurring issue. As explained in the AR Guidelines, this should appear as lines with a zero value or N/A in the column "Planned number of PSUs". This information is fundamental in order to evaluate the real coverage of the sampling design developed. This non coverage activity should exist at least for any Region/RFMO/Scheme/PSUtype. In case there are no non-sampled strata, this should be reflected in the Text Box 4A.

3. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the execution of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

Table 4A. It was unclear sometimes to the EWG if Member States had any unsampled strata if this information was not provided in the Text Box 4A or Tables 4A/4C. In certain cases, stratum ID codes or strata did not match exactly between Tables 4A and 4B.

There are still difficulties in the evaluation of Table 1C. In agreement with a statistical sound sampling program but in contrast to the AR Guidelines some accepted WPs from MS are not providing planned minimum number of individuals to be measured in "Column J". Therefore, the % of achievement (Column N) cannot be calculated. However, the issue of not providing planned numbers is not relevant for future AR reporting as 2021 is the last implementation (sampling) year for which planned numbers are required.

In some cases, Member States did not include information on specific actions to avoid deviations in the relevant text box. General statements such as "administrative issues to collect data/technical difficulties/difficulties in ageing/bureaucratic problems, etc." to explain deviations should be avoided. Detailed description of actions to mitigate deviations should be included in AR sections in order to evaluate if they are appropriate. The EWG acknowledges cases when deviations cannot be avoided due to external global factors, such as COVID-19, quota reductions, decrease in landings, fisheries ban and closures, changes in fisherman's behaviour etc. The EWG suggests to include information on time frame when these actions are expected to produce effect, which is missing in many Annual Reports.

4. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the reporting of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

Table 4A. There is a recurrent issue relating to the alignment of length measurements between Tables 1C and 4A. This issue is causing some discussions and it is time consuming for the EWG, while it is not a major issue for the evaluation of the relevant aspects related to commercial sampling in Table 4A (stratification, adequate allocation of effort, etc).

The EWG had difficulties in evaluating AR in cases when Member States did not include all relevant information. Empty cells in ARs should be avoided.

5. Any good examples from MS to highlight?

- ***Enhanced regional coordination:***

DNK/LTU - Coordination between LTU and DNK for biological sampling in the Baltic Sea.

- ***New and innovative methods to mitigate external factors:***

PRT - an experiment was implemented using "FishMetrics" system of automatic/remote image acquisition of landing boxes during sales; in 2022-2024 a new pilot experiment will be implemented using the same system but aiming at further advancing the system especially by developing automated species identification and individual measurements through artificial intelligence.

IRL - increased at sea self-sampling programmes to mitigate for the loss of observer trips at sea on commercial vessels produced by the effects of COVID-19, Member States organized training for fishermen to perform self-sampling.

- ***Modification of sampling scheme/methodology to contribute to fulfilment of other requirements of related EU legislation:***

LTU - Sampling schemes for SSCF revised to better assess impact of fisheries on marine ecosystem.

- ***Good practices in technical AR reporting:***

FRA: TABLE 1C: The Member State provided information and links to Table 5A under the "Sampling protocol" column.

IRL: TEXT BOX 1C: The Member State provided a detailed explanation on the deviation from the work plan and actions to avoid them. However, there is no text in the obvious separation to 'Others region', but it is possible to indicate this by context.

HRV: TEXT BOX 1C: The EWG considered the explanations very positive that specified not only by region but also by RFMO (even when Member States are involved in one region only).

PRT: TEXT BOX 4A, TABLES 4 A-B-C: The Member State has an exceptional reporting both in Text Box 4A and Tables 4A-B-C. Everything was clear, the deviations well documented as well as the actions to avoid deviations in the future

6. Specific suggestions to improve AR reporting

SVN: The Member State did not select species in Tables 1A and 1B for sampling according to Work Plan, based on thresholds. However, a sampling plan was established for mainly demersal species in 2021 according to Table 4A. AR Guidelines allow the inclusion of new species in Table 1C, not included in the accepted Work Plan, as additional rows at the end of the Table.

As such, the Member State did not provide any information on collected variable of length by species with reference to Table 4A or information on data availability for biological variables in Table 6A of the Annual Report, which is relevant information for end-users.

EWG acknowledged that the Member State collected samples as is stated in Table 4A and suggests for the future, the Member State S can present the variables sampled by inserting new rows at the end of the relevant AR table, as is suggested in the Guidelines.

By doing this, the Member States will show its extra effort in sampling which should be acknowledged in all cases, even more so when there is no obligation to collect it. This is relevant for end-users as well, because it shows information on which stocks biological data can be requested by end-users.

7. Covid-19 consequences for the data collection in 2021, based on information provided in the AR

The sampling intensity of the biological variables and the field operations related to the collection of biological data were impacted by the restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however to a different extent for each country.

Among the difficulties that the countries have faced were the refusal of vessel owners to allow observers to embark on board fishing vessels, the travel restrictions that prevented observers to access vessels, the implementation of social distancing rules that affected also the laboratory work.

For **Sections 1A, 1C** the countries that seem to have been affected more were: DEU, ESP, FRA, NDL, POL, PRT, DNK, ITA, IRL. To a lesser extent were affected: LTU, HRV, MLT, SWE. No effect reported from: BEL, BGR, CYP, FIN, EST, GRC, LTV, ROU.

For **Sections 4A, 4C** the countries that seem to have been affected more were: DNK, ITA, DEU, ESP, FRA MLT, IRL, NDL, POL, PRT, SVN. Less affected were: BEL, LTU, GRC, HRV, LTV, SWE. No effect is reported from: BGR, CYP, FIN, EST, ROU.

The countries tried to find ways to mitigate the problems as far as it was possible. In most of the cases the on-board samplings were replaced with on-shore samplings or samplings at market and extra sampling was conducted in the time periods where the restrictions were milder to compensate for the periods of closure. Some other measures taken by the countries were the self-sampling (ITA, DNK, IRL) and the pilot use of the "FishMetrics" (PRT) which is a system of automatic/remote image acquisition of landing boxes during sales.

Subgroup 2

1. Overall performance of the MS on your sections.

Of the Member States in your sections how many were YES, Mostly, Partly, No based on the evaluation criteria below? Please list the country and indicate your evaluation:

Subgroup 2	Sections	Yes	Mostly	Partly	No	NA	Sum
	1D	15	4	1	1	5	26
	1E	10	4	1	2	9	26
	1F	21	1			4	26
	1GH	19	3			4	26

The Covid-19 pandemic affected the execution part for the different sections; for section 1D three Member States were affected (even though nine countries had issues with Covid-19), for section 1E one country was affected (even though five countries had issues with Covid-19), for section 1F 8 MS identified that sampling was affected and a further 5 referred to Section 4A for comments which were not always easy to identify as relating to 1F, and for section 1GH 11 countries had issues with Covid-19.

2. Overall, what were the four major issues that arose in your evaluation? How would you resolve these? Make recommendations.

The approach of having communication with Member States after the pre-screening and before the STECF EWG was found to be positive.

Pre-screeners should give comprehensive comments for their decisions during pre-screening to make it easier for EWG experts to follow up. Currently there are no clear guidelines for pre-screeners in this respect.

Section 1DE

Six major issues that arose in sections 1DE:

1. The WP (white part) of tables and text boxes in many cases were changed by Member States, making the evaluation very difficult. Member States should copy exactly the WP planned actions (white part) to the AR Text Box and Tables.
2. Final results of pilot studies on RF are missing for many Member States.
3. Unique survey IDs should be included in all surveys and have to be the same as used in Table 5A.
4. Sampling design of RF surveys should be included in Text box 1D or in Table 5a. The link provided should be in English.
5. Member States to make sure that sampling periods are filled in correctly in Tables (1D and 1E).
6. Even if fisheries or species do not exist in an area, the relevant rows should still be filled in the NWP and AR tables, explaining the reasons for not sampling.

Section 1F

As in previous years the evaluation has shown that the guidelines in relation to columns P-T in Table 1F have resulted in Member States not being consistent in using the available codes (i.e. Y, N and NA). 'Y' can include zero by-catch as can 'N'. The way the codes are presented in the AR at present means that there is no clear way to identify zero by-catch. The subgroup has not marked this as negative but has evaluated as to if the MSs have endeavoured to provide meaningful information.

The accepted WPs do not always mean that the ARs, which are required to match the WPs, contain the data at an appropriate disaggregation for a full Assessment of the section to be undertaken.

Section 1GH

In Table 1G two columns (Y and Z) are so-called "support columns". These columns indicate if the achieved values for effort and spatial coverage filled in by the MS require a comment in column AA (AR Comments) from the MS. The function is included to support the MS completing the table as well as the STECF EWG when evaluating the achievements of the MS. In addition, in Table 1H one "support column" (L) is present indicating if a comment is requested from the MS in column M (AR Comments). Unfortunately, for a number of Member States the formulas in the support columns were either missing or modified. Therefore, during evaluation the support columns had to be checked in order to determine whether comments had to be added. It appeared that for some Member States the lack of indications sometimes resulted in the absence of comments for deviations in the surveys' intensity and coverage.

3. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the execution of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

Section 1DE

Covid-19 restrictions (mostly PS1), technical issues and high-water levels (1E, mostly for eels) were the main issues affecting data collection.

Section 1F

For some MSs Pilot Study 2 has been delayed or cancelled due to COVID, COVID has also impacted the level of data collection.

Section 1GH

Technical issues (e.g. vessel breakdown, damaged equipment), COVID-19 restrictions, administrative issues, and bad weather conditions were the issues affecting data collection during surveys at sea in 2021.

4. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the reporting of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

Section 1DE

The following recurring issues have been observed: 1) the WP (white part) of tables and text boxes in many cases were changed by MS, making very difficult the evaluation; 2) unique survey IDs should be included in all surveys and have to be concise with Table 5A; 3) the linked documents should be in English; 4) MS to make sure that sampling periods are filled in correctly in Tables (1D and 1E); 5) even if fisheries or species do not exist in an area, the relevant rows should still be filled in the NWP and AR tables, explaining reasons for not sampling.

