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Report of the Working Group on Fishery Statistics Liaison (WGSTAL)

3–4 June

Luxembourg



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International Council for
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International Council for the Exploration of the Sea Conseil International pour l'Exploration de la Mer

H. C. Andersens Boulevard 44–46
DK-1553 Copenhagen V
Denmark
Telephone (+45) 33 38 67 00
Telefax (+45) 33 93 42 15
www.ices.dk
info@ices.dk

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Contents

1	3rd June. Working party on Fishery Statistics.....	1
2	4th June. Opening, agenda and minutes from 2009 meeting.....	9
3	ICES Advisory process.....	10
4	Extension of the database 1950–1972 and 1973–2005	11
5	Report on cooperation: ICES-Eurostat	13
6	Any other business.....	14
7	Final conclusion of both meetings	15
Annex 1:	Participants list.....	16

1 3rd June. Working party on Fishery Statistics

On 03/04 June 2010, Eurostat hosted the Fisheries Statistics Working Group and the Eurostat/ICES Liaison Working Group. Some 40 delegates from the Member States, Iceland, Norway, Turkey, Croatia, in addition to representatives of DG MARE and JRC participated in the meeting. Delegates from FAO and ICES were present as observers.

Item 1 – Adoption of the agenda and introductory statements

For approval

The meeting was opened by Pedro Díaz Muñoz, Director of Eurostat Directorate E – *Sectoral and Regional Statistics*, who gave a short overview of the main priorities for Fisheries Statistics for 2010, highlighting the objectives of improving efficiency, quality and visibility in the sector.

The Chair, Gita Vergina, Head of Unit E2 – Agriculture and Fisheries, welcomed representatives of DG MARE, the JRC, ICES and FAO to the meeting and introduced the Eurostat Fisheries Statistics Team, Franco Zampogna (Head), Matthew Elliott, Steffie Bos and Annabelle Jansen. The chart reflecting the structure of Directorate E following the reorganization in 2009 and changes at head of Unit level in Units E1 and E2 was presented.

She pointed out that all working group documents were available on CIRCA at least four weeks before the meeting. In addition, all PowerPoint presentations given during the meeting would also be made available on CIRCA immediately after the meeting. The agenda was adopted.

Item 2 – Adoption of the minutes of 7/8 June 2009

For approval

The minutes of the last Working Group meeting held on 8–9 June 2009 were formally adopted.

For the future, the Chair announced that full minutes of meetings would be drafted only in EN and proposed to use a standard approach for full minutes. The draft full minutes would be sent to the Member States one month after the meeting, giving them one month to send their comments. Eurostat would insert the comments received into the minutes and send the new version to the Member States. The new version would also be put on CIRCA as the final minutes. There would nevertheless be an opportunity to comment on the minutes of the previous meeting during the following meeting.

The Members of the Working Group agreed on the proposed approach as regards the full minutes for future meetings.

Item 3 – Data transmission compliance review

For information and discussion

Introduction

Eurostat presented an overview of the situation with compliance with data submission deadlines in 2009. The importance of timely receipt of data and the problems arising from late reports was highlighted. A summary of some of the errors found in the 2009 landings reports was given.

MSs were asked to respect data submission deadlines and consider other aspects of data quality, discussed in more detail under item 4.3 of the Agenda.

MSs were also requested to use eDAMIS to send data to Eurostat and to use the preferred CSV or flat file format for these reports.

Discussion

FR and PO confirmed that aquaculture data had been sent, although late. FR cited technical reasons for the delay.

ES stated that they were experiencing difficulties in retrieving information though these were less acute than in 2009. They expected reporting delays of 1–3 months. ES were also concerned by problems caused by the ASFIS species list was not being static.

RO asked about methodology for producing fisheries statistics, progress with SDMX implementation and relations between GFCM and FAO.

FAO noted that some fishing areas and species codes in Regulation (EC) No 216/2009 needed to be updated in line with changes. These were not expected to result in major problems. FAO asked MSs to bear in mind that FAO, Eurostat and regional fisheries organizations like GFCM were independent of each other and developed requirements separately. More could be done to organize wider sharing of data. It was confirmed that reports sent to Eurostat could be and were shared with FAO and were acceptable in place of their STATLANT format.

ESTAT noted that Working Documents were sent out a month before the meeting and the compliance position was reflected at that point. The submissions of FR and PO were noted. With ICES they confirmed that changes to the ASFIS list were generally minor and would not result in significant problems. Issues of methodology, SDMX and aligning with FAO standards were discussed under separate items of the Agenda.

Conclusions

The WG agreed the contents of Doc. Fish 292 including the compliance table with modifications noted in the meeting.

MSs were asked to respect data submission deadlines and to check reports before dispatch to Eurostat.

Eurostat agreed that they would continue to work with other organizations to reduce reporting burdens.

Item 4.1 – Report to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1921/2006 on the submission of statistical data on landings and fishery products

For information

Eurostat informed the meeting of progress made with respect to the provisions in Regulation (EC) No 1921/2006 for submission of an assessment report to the European Parliament and the Council on the statistical data compiled pursuant to this Regulation and in particular on their relevance and quality and on the submission by Member States to the Commission of a detailed methodological report describing how the data were collected and the statistics compiled.

It was noted that the Report to the European Parliament and the Council had been circulated to CPSA members for comment earlier in 2010 and was awaiting adoption through formal Commission procedures. Recent additional comments from DK had been noted and had been incorporated into a revised draft.

SI and MT noted discrepancies in some figures presented in the tables annexed to the Report and Eurostat agreed to investigate these.

Item 4.2 – Implementation of Regulation (EC) No. 762/2008 on Aquaculture Statistics

For information and discussion

Introduction

Eurostat gave presented the state of play of the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 762/2008 on Aquaculture statistics and related decisions granting transitional periods as well as derogations for the Member States which made a duly motivated request. Eurostat highlighted the new system for processing aquaculture data. Some new quality issues had been found and would be discussed bilaterally with MSs. Some MSs had requested submission of alternative or finer detail than required by the legislation. Eurostat advised that they were actively considering these suggestions.

MSs who had not sent methodological reports as required by the Regulation were asked to do this by September 2010. This would allow Eurostat to compile a report on data quality for the European Parliament and the Council in 2011.

Eurostat advised that requests for derogations from the Regulation had been received from AT, BE, CZ and LU. The LU request had been accepted but written clarification had been sought from the others. This was needed before the official procedure for adoption could be launched, which was intended to be concluded by autumn.

Discussion

DE advised that they had sought grant aid for their industry and asked whether a quality report was expected from them.

DK advised that they had been occupied with building a new aquaculture database and had chosen to delay submission of the methodological report as a consequence. This would be done by September.

FI and RO noted definitional problems with juveniles and fish eggs and asked how the data were being used.

Eurostat noted the problem with eggs and juveniles definitions. This had also been raised in bilateral contact with DE and had been identified while processing the data. It was still too early to advise on data use as processing was still underway. Bilateral contact with MSs on issues identified with the data was expected.

Conclusions

AT, BE and CZ were requested to respond to Eurostat's request for additional information to support derogations under Article 8.

Methodological reports were requested to be sent by the end of September.

Eurostat agreed to investigate definitional issues and report on data use by the next Working Group.

Item 4.3 – Quality requirements

For information and discussion

Introduction

Eurostat gave an overview of the Eurostat quality framework and requirements for quality reports under Regulation (EC) No. 223/2009 (the Regulation on European Statistics) with a view to implement those requirements. The existing requirements for quality reporting in existing were also reviewed. Eurostat proposed to launch a Quality Task Force comprising half a dozen MSs to look at this issue and propose quality indicators. MSs were asked to express their interest in joining this group by the end of June and supply name and contact details. MSs were also asked to confirm that they were content for their methodological reports for landings to be published on Circa.

Discussion

DE was in favour of quality reporting and suggested aligning with work for animal production. They noted that they would be interested in participating in the Task Force.

IE welcomed the approach to quality reporting and noted that reports were only as good as the content. The recently identified problem with IE landings data for 2007 was raised and the suggestion that Eurostat refuse to publish suspect MS data where no confirmation had been supplied.

FR were aware of Eurostat's approach to quality and advised that improving data quality was a constant concern. They were keen to share experiences and indicated that they might be interested in participating in a task force.

Eurostat welcomed the DE proposal and possible Task Force participation. It was noted that some issues were specific to fisheries and would have to be dealt with outside a joint animal production/fisheries group. The fisheries specific elements would need to be identified. Eurostat thanked France for their comments and recognized the problems they outlined. Improved quality checks were envisaged with implementation of new IT systems at Eurostat. Eurostat highlighted that they were unable to refuse to publish data that had been sent to them.