Section 1F

The strata defined in Tables 1F and 4A do not always match and Achieved and Sampled PSU numbers for the strata is often different in the two tables. In most cases this was resolved after the feedback from pre-screening and during the EWG.

Where strata are combined in 1F it is not possible to evaluate coverage against the individual strata presented in 4A.

Section 1GH

Some formatting issues in the accepted NWPs (e.g. data not presented by data type or type of sampling activities not in separate lines) resulted in inconsistencies with the AR guidelines. It was found that such formatting issues have been resolved in the new NWPs.

For some mandatory surveys (e.g. PTSBS, BTSBS) the survey timing is not incorporated in the survey acronym while the survey covers different time periods within the year, e.g. BTSBS covers months 5,6,11 and 12. Such surveys are presented in only one row in the new WP which will make it difficult to evaluate MS survey execution by survey period. It would be beneficial if such surveys would include the survey timing in the survey acronym (e.g. IBTS-Q1). This may require changes to the guidelines.

5. Any good examples from MS to highlight?

Section 1DE

Poland provided all the required information on sampling design and results in text box and tables with linked documents in English language for each survey ID.

Greece provided a full and informative report for PS1, including the final results of the onsite survey.

Section 1F

This section suffers from poor guidelines and as a result it is difficult to provide a good example.

Subgroup 3

As in previous years, the overall performance of Member States on module 2A (fishing activity variables) was good. The vast majority of fishing activity data is collected under the Control Regulation (CR), thus the focus of evaluation was on the complementary data collection in case the CR data was insufficient for scientific use. In general, Member States put considerable effort in collecting these data, most of which are related to small vessels which are very large in numbers. Many Member States still provide information also on variables which are both covered by the CR and appropriate for scientific use. This often is connected to the Work Plans which already contained CR data. It appears necessary to stress this point in future guidelines for both Work Plans and Annual Reports. By definition, all capacity data are to be derived exhaustively from the Fleet Register. Therefore, capacity data should not appear in table 2A or its successor at all.

As repetitive issue in table 2A was when some Member States did not provide the full list of effort variables for all segments. This appears to be reasonable as not all variables which are listed in Table 4 (Commission Implementing Decision 2016/1251) are applicable to all fleet segments. As an example, the variable "number of hooks" should apply to long-liners only. However, it is not always that evident: "Number of fishing operations" could be collected for several fishing techniques, but apparently it is only regarded relevant for purse seiners. The former legislation (Commission Decision 2010/93/EU) was more specific on that issue, and some Member States implicitly still applied the principles laid down there. The subgroup accepted this approach during the evaluation. Moreover, some MS provide as Fishing Technique 'all fleet'.

Regarding the 5A section, the general idea is that MS should have clear, transparent and agreed documentation of their procedures made publicly available at the end of the period covered by the WP, which is precisely this year. In this sense, they are expected to show a gradual transition to that situation, which should be reflected in Table and Text Box 5A. In 5A, EWG noted progress in 2021 AR compared to the AR 2020. Almost all MS showed an improvement in their quality documentation – not only by editing the sampling schemes from 2020, but also by including new schemes in 2021. The amount of publicly available documentation also increased.

Quality assurance framework (QAF) for socio-economic data is reported by the checklist of the selected main European Statistical System QAF principles covering three main areas: Institutional environment, Statistical processes and Statistical outputs. These three main areas are divided to the principles, for example, Confidentiality, Sound methodology, appropriate procedures etc. (see table 5B). Concerning the quality assurance framework implementation for the fishing activity data (5B). In 2021, the overall establishment of the QAF among MS was sufficiently high, less than 10% of the checklist was identified with N meaning that either particular principles of QAF are not in the place yet or the issue itself is not relevant in the individual context. The highest level of QAF implementation was related with use of statistically sound sources and methods (P3), entries and coding of collected data are properly checked (P6), procedures are in place to ensure timely execution (P11), and procedures are in place to monitor internal coherence (P12). These QAF indicators are implemented by average 98% in total MS evaluated. The lowest implementation among MS was for indicators as the absence of agreements for access and quality of administrative data between partners (P6), absence of automatic techniques for data capture, data coding and validation (P8) and publicly available methodological documents (P13).

In table 6A, almost all MS provide sufficient information for the availability of the data collected. Also, in most cases, the data has been made available within a reasonable time. However, it has to be stated that the reference year has not always been addressed properly: In several cases MS interpreted "N+1" as "2021" instead of "2022".

In 7A, the EWG appreciated Member States indication of their participation in Inter-Sessional Sub-Groups (ISSG) of RCG. Participating to RCG/ISSG is an essential prerequisite for improving

cooperation and networking in Europe concerning fisheries data collection. This was also included in the Regional Work Plan (RWP) test run proposed by RCG NANS&EA and Baltic in 2021 and 2022, as well as for the task of ISSG/RWP to prepare a fully operational RWP 2025-2027 which should be presented to RCGs in 2023. Therefore, the EWG recommends that this inclusion of ISSG participation is formally required in the new templates and guidance for NWP/AR from 2022 onward. Evidently, the participation in the Regional coordination group for Economic Issues (RCG ECON) and its related workshops among all Member States was highly improved in 2021. Most regional coordination meetings were organized by virtual meetings due to the Covid-19 situation. On the other hand, virtual meetings facilitated higher attendance of experts in the regional coordination meetings.

A specific point in 7B was the indication 'NA' given by the land-locked countries that were above the threshold, although RCG ECON issued recommendations on aquaculture. The same situation was observed for number of marine MS which did not include RCG ECON recommendations in 7B table, nevertheless they had to apply RCG ECON guidance on the social data collection. EWG suggests using future RWP to collaboratively develop the reference lists of meetings to attend and relevant recommendations to be applied by region.

For some years, the tables 7A, 7B and 7C were kept out of the summary evaluation of each Member State based on the traffic light system in the STECF report. The EWG believes that keeping these tables out of the summary evaluation is not a correct message given to MS. In order to progress toward a full integration, these tables were kept coloured and not with a grey background and kept out of the overall performance evaluation for harmonisation with previous years. The principal reason for not including these tables in the overall performance was the absence of reference lists for meetings and recommendations upon which the EWG could carry a full objective evaluation. Eventually, it should be highlighted that coordination is a very important section and MS shall have into account all the EWG comments.

1. Overall performance of the MS on your sections.

Of the Member States in your sections how many were Yes, Mostly, Partly, No based on the evaluation criteria below?

SUBGROUP 3	SECTIONS	YES	MOSTLY	PARTLY	NO	NA	SUM
	2A	19	3			4	26
	5A	18	4			4	26
	5B						
	6A						
	7A	25				1	26
	7B	22	1			3	26
	7C	23				3	26

2. Overall, what were the four major issues that arose in your evaluation? How would you resolve these? Make recommendations.

1. The evaluation of tables 7A and 7B was, as in previous years, not possible due to the lack of reference tables for relevant coordination meetings and relevant recommendations. Such reference tables should be developed by RCG's taking the opportunity of Regional Work Plans and RCG ECON in the future.

2. Mismatch of sampling schemes' names between Table 5A and Tables 4A, 1D and 1E as well as schemes from Tables 1D and 1E missing in Table 5A. However, the fact that AR 2021 was pre-screened allowed many MS to correct these flaws. Member States were also encouraged to improve further the quality assurance documentation in National WP 2022-2024 (7), Annex 1.1.

3. There were several cases when the EWG experts faced difficulties to evaluate Table 2A because of the incorrectly prepared MS WP and/or wrongly transferred WP to AR template. While the achievements in data collection in these cases were evaluated, consistency with the guidelines was poor and evaluation process was hampered. However, this issue is expected to be solved by the new WP/AR templates in 2022-2027 period.

3. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the execution of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

1. Some Member States forgot to mention the improvements seen in the last year, both in the Table and in Text Box 5A.

2. Land-locked countries express they are not involved in any coordination (Tables 7A, 7B), which should not be the case.

4. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the reporting of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

In 5A, EWG noted that the next two main difficulties remained:

1. Complete the availability of public documents related to the methodologies and technical processes;

2. Ensure the exact match between the rows of Table 5A and sampling schemes in Table 1D ('type of survey'), in Table 1E ('species'*'method') and in Table 4A ('Scheme').

Most of the issues observed during the evaluation of module 2A refer to formal aspects. As in previous years, the evaluation was hampered by the fact that templates for WP and AR differ due to an introduction of a new column "variable" in the AR. Some MS have listed all variables in one cell corresponding to the variable group instead of providing per each variable in separate lines, which would allow to evaluate achievements per variable in AR.

A recurring issue for the Table 7B was that some Member States did not transfer recommendations from WP to comment on the implementation and follow up. RCG ECON recommendations in some cases were not included in the WP as well as AR.

5. Any good examples from MS to highlight?

The subgroup proposed that reporting Fishing activity table 2A by Latvia is a good example to be followed. Concerning Tables 7A and 7B, the Bulgarian reporting planned regional and international coordination as well as follow up of recommendations in a very comprehensive way, consistent with guidelines and is stated as good example.

6. Covid-19 effects

Under the AR sections 2A, 5A, 7A, 7B and 7C reported by MS, the EWG experts did not observe any impact of Covid-19 on the implementation of WP 2021 regarding respective modules. However, as mentioned before, Covid-19 control measures changed the pattern of regional coordination significantly. During 2020-2022 virtual sessions replaced mostly all physical meetings facilitating better attendance and involvement of experts due to the convenience and low cost of participation using virtual tools.

Subgroup 4

1. Overall performance of the MS on your sections.

The EWG appreciated the work done by the pre-screeners. However, from a workflow point of view, it is very important to remember the aim and purpose of the MS Annual Report pre-screening task, performed before the EWG meeting on ad-hoc contract basis. A well-executed pre-screening of the reports can significantly speed up and simplify the work of the Annual Report Evaluation EWG, as well as improve the quality of the assessment. In this regard, the following important points should be considered in the process of the next pre-screening task:

- The pre-screener comments should be short, clear and precise.
- The comments should not be general but refers to the concrete text section or table from the Annual Report.
- The comments should be provided only in case the MS is requested to change or clarify issue from the Annual Report. Generalized, aimless comments should not be provided by pre-screener.
- The pre-evaluation of the Annual Reports should be based on the approved MS Work Plans. The MS should not be asked to provide or change in the Annual Report those things which is not in line with Work Plan obligations.