Conclusions

MSs were asked to advise Eurostat of participation in a Quality task Force by the end of June.

No objections were raised to publication of methodological reports on Circa.

Item 5.1 – Introduction of SDMX (Statistical data and Metadata Exchange) in Fisheries Statistics**For information and discussion****Introduction**

Eurostat gave a presentation of progress with introducing SDMX as a reporting format and structure for fisheries statistics and highlighted the need to send reports through the eDAMIS Single Point of Entry.

Eurostat advised on cooperating with FAO, ICES, DG MARE and others on the standardization of SDMX compliant code lists. MSs had participated in a workshop in March 2010 looking at transmission of SDMX reports and validation at point of receipt using the eDAMIS validation engine. This was followed up with implementation testing in SE, LV and UK May. A meeting was also held with DG MARE and the UK Marine Monitoring Organisation to look at the wider potential for SDMX use. Eurostat had also sent a letter to WG Members asking that they align to a CSV file format as part of the transition to SDMX. The use of a common CSV format was considered to be a major advance in itself.

Eurostat advised of their intention to update their legislation to reference standard code lists and a single point of entry. This could not be done through a gentleman's agreement as Regulations already included data transmission requirements.

Discussion

ES felt that the area codes they used for Area 27 reports were more detailed than Eurostat had advised.

DK asked if DG MARE had formally adopted SDMX as a standard.

Eurostat advised that eDAMIS would not block submission of data where MS overruled the validation controls. The issue of different codes could be addressed through the SDMX converter which could be modified to generate SDMX compliant codes from a MS's own lists. Eurostat agreed to look at this on behalf of data suppliers.

DG MARE advised that they had not formally adopted SDMX but were working closely with Eurostat. SDMX offered great potential to standardize and formalize code lists and processes and was under serious consideration.

Conclusions

Eurostat advised that they could not continue with current situation and SDMX was their chosen solution for fisheries (in line with wider Eurostat policy). SDMX was under active consideration by DG MARE.

Eurostat agreed to look at modification of the SDMX converter to automatically re-code MS's own area codes to SDMX standard.

MSs were requested to use the advised CSV file structure for reporting and provide comments on the advice provided by Eurostat by the end of June.

MSs were asked to use eDAMIS for data transmission and to note renaming of eDAMIS reports for catch statistics.

Item 5.2 – MDT (Multi Dimensional Table) – New Fisheries Production Database

For information

Eurostat gave an overview of the project to develop a new MDT production database to house fisheries data collections. This aims to streamline the collection, to use standardized tools in the whole data process, to increase the quality of the data and to ensure better dissemination of the fisheries statistics. Attention was drawn to the possibilities offered by MDT for improved quality checking including outlier detection.

Item 6 – Overview of publications and dissemination Initiatives

For information

Eurostat gave a short presentation of the dissemination of paper and electronic fisheries publications for fisheries statistics including Statistics in Focus and Data in Focus newsletters and the fisheries pocketbook. A practical demonstration of the Eurostat database and statistical downloads was also provided.

Item 7.1 – Report on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between DG ESTAT and DG MARE

For information and discussion

Introduction

Eurostat gave an overview of cooperation between DG ESTAT and DG MARE including the content of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two Commission DGs and its renewal in 2010. A summary was given of the meeting held earlier in the year to discuss issues of parallel concern and to jointly investigate solutions. Issues covered included renewal of the MoU itself, inclusion of Maritime Policy including and development of complementary data collection systems. Outcomes were included in an Action Plan.

Francky Callewaert of DG MARE's new unit B2 was introduced as Eurostat's main point of contact in DG MARE. Unit B2 were charged with data collection and management including on TAC and quotas, fishing licensing, ad-hoc controls, geographical information and future efficiency and simplification.

Discussion

ES welcomed the cooperation between the two DGs and asked why there was not better cooperation in other areas for example, structural statistics.

RO highlighted difficulties in interpreting and meeting requirements of Regulation (EC) No. 199/2008 (MARE's Data Collection Regulation).

DG MARE explained that DCR requirements were very clear with all steps explained. Data calls were conducted through the JRC. MSs could recover up to half of their costs for meeting DCR requirements from the EC.

Eurostat advised that cooperation with MARE in other areas was underway, particularly in the context of the New Market Observatory for Fisheries Products, discussed under item 7.2.

Conclusions

Cooperation between the two DGs was welcomed. This will continue.

MSs were requested to write to DG MARE with any specific issues on the Data Collection Regulation.

Item 7.2 – Eurostat involvement in Inter-Service Groups of DG MARE

For information

Eurostat gave an overview of their contribution to DG MARE inter-service groups and inter-service consultations. These included the Green Paper on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy and the European Observatory for Fisheries and Aquaculture Products (EOFAP). For EOFAP Eurostat was cooperating in several areas including supply of trade and processing information.

DG MARE gave a presentation on the EOFAP which aimed to provide stakeholders and administrations a better understanding of fisheries markets and achieve greater stability. To do this the Observatory would collect, harmonize and analyse data from MSs and from international sources for all stages along the supply chain.

ES approved of the Observatory concept and advised that they had their own food market surveys. This provided good information on fresh produce but information on frozen products and some species was difficult to obtain. They asked if Observatory data would be made available to MSs.

FI and NL noted similar problems as for ES. FI pointed out that there were something in the region of 1 million possible fisheries products.

DG MARE noted the issues raised and agreed to look into dissemination of Observatory data.

Conclusions

Cooperation between services and the Observatory was welcomed.

DG MARE agreed to investigate dissemination of EOFAP information to MSs.

Item 8 – Eurostat's international commitments

For information

Eurostat provided an overview of their involvement with other international bodies in the previous year. These activities help to maintain coordination between these organizations on technical and statistical standards and reduce MSs' reporting burdens. Activities included contribution to the Coordinating Working Party for Fisheries Statistics (CWP) in February this year. Eurostat contributions included presenting on the Eurostat-FAO-ICES project on implementation of SDMX for data transmission on sharing and agreeing to lead the redrafting of the social and economic components

of the CWP Handbook of Fishery Statistical Standards. Eurostat also advised that a possible MoU with the GFCM was being considered jointly with DG MARE to be should be looked at the context of harmonization of the data collection architecture.

ESP enquired whether similar contacts were being conducted with NAFO.

Eurostat advised that they did not attend NAFO meetings but were in close contact. Problems with redefinition of GFCM areas were noted.

Conclusions

Eurostat agreed to invite NAFO to present at the next Working Group in 2011.

Item 9 – Any other business

No additional items were raised.

2 4th June. Opening, agenda and minutes from 2009 meeting

Franco Zampogna opened the meeting 9 am o'clock. There were no amendments to the Agenda and the minutes from previous meeting (9 June 2009) were approved.

3 ICES Advisory process

The ICES secretariat made a presentation on the way statistical data coming from various sources are analysed from a scientific view point and made available as advice to the European Commission. Amongst the data sources, Eurostat's statistics provided by the Member States are one of the components of this advisory process.

4 Extension of the database 1950–1972 and 1973–2005

David Cross (ICES Consultant) reported on the work undertaken by the ICES Secretariat on the database of catch statistics for the Northeast Atlantic.

At the start of this project in 2006 the ICES/Eurostat database commenced with data for 1973. It had long been recognized by the ICES Secretariat that there was a desire from, among others, fishery scientists within the ICES community, other researchers and environmentalists for longer time-series. However lack of the necessary resources within the ICES Secretariat had delayed the work. In 2006 the work achieved a higher priority as a consequence of the imminent retirement of the officers within the ICES Secretariat and Eurostat with a long experience of processing the data.

The first stage of the project to extend the database was to compile the data for the period 1950–1972, the starting point being using Excel worksheets for the period 1950–1972 resulting from an earlier study by the University of British Columbia (UBC) and kindly supplied by UBC to the ICES Secretariat. These data were checked against the data published in the relevant editions of the ICES Bulletin Statistique, the original national data submissions to ICES, any subsequent correspondence with the national authorities, reports of the ICES stock assessment group reports and the corresponding data submitted by the national authorities to FAO. In May 2007 the results of this work were sent to the national authorities with a request that they review the data and submit any revisions they considered necessary. The results, incorporating the revisions requested by the national authorities, were made available in FAO's FISHSTAT Plus format on the ICES website (www.ices.dk/fish/statlant/ices5072.zip).