Some issues were clarified before the evaluation:

- Pilot Study 3 and 4 (social and environmental data collection) were not relevant for 2020. The 'NA' - Not applicable was provided in the column 'L' EWG judgment in the evaluation grid for those MS which already incorporated results from the Pilot Study to the regular data collection.
- For Text Boxes, if there were no deviations, 'No deviations' was provided in the column 'K' and 'NA' - Not applicable in the column 'J'.

It was proposed to mention a positive information found in AR as good example which could be shared with the other MS and used for data collection improvement. Two principles were suggested:

1. If MS in the Text Box mention about the change of data collection type (Census, Probability Sample Survey, Non- probability sample survey) which was aimed to increase the achievement rate and improvement in the data quality.
2. If MS provided in the AR tables or text higher achievements that was planned in WP.

Of the MS in your sections how many were YES, Mostly, Partly, No based on the evaluation criteria below? Please list the country and indicate your evaluation:

Subgroup 4	Sections	Yes	Mostly	Partly	No	NA	Sum
	3A	19	3	0	0	4	26
	3B	16	4	0	0	6	26
	3C	18	0	0	0	8	26

2. Overall, what were the four major issues that arose in your evaluation? How would you resolve these? Make recommendations.

There were no Major issues found. Issues, when the data was not collected for most of the indicators, the main part in the tables or text boxes was not filled out correctly or data collection was not implemented by MS without clearly provided reason, were classified as major.

3. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the execution of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

Several recurring issues were found:

- Unclear time frame for the data availability or pilot study implementation.
- Some MS provided the Planned sample rate 100% and which was consistent with planned type of data collection scheme 'Census'. However, achieved response rate is very low for a number of segments/variables, therefore the achieved type of data collection scheme is Non-probability sample survey. It would be more accurate for MS to choose appropriate type for their data collection when they provide a National Work Plan for the new period.
- Some variables included in NWP are still missing for some inactive fleet segments.

4. Any persistent or recurring issues regarding the reporting of the data collection referring to the relevant and previous year?

For some land locked countries it is unclear when they start a new pilot study, when it is regular data collection and where the previous pilot study is ongoing. It would be useful for a proper evaluation of the AR if MS clarify why the activity should be intended as a pilot study and not an actual statistical survey. The proposal for the new pilot study 3 and 4 should be submitted in an appropriate format in the WP for 2022-2024. For current AR MS should follow the AR Guidelines where: the previous WP (2020-2021) text should be provided on the 'white area' of text box and clarification about the reasons for not implementing the pilot study in 2021 in 'grey area' keeping the paragraphs 4 and 5.

There are no criteria in Annual Report guidelines for the type of data collection – Indirect Survey. Due to that reason, it is difficult to evaluate cases when the Indirect Survey was performed by MS. It would be useful to develop the guidelines for the evaluation of Indirect Survey for the new reporting period 2022-2027.

5. Any good examples from MS to highlight?

It is noted that the list of segments in the table 3B in AR is more detailed compared to WP where 'All segments' used. It is an improvement to AR. Additional data sources were used for social data. The collection of social data is conducted annually by census.

COVID-19

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the necessary measures, several MS reported that Pilot Study 3 was extended. The timing for the economic data availability for end user was extended.

Pilot study 4 for the environmental data was not implemented due to COVID-19 pandemic situation. The market research for pilot study 4 in Slovakia has been extended for 2022-2024.

3. TOR 2 EVALUATION OF MEMBER STATES TRANSMISSION OF DATA TO END USERS IN 2021

3.1 Setting the scene

End-users are requested to report data transmission issues that relate to Member States not having provided data, provided data late or provided data with quality issues, in the Data Transmission Monitoring Tool (DTMT). In the DTMT end-users should indicate the type of data issues by selecting QUALITY, TIMELINESS, or COVERAGE and whether the issue has a LOW, MEDIUM or HIGH impact on the work.

The DTMT is accessible at <https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/dcf/dtmt>.

The EWG experts and the pre-screeners worked in an Excel file, exported from the DTMT and shared on the EWG 22-07 Teams Meeting Channel. After the meeting JRC and DGMARE entered the STECF EWG comments and assessment on the online DTMT.

The initial assessment of the DT issues was carried out by subgroup 5. As for the Annual Reports, the DT issues had undergone a pre-screening assessment prior to the EWG final assessment. The pre-screeners were requested to run a first assessment of the issues and to propose draft comments. In order to ensure harmonization and consistency, a few EWG experts revised all issues for consistency after the sub-group assessments was finalized.

Table 6 below shows that in total 257 DT issues, from 5 data calls in 2021 and 3 end users were reported in the DTMT. 129 DT issues were related to COVERAGE, 125 to QUALITY and 3 to TIMELINESS. The number of DT issues were less than in the previous year (555 DTi last year). However, end-users are reporting issues in different levels of aggregation but there are also different variables, levels of detail, time periods and/or particular issues that data calls focus on during the years. Also, extra meetings can results in specific data calls to look at data issues. The Med and Black Sea EWG 21-02 for example asked for the re-submission of data which raised more issues for that year, but finally also that many more issues were corrected. For these reasons, the number of DT issues between years are not comparable.

Table 6. DT issues in the DTMT by end-user and issue type (Coverage, Quality, Timeliness).

End User	Data Call	Coverage	Quality	Timeliness	Number of Issues
ICCAT	Task 1 & Task 2	7			7
ICES	-	9	2	3	14
STECF EWG	FDI	13	34		47
	Fleet Economics	60			60
	Med and BS	31	87		118
	Processing	9	2		11
SUM		129	125	3	257

3.2 Tools and criteria for the assessment

The Data Transmission Monitoring Tool (DTMT) has been designed with the purpose of facilitating exchange of information among the end users of data, Member States and Commission. The

objective of this approach is to efficiently monitor and communicate data issues and in the long term improve the flow and quality of data. It is important that issues are properly reported and commented on at all levels in the DTMT, so that a follow-up of data issues can be ensured. In order to harmonise the way data issues are being reported and dealt with by the various involved parties (data end-users, Member States, STECF EWGs on assessment of DT issues and ultimately DG MARE) a guidance document has been developed in stages under the guidance of DGMARE, JRC and STECF at the STECF Plenary.

Following the guidance document the experts made use of the assessment criteria and the examples that were in the guidance when assessing the DT Issues. The comments by the EWG were harmonized among similar issues and consistent responses were used.

3.3 Results

The evaluation concluded that out of the 257 DT issues that were reported in the DTMT referring to 5 data calls in 2021, 92 issues were justified as SATISFACTORY, and 56 as UNSATISFACTORY. In addition, 109 issues were assessed as FOLLOW-UP NEEDED because the MS and end-user comment were either contradictory or the Member States comment was unclear. Additionally issues concerning historical data was acknowledged by the Member States and stated to be fixed and resubmitted was assessed as FOLLOW-UP NEEDED. When the issue was concerning data collection and not data transmission it was assessed as UNSATISFACTORY.

Table 7. DT issues in the DTMT by end-user, type (Coverage, Quality, Timeliness), severity (High, Low, Medium) and STECF Assessment (Follow-up needed (F), Satisfactory (S) and Unsatisfactory (U)).

Data Call	COVERAGE									QUALITY						TIMELIN ESS	TOT		
	HIGH			LOW			MEDIUM			HIGH			LOW			MEDIUM			
	F	S	U	F	S	U	F	S	U	F	S	U	F	S	U	F		S	S
FDI			1	2			5	5		3	5	1	14	9		1	1		47
Fleet economics				1	27	8	1	3	20										60
Med and BS				8	11	12							67	19	1				118
Processing		1	5				2		1		1	1							11
ICES	1	2	1	2	3									2				3	14
ICATT TASK I	1		1																2
ICAT TASK II	1		4																7
	3	3	12	13	41	20	8	8	21	3	6	2	81	30	1	1	1	3	257

For Fleet Economics data call 26 DT Issues were due to the checks of “zero” values reported by Member States to confirm if the zero value is a missing value or not which were finally assessed as SATISFACTORY. 4 of DT Issues were concerning the reporting of inactive vessels which were not in the planning of the Member States thus the assessment was SATISFACTORY with a comment from the “MS should look for additional ways to improve the data collection or to apply PIM method to estimate capital value and capital costs”. Two issues were concerning missing data with Low and Medium severity and one reoccurring, which was acknowledged by the MS and already submitted to the following data call in 2022 which were assessed as FOLLOW-UP NEEDED. The UNSATISFACTORY issues (28) which most were Medium severity and recurrent issue were all failure in data collection.

For Mediterranean and Black Sea data call there were 13 UNSATISFACTORY issues which were failure concerning data collection and not data transmission with Low severity and not Recurrent. 75 of the Mediterranean and Black Sea issues were assessed as FOLLOW-UP NEEDED from which 67 were issues regarding Quality and 8 Coverage with all Low severity and no or unknown

recurrence. The FOLLOW-UP NEEDED issues from the Med and Black Sea were due to information provided by end-users and MS was contradictory and further clarification was needed (22 DT issues). 53 of the FOLLOW-UP NEEDED issues from the Med and Black Sea were due to data missing or data error in the past which was acknowledged by the MS fixed or planned to be submitted in the next data call (53 DT issues).

For the FDI data call the 2 UNSATISFACTORY issues were due to High severity of the issues regarding missing data and also erroneously reported data (coverage and quality). 20 issues that were assessed as SATISFACTORY 10 of the issues were on Quality of spatial data that where the Member State did not have any erroneous records as the End-User had stated so the EWG accepted their response. 10 of the SATISFACTORY issues were regarding the comparison between FDI and AER data for years 2017 and 2018 where Fishing technique was not comparable between data calls. MS explained differences between FDI and AER fleet segments are related to the absence of data on inactive vessels in the FDI data sets and also due to inconsistent definitions in the guidance of both data calls. STECF acknowledged MS response as acceptable. 25 of the FOLLOW-UP NEEDED issues from the FDI data call were erroneous records from the Spatial data that and other issues were regarding the differences between FDI and AER data calls which were mostly Low and Medium severity and none of them were recurring. A few MS were also asking for further instructions on how to overcome this inconsistency which should be followed up and communicated with the MS.

Processing data call 2 FOLLOW-UP NEEDED issues due to not a clear response from the MS severity Medium and not recurrent. 7 UNSATISFACTORY issues do to failure concerning data collection which were High severity (5 DTi) and Medium (2 DTi). 2 SATISFACTORY issues from the Processing data call one was although high severity and recurrent, it was closed since it related to the past and data transmission has previously evaluated. The other one was also with high severity and not recurrent but since the MS follows and accepted Work Plan it is acceptable.

3.4 Suggestions how to improve handling of DTMTs by experts and pre-screeners

The EWG agreed that a screening of the DT issues should take place before the EWG starts, together with pre-screening of ARs.

The EWG discussed the need for objective assessment criteria and whether the current guidelines are fit for purpose. The basis for the assessment is to assess whether the EWG or the end user work was significantly hampered due to the issue. In that case, the assessment rating is 'UNSATISFACTORY'. If the severity is low and it is a non-recurrent issue however, expert judgement is relevant to see if the issue can be sorted out by communication between the end user and the Member States. In order to facilitate the assessment of DT issues the EWG started to draft a decision tree for the assessment that was provided to DGMARE. The EWG suggests that this is used as the basis for further improvements of the guidelines.

The EWG considers that the data transmission issues on data collected but not transmitted due to low sampling outputs should be further discussed. Including weather thresholds should be agreed by end-user on a minimum number of samples and minimum number of individual measurements for raising purpose for the relevant population. Sampling of non-target species in a low exploited area and/or quarter often leads to poor sampling and careful attention should be brought when handling these data. Furthermore it is important that the end users check if the data collection and transmission is subjected to any form of bi-lateral agreement with another Member State or a wider agreement.

4. TOR 3 PREPARE THE ASSESSMENT GRID AND EVALUATORS' GUIDANCE FOR AR 2022 AND ONWARDS

To review and prepare an assessment grid and guidance for evaluation of AR 2022 and onwards, the EWG based its work on a draft stand-alone document for AR evaluation that had been prepared by EWG 20-18 and provided to the EWG as a background document. The EWG elaborated further on the document by addressing the following issues:

- Setting the scene for the evaluation process and the basic principles of evaluation
- Guidance for pre-screening
- Overview of automatic checks during submission and expert pre-screening
- Guidance for the screening by experts for each table and text box
 - Evaluation of “quality” aspects of the report
 - Guidance for AR evaluation for the modified guidance document
 - Potential link with DTMT
 - Questions related to assessment grid

The EWG was not able to finalise the guidance documents within the given time of the EWG. However, the Commission has been provided with the draft evaluation guidance for annual report under revised EUMAP (version EWG 20-18) and the EWG suggests that it is further elaborated and finalised during the next EWG on the evaluation on NwPs in October 2022.

5. TOR 4 CHECK THE AR 2022 TEMPLATE (EXCEL AND WORD FILES)

The ToR was addressed by each sub-group dedicated to the particular sections. After guidance by the focal point from MARE the priority was to check for inconsistency in the formulas in the Excel files. The outcome from the checking has been provided to DGMARE that will publish the templates later on in 2022.

6. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

The two step ping-pong approach in which issues identified with the ARs were sent to Member States prior and during the EWG allowed for a more efficient assessment of ARs as significant number of issues could be solved before and during the EWG.

Evaluation of 2021 Annual Reports

The overall scores of the performance level by Member States was significantly higher compared to last years. The number of AR sections that received a compliance level score of YES increased from 5 for 2020 ARs and from between 6 and 8 in the ARs of 2018-2020 to 14 for 2021 ARs.

The increase in the overall performance is in the majority of cases a result of an increase in the performance from MOSTLY to YES in the assessment of sections 1E-1H. The EWG agreed that regarding these sections the increase in the overall improved implementation of the Work Plan compared to 2020 ARs is mainly due to a reduction of serious covid-19 related issues i.e. in 2020 a number of surveys were not executed at all or only partly executed. The Member States have also linked table 1 and 4 to a greater extent or provided this in the ping-pong. Furthermore, the EWG considers that the improvement in the overall performance after the pandemic compared to before, is most likely due to the two step ping-pong approach that has allowed Member States to resubmit information twice if needed and a general improvement of the ARs over time.

The EWG evaluated the Covid-19 consequences for the data collection in 2021. In general, the EWG agrees that Covid-19 effects are still present but to a lesser degree than in 2020. STECF observes that among the difficulties that the Member States have faced were the refusal of vessel owners to allow observers to embark onboard fishing vessels, the travel restrictions that prevented observers to access vessels, and the implementation of social distancing rules that affected also the laboratory work. In 2021 Member States tried to find ways to mitigate the problems as far as it was possible and on-board sampling was replaced by on-shore sampling or sampling at markets and extra sampling was conducted in the time periods where the restrictions were milder to compensate for the periods of closure.

Evaluation of Data Transmission Issues

STECF observes that in total 257 DT issues, from 5 data calls in 2021 and 3 end users were reported in the DTMT. The number of DT issues was lower, compared to issues raised in the previous year (555 issues last year). Most of the DT issues were reported for Mediterranean and Black Sea (118) and Fleet economics data calls (60). The FDI data call resulted in 47 issues. 129 DT issues were related to COVERAGE, 125 to QUALITY and 3 to TIMELINESS.

STECF further observes that out of the 257 DT issues, 92 issues were classified as SATISFACTORY and 56 as UNSATISFACTORY. In addition, 109 issues were assessed as FOLLOW-UP NEEDED because the comment from the Member State and end-user were either contradictory or the Member State comment was unclear.

The DTMT guidance was the basis for the evaluation. The EWG suggested improvements of the guidance to be discussed at the yearly DTMT discussions in STECF plenary.

Preparation of the assessment grid and evaluators' guidance for AR 2022 and onwards and checking the AR 2022 for completeness

Based on the draft stand-alone document for AR evaluation that had been prepared by EWG 20-18 the EWG elaborated further on the document by addressing issues such as basic principles of evaluation, guidance for pre-screening etc. The EWG was not able to finalise the guidance documents within the given time of the EWG agreed that it should be finalised during the EWG 22-18 on the evaluation on National Work Plans in October 2022.

As regards the formulas in the Excel files, all were checked for consistency and modified if necessary.

7. CONTACT DETAILS OF EWG 22-07 PARTICIPANTS

¹ - Information on EWG participant's affiliations is displayed for information only. In any case, Members of the STECF, invited experts, and JRC experts shall act independently. In the context of the STECF work, the committee members and other experts do not represent the institutions/bodies they are affiliated to in their daily jobs. STECF members and experts also declare at each meeting of the STECF and of its Expert Working Groups any specific interest which might be considered prejudicial to their independence in relation to specific items on the agenda. These declarations are displayed on the public meeting's website if experts explicitly authorized the JRC to do so in accordance with EU legislation on the protection of personnel data. For more information: <http://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/adm-declarations>

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8. LIST OF ANNEXES

Electronic annexes are published on the meeting's web site on:
<https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/ewg2207>

List of electronic annexes documents:

EWG-22-07 – Annex 1 – Evaluation of ARs per MS

EWG-22-07 – Annex 2 Covid overall consequences per MS

9. LIST OF BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background documents are published on the meeting's web site on:
<https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/ewg2207>

List of background documents:

EWG-22-07 – Doc 1 - Declarations of invited and JRC experts

ANNEX 1 AGENDA

Afternoon session: 14h - 18h (Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu)			
End of meeting: Fri (24/6) at 15h			
AGENDA			
Monday, 20 June			BEHIND THE SCENES
	8.45	Connect to the meeting	
Start	9.00	1. Welcome and house-keeping: introduction of participants (Chair) 2. Introduction from JRC on STECF rules and FTP access (JRC) 3. Introduction of the ToRs (Commission) 4. Status of DT issues (Jaana) 5. Subgroup formation 6. Adoption of agenda and task allocation	
Lunch			
	13-14		
	14-17.30	Subgroup work: TOR 1 AR assessments and TOR 2 and 3 subgroup 5	Start with Assessment grids from pre-screener
	17.00-18.00	Introduction from JRC on STECF rules and FTP access (JRC) and daily wrap up in plenary	
Tuesday, 21 June			
	9.00	daily check-in Subgroup work: TOR 1 AR assessments and TOR 2 and 3 subgroup 5	
Lunch			
	13-14		
	14-17.30	Subgroup work: TOR 1 AR assessments and TOR 2 and 3 subgroup 5	
	17.30-18	Daily wrap up in plenary	Ready with feedback from experts to Commission on MS
Wednesday, 22 June			
	9.00	daily check-in Subgroup work: TOR 1 AR assessments and TOR 2 and 3 subgroup 5	
Lunch			
	13-14		
	14-16.30	Subgroup work: Assessment of ARs finalised	Start work on MS final overview (including Word template for the outcome for each MS) and collation of subgroups output
	16.30-17:30	Daily wrap up in plenary	
Thursday, 23 June			
	9.00	Plenary: DT Issues discussion	Last day for MS to respond to issues.
Lunch			
	13-14		Deadline from MS to provide response to issues.
	14-17.30	Plenary: DT issues finalised and non-satisfactory issues presented in plenary	
	17.30-18	Daily wrap up in plenary	
Friday, 24 June			
	9.00	Plenary session AR evaluation - EU overview agreed in plenary (traffic light) Presentation of the decision tree Overall conclusions ToR 3	Draft report and compilation of results per MS
Lunch			
	13-14		
	14.00	Finalisation of the report	
End of meeting	15.00		

ANNEX 2 CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT OF ANNUAL REPORTS

1. Introduction

The evaluation of ARs are conducted by experts with knowledge and expertise from all areas of the DCF. To efficiently address the large amount of information to be evaluated, the work during assessment EWGs are carried out in sub-groups based on the expertise of the evaluators.