The second stage of the project was to validate the data on the ICES/Eurostat catch database for the period 1973–2005, the range of data available at the start of the project. In practice the second stage overlapped the first stage in timing because a major objective was to obtain continuous time-series covering the period 1950–2005. The data available in the ICES/Eurostat database were checked against the data published in the relevant editions of the ICES Bulletin Statistique, the original national data submissions to ICES and Eurostat, any subsequent correspondence with the national authorities, reports of the ICES stock assessment group reports and the corresponding data submitted by the national authorities to FAO. This process was completed in early 2009 and at the joint ICES/Eurostat Working Group meeting in May 2009 the national representatives were requested to review the results and inform ICES of any revisions they wished to be included. In March 2010, taking into account the feedback from the national authorities, the results of the first two stages of the project were combined and, with a short delay as a result of a lack of resources within Eurostat, have been made incorporated in the ICES/Eurostat catch database for the NE Atlantic. The data will also be made available shortly in the FISHSTAT Plus format for down-loading from the ICES website.

A third stage was then added to the project. ICES was founded in 1902 and has published catch statistics in the annual volumes of the Bulletin Statistique since that time. As part of the project it was decided to process these data held in the ICES archives as hard-copy publications. However it was soon evident that, particularly in the earlier years, the data were incomplete both in terms of the number of reporting countries and the species coverage by the countries and hence that there was a risk of misinterpretation of the data were they to be presented as time-series in the same manner as with the data for 1950–2005. Thus it was decided to present the data as an Excel file for each reporting country containing individual worksheets for each year in the

range 1903–1949. This work has now been completed and consideration is being given within the ICES Secretariat as to how to disseminate the information on the ICES website while drawing the attention of users to limited comparability of the data.

Mr Cross drew the attention of the Working Group to the fact that there remain discrepancies between the ICES/Eurostat database and the FAO database, discrepancies which could affect the credibility of both databases. He proposed that, although the identification and eventual elimination of these discrepancies involved meticulous examination of individual datasets requiring a heavy call on the scarce staff resources of all the secretariats concerned, consideration should be given attempting to resolve the situation, at least for the more recent.

5 Report on cooperation: ICES–Eurostat

Eurostat gave a presentation highlighting areas of cooperation between Eurostat and ICES in development of common standards and processes in the previous year.

A follow-up meeting to the 2009 Working Group was held with ICES and FAO at the ICES HQ in Copenhagen on 16–17 November 2009. This provided a ‘launch pad’ for cooperation between ICES, Eurostat and FAO on implementation of SDMX as an international standard for fisheries information, the use of agreed validation standards and the extension of the joint catch database. SDMX was accepted in principle as a suitable standard for all organizations and joint statement of policy and overview of data collection initiatives was prepared.

The SDMX initiative was presented by Mette Bertelsen (ICES) at the D4Science World User and Integrated Capture Information System (ICIS) meetings on 25–27 November in Rome. At this event ICES also gave a presentation on their experience in handling integrated documents and shared document environment in the ICES advisory process during 2008–2009.

A further presentation on SDMX as international standard for fisheries was made by Franco Zampogna (Eurostat) to the Coordinating Working Party (CWP) at the meeting in Tasmania in February 2010. In this Eurostat promoted the use of SDMX as an international standard and highlighting planned follow-up work.

A number of issues were raised on the technical aspects of SDMX implementation and these were taken forward to Eurostat's March SDMX workshop and associated meetings with FAO, ICES and DG MARE. There was a strong emphasis on the need to present the considerable benefits of SDMX standardization and not overplaying the technical details which it was thought might act as a deterrent to some. The need to ensure full cooperation between information technology and fisheries experts in the implementing processes of SDMX model was also emphasized.

All parties (FAO, ICES and Eurostat with DG MARE) met once more in Luxembourg on 4 March 2010 to discuss how to take the SDMX initiative forward and Eurostat agreed to act as secretariat for this work.

6 Any other business

FAO advised that the UNSD had recently agreed the Global Strategy on Improving Agricultural Statistics.

The main concept of the Strategy was to integrate agriculture statistics into national data collection statistical systems through sharing of common linkage information. Fisheries and aquaculture were considered to be a sub-sector of agriculture. It was also considered that integration and harmonization among statistics of all agricultural sub-sectors would help to obtain a better overall picture, especially on socio-economic aspects, of fishery and aquaculture sub-sector.

For implementation for fisheries and aquaculture, two initial steps were identified as being needed:

- i) The identification of people engaged in fisheries (full-time, part-time or in conjunction with other occupations through population census. This would become frame data in developing further sampling schemes,

and

- ii) Inclusion of fishery/aquaculture alongside area oriented surveys, such as rural, household, land and water use, and market surveys. The Strategy also strongly encourages the use of GIS and satellite imagery as well as administrative information for frame information, which would be useful for fishery/aquaculture sub-sector.

Progress would be reported at the next meeting.

7 Final conclusion of both meetings

- The full minutes of the WG would be uploaded in Circa by **5 July**.
- Eurostat indicated that the next meeting was not yet scheduled, but was expected to be held either end of May or beginning of June 2011.
- Methodological reports on aquaculture were requested from MSs by **end of September 2010**.
- AT, BE and CZ were requested to respond to Eurostat's request for additional information to support derogations under Article 8 of Regulation (EC) No. 762/2008.
- MSs were asked to advise Eurostat of participation in a Quality task Force by the **end of June 2010**.
- Eurostat agreed to investigate definitional issues with eggs and juveniles and use of data and report on data use by the next Working Group (at the latest).
- MSs were requested to use the advised CSV file structure but comments on the advice provided by Eurostat are requested by **the end of June**.
- MSs were asked to use eDAMIS for data transmission and to note renaming of eDAMIS reports for catch statistics.
- Eurostat agreed to look at modification of the SDMX converter to recode MS area code to SDMX standard.
- MSs were requested to write to DG MARE with any specific issues on the Data Collection Regulation.
- DG MARE agreed to investigate dissemination of EOFAP information to MSs.
- Eurostat agreed to invite NAFO and one or two MSs to present at the next Working Group in **May 2011**.
- FAO to report on progress with the Global Strategy on Improving Agricultural Statistics at the next Working Group.

Eurostat thanked all the members of the Fisheries Statistics Working Group, the colleagues from DG AGRI, JRC and other international institutions for their active participation and the interpreters for their valuable contribution.

Working documents once available can be found at:

<http://circa.europa.eu/Members/irc/dsis/fishery/information>

Annex 1: Participants list

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE/FAX	EMAIL
Ahvonen, Anssi	Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute, PO Box 2 00791 Helsinki Finland	tel: +358 405 2222 19 fax: +358 20 575 1201	anssi.ahvonen@rktl.fi
Bágelová, Katarína	Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic Dept. of Agricultural and Environment Statistics Section of Business Statistics Miletičova 3 824 67 Bratislava Slovakia	tel: +421 2 502 36 630 fax: +421 2 502 36 630	Katarina.bagelova@statistics.sk
Bertelsen, Mette	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea H. C. Andersens Boulevard 44–46 DK-1553 Copenhagen V Denmark		mette@ices.dk
Bos, Steffie	Eurostat 5, rue A. Weicker 2721 Luxembourg Luxembourg Office: BECH C3/605	Phone: +352 4301 37308	Steffie.bos@ec.europa.eu
Callewaert, Francky	Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) B-1049 Brussels Belgium Office: BRU-J-79 01/077	Phone: +(32) 2 2964013	francky.callewaert@ec.europa.eu
Capaccioli, Maurizio	Eurostat 5, rue A. Weicker 2721 Luxembourg Luxembourg ESTAT/B.3		
Cross, David ICES Observer	9 rue Massewee 6168 Gonderange Luxembourg	tel: +352 78 90 55 fax: +352 78 75 37	
Dambrauskis, Tomas	Fisheries Service under the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania J. Lelevelio G. 6 01102 Vilnius Lithuania	tel: +37 52398401	tomasdambrauskis@zum.lt