In order to ensure that the results from different evaluators are comparable and transparent, there is a need to ensure a consistent approach for evaluation of ARs.

This document provides a set of rules/assessment criteria to guide future evaluators of ARs and to increase consistency in the responses from different evaluators. The aim of the set of criteria is to, in addition to the existing guidelines for evaluators, provide guidance to the pre-screeners and evaluators at future EWGs and should not have legal status. The document should be a living document and updated after each EWG evaluating ARs, if needed.

2. General principles

For each AR section assess whether the MS executed the data collection in accordance with the NWP.

2.1. EWG evaluators should consider the following approach when evaluating the ARs in the provided evaluation grid provided in the Excel:

- In order for the Commission to be able to assess whether further clarification or action is required from MS's all EWG comments need to be clear, self-explanatory and consistent.
- At the start of the EWG, the results from the pre-screening will be included in the evaluation grid under the heading 'Manual pre-screening'. If the issue has been marked as N, the pre-screeners have identified whether the issues is considered minor or major. The pre-screener will have provided a proposed final comment from the pre-screeners. These issues should have priority for evaluation during the EWG.
- The EWG is requested to make a final judgement based on the pre-screeners input and provide a comment and a potential action needed.
- For issues that are identified as *major* by the EWG the MS can be requested to resubmit the relevant part of the AR. For issues that are identified as *minor* by the EWG the MS can be requested to provide an explanation in the ping-pong process.
- The impacts on 2020 data collection activities will be evident in the 2020 and 2021 ARs and differences in reporting compared to previous years are expected. Reported effects due to Covid-19 should be differentiated from other factors in the AR evaluation grid and in the overall presentation of the evaluation results in the EWG report by shading the cells. MS have been given quarterly report on the implementation of the data collection to the RCGs. These reports can be used as reference for these cases.

2.2 Evaluators should complete the assessment of the relevant sections of the AR in the assessment grid as follows:

- The assessment results from the EWG should be filled in the below columns:

EWG comment	EWG judgement	EWG: Action needed?
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- Assess issues flagged by the pre-screeners as minor and major. If pre-screeners have put Y (in the column "manual pre-screening") fill the below cells accordingly:

EWG comment	EWG judgement	EWG: Action needed?
No comment	Yes	No action needed

- No cells should be left empty. If the section is not relevant for the MS fill the cells accordingly:

EWG comment	EWG judgement	EWG: Action needed?
NA	NA	NA

- Concerning the question: *Are there any deviations?* If the answer from MS is no. Fill the cells accordingly:

EWG comment	EWG judgement	EWG: Action needed?
No deviations	Yes	No action needed

- Concerning the question: *Are there any deviations?* If the answer from the MS is yes. Fill the cells accordingly:

EWG comment	EWG judgement	EWG: Action needed?
Deviations exist	No, mostly, partly	Action needed

ANNEX 3 OVERVIEW OF REPORTING AND EXECUTION OF THE 2020 WP BY MEMBER STATE

Member State: AUT Austria

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

Austria is a landlocked country and most sections are not applicable for the Member State. EWG 22-07 evaluated AR as "Mostly".

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

Not applicable.

3. Recreational Fisheries

Not applicable.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Not applicable.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

Not applicable.

6. Surveys at sea

Not applicable.

7. Fishing activity variable

Not applicable.

8. Fleet socio-economic

Not applicable.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

Table 3 B was not provided in WP. In some cases, types of data collection schemes were provided wrongly. The information about frequency for the regular data collection should be provided also. Member State should follow the guidelines in for future WP and AR submissions.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

Not applicable.

11. Data transmission issues

Not applicable.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

The duration of recreational pilot study was set as October 2019–February 2021 (including time for data analysis and reporting), but due to COVID-19 it is on-going also in 2022.

Member State: BEL Belgium

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The overall reporting and execution of the 2021 NWP is evaluated as good without major issues. Some under achievements were reported with respect to COVID limitations. Member State response was assessed as unsatisfactory for several data transmission issues concerning economic and social data for the fish processing industry.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No major issues. Member States reported difficulties in biological sampling due to COVID.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No major issues.

Methodology for sampling design for recreational fishery is not sufficiently described in Text Box 1D, and web link provided in Table 5A is not functional. MS extended Pilot Study 1 on recreational fishery to 2022 due to COVID.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No major issues were identified.

MS to ensure to include Eel Fisheries dependent rows and sea trout in the future WP submissions.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No issues.

6. Surveys at sea

No issues.

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues.

MS is advised to make efforts to increase achieved sampling rate.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No major issues.

MS is advised to make efforts to increase achieved sampling rate. In case of inactive vessels MS should consider issue of vessel length categories.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

Not applicable.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No major issues.

To prevent low response rate in case of Census, it is recommended to change the Type of data collection from Census to non-probability sample survey in the future WP.

11. Data transmission issues

Concerning data transmissions by MS in 2021, end-users reported 12 issues related to coverage and data quality. For 9 issues MS explanation was assessed by the EWG as satisfactory, and for three issues regarding fish processing data collection and reporting MS response is unsatisfactory. MS is asked to look for additional ways to improve the data collection for fish processing concerning variables Weight of raw material per species and origin, Energy costs, and Social data: Age, Education and Nationality.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

MS reports issues in data collection activities due to COVID for fish processing industry and biological sampling of commercial fisheries. MS extended Pilot Study 1 on recreational fishery to 2022 due to COVID.

Member State: BGR Bulgaria

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The overall implementation of 2021 WP and reporting was good without major issues. Only due to the Covid-19 restrictions and following administrative burdens, Bulgaria postponed pilot study on recreational fisheries to 2022. Regardless of issues with Covid-19 impact on section 1D, all other relevant AR sections were assessed as "Yes".

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No issues.

3. Recreational Fisheries

Bulgarian pilot study on recreational fisheries which was expected to start in 2020 or 2021 was postponed to 2022 due to Covid-19 restrictions and administrative burdens.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Not applicable.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

MS had some issues in consistency with guidelines concerning Table 1F, but after the resubmission of AR, issues were solved.

6. Surveys at sea

No issues. Stomach sampling that was not planned for 2021 was conducted according to RCG Med&BS recommendation.

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No issues.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No issues.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No issues.

11. Data transmission issues

In FDI data call for spatial data End User indicated data transmission issues, however, taking into account MS reply and lack of clarity in the End User comment, STECF EWG provided Satisfactory assessment.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Due to the Covid-19 pilot study on recreational fisheries were postponed to 2022. Due to the Covid-19 exchange with Romanian staff was not possible in 2021 for surveys at sea.

Member State: CYP Cyprus

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The EWG evaluated the overall Annual Report as 'Yes' what is >90% of achievements from Work Plan. The overall performance and compliance for Cyprus was good without major issues. Responses by the MS to feedback requests by pre-screeners and the EWG, and the resubmissions of the Annual Report resolved the issues highlighted during the evaluation process. Under-sampling for biological variables and non-performing of pilot study 2 as an effect of the COVID-19 restrictions were clearly described as deviations in the text boxes of the Annual Report.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No major issues.

3. Recreational Fisheries

Not applicable.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Not applicable.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No major issues.

6. Surveys at sea

No major issues.

7. Fishing activity variable

No major issues.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No major issues.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

Not applicable.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

Not applicable.

11. Data transmission issues

No issues were assessed as unsatisfactory by the EWG. Just an issue of low severity was highlighted.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

In text box 1C, the MS states that COVID-19 affects sampling for biological variables because sampling onboard was seriously limited by the pandemic safety measures. In text box 1F (and mentioned also in Table 1F), the MS states that Covid-19 restriction measures limited sampling on board carried out during 2021. Furthermore, because of the COVID-19 restriction measures, pilot study 2.1 was postponed, pilot study 2.2 was not performed and pilot study 2.3 seems to be cancelled.

Member State: CZE Czech Republic

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The EWG was not able to evaluate the overall performance for Czech Republic because it is a landlocked country and most sections are not applicable for the MS. However, MS show some improvement in socio-economic data collection for aquaculture and provides comprehensive information on quality assurance in data collection with a need to amend remaining issues in the future.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

Not applicable.

3. Recreational Fisheries

Not applicable.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Concerning the reporting, Czech Republic did not listed all species, that occur in the distribution range (e.g. Salmon, Sea trout in Elbe river), even if not abundant. Area Code should be following Guideline tables (e.g. North Sea, not Nord sea etc.). EWG suggests to the MS to follow the guidelines in the future submission of the WP and AR. The Czech Republic did not carry out any practical research on anadromous and catadromous fish species (salmon and eel) according to the work plan 2021. EWG request MS to report monitoring results in the next AR.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

Not applicable.

6. Surveys at sea

Not applicable.

7. Fishing activity variable

Not applicable.

8. Fleet socio-economic

Not applicable.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

Concerning the reporting, the Czech Republic in the 2021 annual report, added 26 rows in order to include the collection of data referred to for 2020. Moreover, the MS explained that in 2021 it was possible to collect data for 2019 and also for 2020. EWG suggests to the Member State to amend their WP and follow the guidelines for future WP and AR submissions. Concerning the execution, the Czech Republic provided that the achievement rate is only 50% but also explained in the text that total aquaculture production covered was 70-75%. MS is planned to fix a sample rate at a level close to annually 10% for further data collection. In general, EWG noted an improvement in this part of the annual report and encourage Member State to store data in secure databases according to DCF.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

Not applicable.

11. Data transmission issues

Not applicable.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

No impact of the COVID pandemic, but Member State postponed the first eel monitoring for autumn 2022 due to the administrative complexity.

Member State: DEU Germany

1. reporting and execution of the 2021 WP **Overall**

Germany provided a very well-written report and informative report. All tables and textboxes were completed properly. The overall performance and compliance were classified as "Yes" for most of the modules. Just 2 modules were classified as "Mostly". Most of the issues raised by the EWG 22-07 were solved by the MS in the feedback process during the EWG.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

The biological modules were well reported. No major issues have been raised by the EWG.

3. Recreational Fisheries

The module has been reported thoroughly. No major issues were identified. EWG encourages the MS to follow guidelines respective to surveys (Recreational survey is called "off-site and on-site" in 1D, but "DMAP" in 5A.). Unique survey IDs need to be unique and consistent throughout tables.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No major issues were identified. EWG understands that COVID-19 has seriously affected the eel surveys of the MS in the Sargasso Sea as well as the eel sampling from the commercial fishery.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No major issues were identified.

6. Surveys at sea

No major issues were identified.

EWG notes that NWP question 5 "explain where thresholds apply" removed from text boxes. Also, for FEJUCS AR map is missing, for IBTS-Q1, NHAS, COBALT provided links do not work.

EWG further notes that technical issues and COVID19 restriction have severely affected DEU data collection during research surveys at sea for IBTS Q3, DYFS, GSBTS, GAS EEZ, EELS.

7. Fishing activity variable

MS has performed properly in all regions and no issue has been reported.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No major issues were identified.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No major issues were identified.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No major issues were identified.

11. Data transmission issues

One data transmission issue of High severity was flagged (coverage issue in Fish Processing data call), which solution by MS was assessed by the EWG as unsatisfactory.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

MS Data Collection Program was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021, mainly due to the problems of getting observers onboard of commercial vessels as well as due travel restrictions. The effect of Covid-19 pandemic has been particularly obvious on executing of the research surveys at sea.

Member State: DNK Denmark

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 AR

Overall reporting and execution of the national work plan is good. Only a few issues arise in some sections.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No major issues.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No major issues. However, the conduction of the pilot study was heavily affected by the pandemic.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

With regards to eel and salmon the achievement could not be fully evaluated since the white part in the AR is different from the accepted WP. Here, DNK should follow the guidelines in future. For eel one survey was not done and four out of eight surveys were probably undersampled according to the WP 2021. For salmon probably only two out of four planned surveys were achieved.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No major issues.

6. Surveys at sea

No major issues.

7. Fishing activity variable

No major issues.

8. Fleet socio-economic

With regards to the sampling DNK did not provide explanations for undersampling. The achieved sampling rate should be increased in future or explanations provided and deviations from the NWP should be reported in the text.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No major issues.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No major issues.

11. Data transmission issues

Four data transmission issues were listed for Denmark. Three DT issues were related to the economics variables, one DT issue was related to biological variables. After the evaluation by the EWG, all issues were assessed as satisfactory.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Due to covid-19 there has been deviations in the achieved sampling program compared to the planned program similar to last year. However, with regards to the biological sampling DNK implemented a high self-sampling level in order to minimize the Covid-19 impact.

For the recreational fisheries no results are obtained within the pilot study due to missing sampling because of the COVID-19 situation. No on-site sampling could be carried on private boats and only a few on charter boats.

Member State: ESP Spain

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The overall performance and compliance for Spain was classified as "Yes" for all modules. MS responses provided to feedback requests from pre-screening and the EWG resolved most issues. For several data transmission failures concerning ICAAT and STECF data calls MS response was assessed as unsatisfactory.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

A more detailed description of sampling design of highly migratory species would be desirable in the future submissions of AR.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Some minor deviations in eel and salmon surveys due to mobility restrictions, non-operating trap or river hydrological conditions.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

6. Surveys at sea

No major concerns have been raised by the EWG.

Some surveys were cancelled due to COVID-19, vessel technical problems, vessel breakdown or unavailability.

7. Fishing activity variable

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No major concerns have been raised by the EWG.

For many Census data collection planned sample rate of 100% was not achieved.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

11. Data transmission issues

A total of 71 issues were identified, 8 clarifications of MS were found to be satisfactory, 12 unsatisfactory, and 51 require further follow-up action.

Unsatisfactory responses concern ICAAT TaskI&II and STECF EWG Med and BS data calls, mostly failures concerning data collection and not data transmission.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Some research surveys at sea were cancelled due to COVID-19 and mobility restrictions influenced on eel and salmon surveys execution.

Member State: EST Estonia

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The overall performance and compliance for Estonia was classified as "YES". One recurring issue has been identified.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No major issues identified in sampling achievement.

MS does not present any relevant action to minimise deviations. Perhaps the reasons given for the deviations (fluctuating catches (quotas) and movements of fishing vessels within the areas) mean that the measurements will have little influence on any action taken. Issues related to sampling plan description and data were solved during the EWG meeting.

3. Recreational Fisheries

In future submission MS to provide sampling design in the Text box, or links providing to documentation in English language.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No major issues identified. Some undersampling occurred.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No issues identified.

6. Surveys at sea

No major issues identified. In future MS to submit data assimilations for BIAS CTD data to international database.

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues identified.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No major issues identified. The "Type of data collection" should be corrected in future submissions.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

Not applicable.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

Not applicable.

11. Data transmission issues

MS explanation on data transmission deficiency was assessed by STECF as satisfactory (one issue).

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

No issues.

Member State: FIN Finland

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The performance was very good and overall performance of the AR 2021 was assessed as compliance class Yes.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No issues.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No major issues. In future submission MS to provide detailed documentation in English language.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No major issues. In future submissions MS is not obliged to change the WP part of the AR.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No issues.

6. Surveys at sea

No issues.

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No issues.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No issues.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No issues.

11. Data transmission issues

One data transmission issue was reported for Finland and the EWG 22-07 assessed it as satisfactory.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

No issues.

Member State: FRA France

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The overall performance of the French AR 2021 was assessed as compliance class "Mostly".

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No concerns have been raised by the EWG. However, it was noted that while the MS made the effort for reallocation of the sampling effort to get better results, the achievements are evaluated according to the most updated WP and the explanation for the deviations should be provided according it.

3. Recreational Fisheries

MS should, according to the guidelines, include the link of the sampling design in Table 5a.

In future submission for recreational fisheries MS should follow the guidelines in area naming and provide final results of Pilot Study 1. Furthermore, for Pilot Study 1 it is noted that MS could consider on-site sampling.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Eels and salmon were undersampled within this section.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

In Table 1F the device type and database name are missing. It would be beneficial if the MS would update the table.

6. Surveys at sea

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

7. Fishing activity variable

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

8. Fleet socio-economic

Table 3A to be resubmitted as the response rates are presented without % and the frame population differs according to the variable (or to the type of data collection scheme) in all the three sub-regions. MS should check and correct the frame population. The achievement rate and response rate should be checked for the type of data collection.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

NA

11. Data transmission issues

There were 71 DT issues relating to France (with 56% of the DTI identified referring to the Data Call "Fleet economics"), and the EWG assessments were as follows:

Satisfactory: 36

Unsatisfactory: 26

Follow up: 9

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted commercial sampling and Pilot Study 2.

Member State: GRC Greece

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The overall performance and compliance for Greece was good without major issues and classified as "Mostly". (Compliance class for most modules is "Yes", for two Modules, i.e. 1G-H, and 2A is "Mostly" and for one Module, i.e. 1E is "Partly"). MS responses, provided to feedback requests from pre-screening and the EWG, resolved most outstanding issues which was appreciated.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No essential concerns have been raised by the EWG.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No essential concerns have been raised by the EWG. The pilot study started in the period 2017-2019 was extended to 2020-2021 but the **COVID-19** effects produced a low return rates limited participation and cancelled fishing trips.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Some shortfalls were reported for data collection in fresh water. Severe undersampling regarding catadromous species due to administrative constrains in Western Greece (EMU1 & EMU2) and it is unclear if or how administrative constraints will be solved. GRC need to clarified if sampling will be performed in 2022 onwards.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

6. Surveys at sea

All surveys completed except MEDIAS due to unavailability of vessel (repairs) and no other suitable vessel was available.

7. Fishing activity variable

No major concerns have been raised by the EWG but for some segments/variables the achieved sample rate is very low compared to the planned one. For the next programming period, MS will have to provide implementation on cross validation for some segments (>12m.).

8. Fleet socio-economic

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

11. Data transmission issues

No issues were assessed as unsatisfactory by the EWG.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Due to COVID-19, some pilot studies could not be completed.

Member State: HRV Croatia

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The overall performance for AR 2021 was assessed to compliance class "YES".

No major issues were detected.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No major issues were detected.

Taken into consideration that the implementation for some strata was low, MS should have provided more information on actions foreseen to minimize deviations in future.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No major issues were detected.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No major issues were detected.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No major issues were detected.

6. Surveys at sea

No major issues were detected.

7. Fishing activity variable

No major issues were detected.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No major issues were detected.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No major issues were detected.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No major issues were detected.

11. Data transmission issues

9 of the total 12 issues were observed for Med&BS and FDI data call (MEDITS survey, spatial data and discards length) assessed as 'Follow-up-needed'. All other issues were assessed as 'Satisfactory'. None of the issues was marked as 'Unsatisfactory'.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

No major issues were detected.

Member State: HUN Hungary

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

Hungary is a landlocked country and most sections are not applicable for the MS. EWG 22-07 evaluated AR as "Mostly".

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

Not applicable.

3. Recreational Fisheries

Not applicable.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Not applicable.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

Not applicable.

6. Surveys at sea

Not applicable.

7. Fishing activity variable

Not applicable.

8. Fleet socio-economic

Not applicable.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No major issues.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No major issues.

11. Data transmission issues

Not applicable.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

No issues.

Member State: IRL Ireland

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The overall reporting and execution of the 2021 NWP is rated good without major issues. Some shortfalls were reported with respect to COVID limitations. Some data transmission failure for certain fleet economic variables were filed.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No major issues.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No issues.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No major issues were identified.

Electrofishing on yellow eel was hampered due to COVID, Salmo counting was affected by a defective device.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No major issues.

Some minor procedural deviations referring to stratum ID as well as a reduction in self-sampling as consequence of COVID were observed.