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE/FAX	EMAIL
Demirsoy, Ilkay	Turkish Statistical Institute Agriculture and Environment Statistics Department Necatibey Caddeesi No 114 06100 Yüce-tepe Ankara Turkey	tel: +90 312 410 02 04	ilkaydemirsoy@tuik.gov.tr
Elliott, Matt	Eurostat 5, rue A. Weicker 2721 Luxembourg Luxembourg Office: BECH C3/628	Phone: +352 4301 33170	matthew.elliott@ec.europa.eu
Ghianni, Renzo	Statistics Netherlands Postbus 24500 2490 The Hague The Netherlands	tel +31 70 337 41 94	f.ghianni@cbs.nl
Grüner, Eda	Statistics Estonia Environment and Sustainable Development Statistics Service Endla 15 15174 Tallinn Estonia	tel: +372 625 9307	eda.gryner@stat.ee
Havelin, Trond	The Directorate of Fisheries P.O. Box 2009 Nordnes 5817 Bergen Norway	tel.: +47 974 3 2957 fax: +47 55 23 80 90	trond.havelin@fiskeridir.no
Cordón, Miguel Ángel	Servicio de Estadísticas de la Pesca Subdirección General de Estadísticas Agro-alimentarias Subsecretaría Ministerio de Agricultura Pesca y Alimentación Paseo de la Infanta Isabel I 28014 Madrid Spain	tel: +34 91 347 5564 fax: +34 91 347 5293	Mcordonm@mapya.es
Funcke, Olle	Statistics Sweden Fishery Statistics Klostergatan 23 70189 Örebro Sweden	tel: +46 1917 6051 fax: +46 1917 6417	olle.funcke@scb.se
Iordache, Nadia	National Institute of Statistics Direction of Agriculture and Environment Stats. 16, Libertății Ave. 70542 Bucharest (Sector 5) Romania	tel: +40 21 31 818 44 fax: +40 21 31 123 89	nadia.iordache@insse.ro

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE/FAX	EMAIL
Ivanov, Krassimir	Eurostat 5, rue A. Weicker 2721 Luxembourg Luxembourg ESTAT/B.5		
Jansen, Annabelle	Eurostat 5, rue A. Weicker 2721 Luxembourg Luxembourg Office: BECH C3/614	Phone: +352 4301 37145	Annabelle.jansen@ec.europa.eu
Jeske, Imanuel	Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung Referat 522-Fangregulierung Fischereiauwand/Fischereistatistik Huabachstrasse 86 22765 Hamburg Germany	tel: 0049 40 306860 514	imanuel.jeske@ble.de
Lojović- Hadzihasnovic, Enisa	Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia Vozarski pot 12 SI-1000 Ljubljana Slovenia	tel: (+386) 1 2340 760 fax: (+386) 1 2340 860	enisa.lojovic-hadzihasanovic@gov.si
Lundgren, Robin	Swedish Board of Fisheries Department of Fisheries Control Box 423 401 26 Göteborg Sweden	tel: +46 31 743 03 93	robin.lundgren@fiskeriverket.se
Macova, Marcela	Czech Statistical Office Na padesatem 81 100 82 Prague 10 Czech Republic	Phone: ++420 274 054 088 Fax: ++420 274 054 120	marcela.macova@czso.cz
McLoughlin, Margaret	Central Statistical Office Skehard Road Cork Ireland	tel: 353 214535601	Margaret.mcloughlin@cso.ie
de Meo, Michele	IREPA ONLUS Via S.Leonardo Trav. Migliaro snc IT-84131 Salerno Italy Http: www.irepa.org	tel: +39 089 338978 fax: +39 089 330835 mobile: +39 329 8954786	demeo@irepa.org
Mikelsone, Inese	Division of Fishing Management and Regulation-Fisheries Policy Ministry of Agriculture 2, Republikas Laukums 1010 Riga Latvia	tel: +371 670 275 25	inese.mikelsone@vzp.gov.lv

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE/FAX	EMAIL
Mimica, Renata	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development Directorate of Fishery Fleet Management Division Branch Office Rijeka Demetrova 3 51000 Rijeka Croatia	tel/fax: +385 51 321 293	mpsvg.ribarstvo.rijeka@ri.t-com.hr
Moura, Carlos	Department for Information and Management of the Activity DGPA – General Directorate for Fisheries and Agriculture Av.a Brasília 1449-030 Lisboa Portugal	tel: +351 21 303 58 73 fax: +351 21 303 59 33	cmoura@dgpa.min-agricultura.pt
Nielsen, Rasmus	The Danish Directorate of Fisheries Unit of Statistics Nyropsgade 30 1780 Copenhagen V Denmark	tel: +45 7218 5917	rani@fd.dk
Paquotte, Philippe	Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) B-1049 Brussels Belgium Office: BRU-J-99 03/061	Phone: +(32) 2 2997632	philippe.paquotte@ec.europa.eu
Pilka, Leszek	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development Department of Fisheries Poland	tel: +48 022 623 24 40	leszek.pilka@minrol.gov.pl
Ranner, Herwig	Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) B-1049 Brussels Belgium Office: BRU-J-79 02/070	Phone: +(32) 2 2999805	herwig.ranner@ec.europa.eu
Reade, Stefan	Marine Fisheries Agency Fisheries Statistics 3–8 Whitehall Place London SW1A 2HH UK	tel: +44 207 270 8127 fax: +44 207 270 8072	Stefan.reade@mfa.gsi.gov.uk
Reitsema, Marius	Statistics Netherlands Division of Business Statistics P O Box 24500 2490 HA Den Haag Netherlands	tel: +31 70 337 4302	mrta@cbs.nl
Sigfinnsson, Gudmundur	Hagstofa Íslands/Statistics Iceland Borgartuni 21a 150 Reykjavik		gudmundur.sigfinnsson@hagstofa.is