6. Surveys at sea

No major issues, some targets were not met due to unfavourable weather conditions or COVID restrictions.

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No major issues. Lack of collecting few variables was explained and justified.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No major issues.

Some formatting issues were observed; MS faced low response rates for some variables.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No issues.

11. Data transmission issues

Several issues were observed for fleet economic data, referring to effort for vessels without logbooks and to variables related to capital.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Due to COVID, access to some of the access to samples from commercial fisheries was affected. Sampling intensity for electrofishing on yellow eel was hampered. Self-sampling on bycatch was also impacted negatively. Some targets for surveys at sea could not be met.

Member State: ITA Italy

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The EWG evaluated the overall Annual Report as 'Partly'. Although compliance for most of the modules was "Yes", "Mostly" was rated for three modules (i.e. 1D, 1F, and 3A), and "No" for module 1E, which originates the overall 'Partly'.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

Member State has generally performed well, with only some issues concerning reporting. However, most of the problems were solved after MS replied to EWG.

3. Recreational Fisheries

Concerning reporting of the recreational fisheries, it was asked MS to stick with exact text in the white part of AR as in the accepted NWP in future submissions. While concerning execution, it is requested that MS provide further details on sampling designs in future submissions.

Concerning the Pilot Study, MS is asked to provide information on results in Annual reports. And present drawn conclusions and implications for regular sampling in future submissions.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in freshwater

The evaluation for this module was not good, mainly because MS didn't follow guidelines. The white part of Table and Textbox 1E is hugely different from the part submitted in WP 2021, and much information is missing.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

There are still some pending issues regarding Table and Textbox 1E.

MS submitted a new Table 1F towards the end of the EWG, providing the required data. But, still, there are some format issues in the new file. MS have to update the table accordingly.

MS submitted a new Textbox 1E, and this new text includes some results. However, a general text relating to sampling achievement should be provided to support Table comments.

Regarding execution, as there are stratum code errors in the new submission, a complete comparison is difficult. Once again, MS is asked to update the table.

6. Surveys at sea

In general, Member State has performed well, only some deviations pointed out, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

7. Fishing activity variable

In general, Member State has performed well. Reporting issues were solved after resubmission, and in execution, MS is asked to make every effort to overcome sampling difficulties due to future administrative problems.

8. Fleet socio-economic

Concerning reporting of fleet socio-economic, MS is asked to carefully fill the AR tables to respect the guidelines and avoid inconsistencies in future submissions.

Regarding sampling plan achievement, MS is asked to take all the necessary actions to eliminate cases with very low achieved sample rates in future submissions and report and justify the discrepancies (Other Regions).

9. Socio-economics for aquaculture

The Member State has performed well, and no issue has been reported.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

The Member State has performed well, and no major issue has been reported. Only a recall to MS to adopt WP in the future AR submission.

11. Data transmission issues

Med and BS Data Call: 33 issues of low severity were identified. Follow-up is needed on twenty issues, nine were assessed as satisfactory, and four were unsatisfactory.

FDI Data Call: 5 issues were identified. Follow-up is needed on four low severity issues; one medium severity issue was assessed as satisfactory, and one high severity issue as unsatisfactory.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Data collection was impacted by the restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic for Italy, namely, in the areas shown below:

1. The sampling intensity of the biological variables and the field operations related to collecting biological data (1A-1C). Italy tried to find ways to mitigate the problem. The measure taken was self-sampling; Difficulties due to COVID are reported for 14 strata (4A);
2. Monitorization of planned strata for incidental by-catch (1F) – COVID-19 impacted onboard sampling, as did administrative issues;
3. The execution of surveys was affected. As a result, no sampling in GSA 9 &10 for DRES due to COVID 19 restrictions.

Member State: LTU Lithuania

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The overall performance and compliance for Lithuania was classified as "Yes" for all modules. MS responses provided to feedback requests from pre-screening and the EWG resolved most outstanding issues which was appreciated.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

A more detailed description of sampling design would be beneficial. External links in T5A only in Lithuanian language so it was not possible for the EWG to evaluate in detail.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

Some minor deviations in adult salmon and sea trout data collection in rivers ŠVENTOJI AND JŪRA due to non-functioning vaki counter.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

6. Surveys at sea

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

All surveys completed except SPRAS (2 days) due to failure of acoustic equipment.

7. Fishing activity variable

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

Data collection and reporting on aquaculture section is not applicable for LTU.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

11. Data transmission issues

FDI Data Call – A number of erroneous records were detected during compilation of spatial data.

EWG acknowledges the willingness of MS to take care of the issue in the next data call.

ICES WGBYC protected species bycatch– Data not submitted for 2019.

MS should ensure all data is provided by the deadlines of the Data Call.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

COVID-19 was not cited as an issue

Member State: LVA Latvia

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The overall performance of the AR 2020 was assessed as compliance class "Yes". Overall, Latvia performed very well. Only a few minor issues have arisen regarding the Surveys at Sea and Recreational Fisheries. Finally, in all the three Data Transmission issues, the MS response was acknowledged as acceptable.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No issues detected.

3. Recreational Fisheries

Covid-19 restrictions impeded data collection for salmon and sea trout. In addition, some minor issues were also flagged by EWG. No data on cod rec fish due to fishing ban. MS was asked to provide more detailed information on sampling designs in 1D in future submissions.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No issues detected.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No issues detected.

6. Surveys at sea

There are some issues regarding the execution of some surveys, mainly justified due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues detected.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No issues detected.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No issues detected. On the contrary, some variables for fresh water aquaculture were collected even though they were not foreseen in NWP.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No issues detected.

11. Data transmission issues

Three data transmission issues were flagged, all of them regarding the FDI data call. In all cases, STECF EWG acknowledged MS response as acceptable.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Latvia's Data Collection Program impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, mainly due to the travelling restrictions. In most cases, however, the MS managed to overcome these difficulties. Only in the case of recreational fisheries, covid-19 pandemic impeded data collection for salmon and sea trout. In addition, there are few issues caused by covid-19 pandemic regarding the execution of surveys at sea.

Member State: MLT Malta

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The EWG evaluated the overall Annual Report as 'Mostly' what is 50-90% of achievements from Work Plan.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

Situation considered to improve for the case of *Thunnus thynnus*, which undersampling was related to COVID-19. No actions to minimise deviations for the other species.

In future AR submissions MS should follow the guidelines and provide actions to avoid deviations.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No sampling designs described for routine data collection/ samplings of *T. thynnus* in 1D nor T5A. Also, no sampling designs are covered for remaining species of Table 3.

MS to make sure to transfer findings from recreational fishery pilot study for all mandatory species (additional to bluefin tuna) in table 3 to regular sampling for future submissions and provide details of sampling design in 1D and Table 5A.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No issues

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No issues

6. Surveys at sea

No issues

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues

8. Fleet socio-economic

Frame population is not the same for all variables listed in certain segments. It is due to the reference year for activity/transversal variables is different from the reference year for socioeconomic ones (2021 and 2020, respectively). However, this is not compatible with Table 6A where it mentioned that the reference year for the variables in Table 3A is "N-1".

MS stated in AR that Methodologies are publicly available but no link to the website is provided. Only the link where general information about data collection can be found. MS should provide a link to methodology for the future AR submissions. MS should follow quality assurance framework in the future WP and AR submission.

Collected data are not stored in a database. MS should implement a database as soon as possible.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

Inconsistencies between the AR doc and Table 5 for Accessibility and clarity. Y in doc, N in table (P13). Even if table 5B reports N for P13, in the comment MS specify: Documentation is publicly available on the Departmental's website at <https://agrikoltura.gov.mt/en/fisheries/Pages/researchUnit.aspx>

Data is stored in MS Excel sheets organised in shared folders. MS should implement a database as soon as possible.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

MS stated in AR that Methodologies are publicly available but no link to the website is provided. Only the link where general information about data collection can be found. MS should provide a link to methodology for the future AR submissions. MS should follow quality assurance framework in the future WP and AR submission.

Collected data are not stored in a database. MS should implement a database as soon as possible.

11. Data transmission issues

Failure concerning data collection for *Fish processing data call*: Social data have never been reported for fish processing. MS has attempted to collect social data for processing industry in its surveys, though enterprises did not provide information on social data either due to reluctance to provide such information or unavailability of certain parameters. MS should continue to request such information as required by the WP. MS should look for additional ways to improve the data collection.

Failure concerning data transmission *FDI data call*: A number of erroneous records were detected during compilation of spatial data.

EWG acknowledges the willingness of MS to take care of the issue in the 2022 data call.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

COVID-19 affected at sea and at market sampling.

Member State: NLD Netherland

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The Netherlands overall performance and compliance was rated "Mostly". Compliance for most of the modules was "Yes", while "Mostly" was rated for three modules in regards to the data quality and data availability (5A, 5B, 6A). If 'N' (no) is indicated in Table 5A for information related to Data capture, Data storage or Data processing, MS shall explain the main constraints and/ or steps taken in Text Box 5A.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

The COVID-19 pandemic plays a significant role in the deviations regarding the execution of the sampling onboard, while other deviations mainly stem from the sampling design. By design, the sampling follows the fisheries. As a result, on the species level, the achieved sampling generally met the planned.

3. Recreational Fisheries

The manuals and documentation given in table 5A are largely in Dutch language. MS is kindly invited to provide information on sampling design and quality documents and external websites in English language for possible external review in future submissions.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Some minor undersampling of glass eel with lift net due to COVID 19 was observed. Also, some undersampling of salmon due to incorrect planned values are presented. MS provide explanation in table 1E.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No major issues. The deviations of sampling were related to COVID-19.

6. Surveys at sea

Only minor deviations due to bad weather and COVID-19 pandemic impacts.

7. Fishing activity variable

No issues identified.