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE/FAX	EMAIL
Storbraten, Berit	Statistics Norway Oterveien 3 2225 Kongsvinger Norway	tel: +47 62 88 51 16	berit.storbraten@ssb.no
Stroie, Constantin	National Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture 35-37 Sos. Oltenitei Sector 4 Bucharest Romania	tel: +40 216344429 tel: +40 216344430 fax: +40 21 3326 132	constantin.stroie@anpa.ro
Suranyi, Daniel	Eurostat E2 5, rue A. Weicker 2721 Luxembourg Luxembourg Office BECH A3/131	Phone: +352 4301 35250	Daniel.Suranyi@ec.europa.eu
Tanti, Ronald	National Statistics Office Agriculture and Fisheries Unit Lascaris VALLETTA VLT 2000 Malta	tel: +356 2599 7333 fax: +356 2599 7343	ronald.tanti.gov.mt
Tessens, Eddy	Vlaamse Overheid Landbouw en Visserij Vrijhavenstraat 5 8400 Oostende Belgium	tel: +32 59 431920 fax: +32 59 807693	eddy.tessens@lv.vlaanderen.be
Tritten, Christian	Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) B-1049 Brussels Belgium Office: BRU-J-99 02/050	Phone: +(32) 2 2999509	christian.tritten@ec.europa.eu
Tsuji, Sachiko FIES/FAO Observer	FAO-Fisheries and Aquaculture Information and Statistics Service Fishery and Aquaculture Department Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00153 Rome Italy	tel: +39 6 57055318 fax: +39 6 57052476	Sachiko.Tsuji@fao.org
Schenk, Herta	Eurostat E2 5, rue A. Weicker 2721 Luxembourg Luxembourg Office: BECH C3/632	Phone: +352 4301 31977	Herta.schenk@ec.europa.eu
Suranyi, Daniel	Eurostat E2 5, rue A. Weicker 2721 Luxembourg Luxembourg Office BECH A3/131	Phone: +352 4301 35250	Daniel.Suranyi@ec.europa.eu

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE/FAX	EMAIL
Verdier, Pierre	Bureau Central des Statistiques Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche Direction des Pêches maritimes et de l'Aquaculture 3, Place de Fontenoy 75007 Paris France	tel: +33 1 4955 82 81 fax: +33 1 4955 8200	Pierre.verdier@agriculture.gouv.fr
Vergina, Gita Chair 3 June	Eurostat E2 5, rue A. Weicker 2721 Luxembourg Luxembourg Office: BECH C3/631	Phone: +352 4301 37644	Gita.vergina@ec.europa.eu
Walther, Matthias	Statistisches Bundesamt Postfach 170377 53029 Bonn Germany	tel: +49 1888/644- 8666 fax: +49 1888/644- 8972	matthias.walther@destatis.de
Wandall, Mette	The Danish Directorate of Fisheries Unit of Statistics Nyropsgade 30 1780 COPENHAGEN V Denmark	tel: (+45) 7218 5916	mefn@fd.dk
Yordanova- Kapralyakova, Plamena	Ministry of Agriculture and Food National Agency for Fisheries and Aquacultures (NAFA) 17, Hristo Botev blvd 1606 Sofia Bulgaria	tel: +359 2 80 51 663 fax: +359 2 951 5718	p_eneva@nafa-bg.org
Zampogna, Franco Chair 4 June	Eurostat E2 5, rue A. Weicker 2721 Luxembourg Luxembourg Office: BECH C3/607	Tel: +352 4301 37268	franco.zampogna@ec.europa.eu
Zanzi, Antonella	Joint Research Centre Via E. Fermi 2749 I-21027 Ispra (VA) Italy Office: IPR-5A 00/006	Phone: +(39) 0332 78669	antonella.zanzi@jrc.ec.europa.eu