8. Fleet socio-economic

Census questionnaire with low achievement for several segments and very low values for several Segments or variables. The justification in the text box is partially explained by the COVID-19 pandemic. MS should make efforts to increase the response rate. MS should consider a restructuring of the data collection scheme to achieve higher achieved/response rates in the future.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

Census with achieved sample rates of 8%, 18%, and 35% was provided. Livestock used was not collected in the On-bottom/Oyster segment as planned in WP. MS explained that the low response rate for the social variables might have been due to the lack of communication possibilities due to the corona pandemic although it is known that response rates for surveys on socio-economic data from small-sized companies is low in general.

For the next ARs, MS should provide more text in the deviations section to justify the low response rate for non-social variables. Take into account different data collection schemes if the achieved sample rate for Census is lower than 70 or 75%.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

Not applicable.

11. Data transmission issues

Five Data Transmission issues were listed for the Netherlands. Two issues were related to the Fleet economic data call and three were related to the FDI data call. After the evaluation by EWG 22-07, two out of the five cases were assessed as satisfactory. One issue related to the Fleet economic data call and two related to FDI data call still needs a follow-up. The Netherlands should take appropriate steps to solve the issue.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Due to Covid-19 there has been minor deviations in the achieved sampling programme compared to the planned.

Member State: POL Poland

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

Overall, reporting and execution of the 2021 NWP was assessed as a 'Yes'. No substantial concerns have been raised by the EWG.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No concerns have been raised by the EWG only suggestion for the future reporting. According to AR guidelines 2020-2021 also strata with no planned sampling coverage should be included in Table 4A, see guidelines for column Total number of PSU in the sampling year: "Work plan table 4a should include one or more rows for strata for which no sampling is planned. In the Annual Report, this should be populated with the actual number of PSU for unsampled strata."

3. Recreational Fisheries

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

6. Surveys at sea

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

7. Fishing activity variable

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No substantial concerns have been raised by the EWG, only suggestion for the future implementation. Indeed, for several segments for a lot of variables the Achieved Sample Rate % and Response rate % reported are less than 70% in case of Census. For the future, MS should consider restructuring the survey to increase achieved sample rate/response rates, or to switch to a different data collection scheme.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

NA

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

11. Data transmission issues

There are five DT issues regarding the FDI data call, 3 related to the quality and 2 to coverage aspects. The severity was low for 1, medium for 2 and high for other 2. They are not recurring issues. The assessment by the EWG is "satisfactory" in all cases.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

By-catch sampling affected by COVID-19.

Member State: PRT Portugal

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

Portugal provided a very well-written report, fully informative for all the work done as well as for the issues that were not covered. All tables and textboxes were completed properly. Some shortfalls were reported related mainly with COVID limitations. Also, some data transmission failures were detected.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

The biological modules were reported very well by Portugal. Where deviations occurred, detailed explanations were provided in both the tables and the textboxes. In most of the cases the main reason of deviations was Covid pandemic. It should be acknowledged that Portugal tried to find ways to mitigate Covid effect on sampling coverage, among which was the pilot use of the "FishMetrics". Also, Portugal taking into consideration the EWG comments of previous year, this year provided the text by Region.

3. Recreational Fisheries

The Pilot studies for the sampling of the most mandatory species of recreational fishery are still under development. Most of the pilot studies were not implemented due to COVID-19 limitations.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Some issues were reported related to deviations due to low response rate or low catches, and small deviations in experimental stow net fishing due to COVID-19 limitations.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

MS has performed properly and no major issue has been reported, only some deviations due to COVID-19 limitations.

6. Surveys at sea

Some issues were raised for the surveys. For PELAGO days at sea were below planned (58%), but the number of activities were achieved (106%), for UWTV FU28-29 days at sea was according to planned (115%), but planned number of activities and spatial coverage was below planned (36%). For ARQDACO only 16 of the 34 planned fishing hauls carried out due to strike of crew and all areas were not covered.

MS should ensure the proper performance of all the surveys.

7. Fishing activity variable

MS has performed properly in all regions and no issue has been reported.

8. Fleet socio-economic

MS has performed properly and no major issue has been reported. A minor issue reported was that the MS didn't make any reference whether it follows the methodologies, guidelines and practices agreed by PGECON.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

MS has performed properly and no major issue has been reported. The improvement made by introducing new segments is acknowledged. Also, MS is invited to refer to agreed PGECON methodologies in future submissions.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

This section is not applicable for the MS

11. Data transmission issues

Six data transmission issues were identified for Portugal, 4 of them concerns FDI data call, 1 ICCAT, and 1 ICES WGSFD data calls. Three of these issues were classified as being of high severity, two of medium and one of low severity. No issue highlighted as recurrent. Three issues were considered not to have been resolved and were highlighted as being unsatisfactory, one issue needs follow up and two assessed as satisfactory.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Portugal's Data Collection Programme was impacted by the Covid – 19 pandemics however to a lesser extent from previous year. MS reported issues on biological sampling of commercial fisheries, on recreational fisheries, where most pilot studies were not implemented due to the COVID19, and to a lesser extent to diadromous species data collection.

Member State: ROU Romania

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The MS performance was generally good, however some issues were identified, such as Inconsistencies between WP and AR guidelines.

Finally, there are four data transmission issues considered as 'follow-up needed'. MS has to contact JRC to solve issues.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No Major issues.

MS although has changed the part of text box 4A that comes from its approved WP, still the text is not the same with the approved one. MS has to follow the guidance in the next AR submissions.

3. Recreational Fisheries

The sampling year in AR is 2018-2020 instead of 2021.

MS has to stick with exact identical text in white part of AR as in the accepted NWP in future submissions and follow guidelines (white part)

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

NA

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No major issue.

6. Surveys at sea

No major issue.

7. Fishing activity variable

No issue.

8. Fleet socio-economic

Even if the MS changed the WP text, MS should transfer the information would have been transferred from their accepted WP before filling in the additional section highlighted in grey.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

Even if the MS changed the WP text, MS should transfer the information would have been transferred from their accepted WP before filling in the additional section highlighted in grey

Furthermore, there are issues on the format: the original text from WP has been changed, the text is not consistent with AR guidelines, and details on environmental data on aquaculture are reported on the wrong section.

The data storage at the moment is under construction, deadline in 2023.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

The WP text has been changed compared the one reported in the WP. The "white" section reports result instead of reporting the plan for collection and no change had been made in the revised text available.

11. Data transmission issues

Three data transmission issues on FDI data call were assessed as 'follow-up needed'. Large differences between AER and FDI have been noticed. MS has to contact JRC to resolve these issues.

One was assessed as 'follow-up needed' for protected species bycatch which was not collected by MS.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Covid-19 restrictions did not allow staff exchanges with Bulgaria in 2021. It also limited data acquisition for Recreational fishery

Member State: SVK Slovakia

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The planned pilot study 4 for 2020 and postponed for 2021 was not implemented due to COVID - 19 pandemic situation. The overall performance for the reporting and execution of Slovakia was assessed as "NA".

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

Not applicable.

3. Recreational Fisheries

Not applicable.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Not applicable.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

Not applicable.

6. Surveys at sea

Not applicable.

7. Fishing activity variable

Not applicable.

8. Fleet socio-economic

Not applicable.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

According to WP, MS planned a pilot study for 2020-2021 (24 months). However, the market research for pilot study 4 in Slovakia has been extended for the years 2022-2024. For the future AR submission MS should follow the Guidelines for AR report.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

Not applicable.

11. Data transmission issues

No data transmission issues were reported for Slovakia.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Not applicable.

Member State: SVN Slovenia

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The overall reporting and execution of the 2021 NWP was evaluated as "Yes". MS provided responses to feedback request from pre-screening and the EWG resolved most outstanding issues which was appreciated.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No major concerns have been raised by the EWG. However, MS should follow the guidelines and ensure consistency between text and tables contents for AR submission in the future. Also, MS is encouraged to improve further quality assurance documentation in future AR (Annex 1.1) and to provide links.

EWG acknowledged MS collected samples as is stated in Table 4A and suggests for the future (Table 2.1 in AR2022), MS can present the number of individuals and number of samples for species sampled by inserting new rows at the end of the relevant AR table, as is suggested in the Guidelines.

MS indicates that deviations in sampling coverage were due to Covid-19.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

Not applicable.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

6. Surveys at sea

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

Concerning planned survey intensity, MS indicates that OTB_VOL days at sea were reduced and fish hauls undersampled due to Covid-19.

7. Fishing activity variable

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

In future AR submissions, MS is recommended to explain deviations observed in achievement.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

11. Data transmission issues

Three data transmission issues were identified, all low severity and no recurrent: 1 concerns the Mediterranean & Black Sea data call and 2 the FDI data call. Two issues need follow-up and one was assessed as satisfactory.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Covid-19 had some impact on sampling coverage and survey.

Member State: SWE Sweden

1. Overall reporting and execution of the 2021 WP

The overall performance and compliance for Sweden was classified as "Yes" for all modules. MS responses provided feedback requests from pre-screening and the EWG resolved most outstanding issues which was appreciated.

2. Biological sampling of commercial fisheries and stocks

No major concerns have been raised by the EWG. However, in future MS should submit information within time frame and describe the planned methodologies to be implemented.

3. Recreational Fisheries

No major concerns have been raised by the EWG. However, MS is asked to provide information on sampling design and quality in external websites in English language for possible external review in future submissions. Also, MS needs to make sure to present results of pilot studies in ARs in future.

4. Anadromous, catadromous data collection in fresh water

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

5. Impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

6. Surveys at sea

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

7. Fishing activity variable

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

8. Fleet socio-economic

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

9. Socio-economic for aquaculture

No major concerns have been raised by the EWG. MS should follow the methodologies, guidelines and practices agreed by PGECON.

10. Socio-economic for processing industry

No concerns have been raised by the EWG.

11. Data transmission issues

FDI Data Call – A number of erroneous records were detected during compilation of spatial data.

12. The impact of Covid-19 on the deviations or issues

Part of deviations are explained by impacts and instabilities caused by COVID-19 pandemic in sampling in the Baltic Sea and other reasons at the national level.

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STECF

The Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) has been established by the European Commission. The STECF is being consulted at regular intervals on matters pertaining to the conservation and management of living aquatic resources, including biological, economic, environmental, social and technical considerations.

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