

THE THIRD WORKSHOP ON POPULATION OF THE RDBES DATA MODEL (WKRDB-POP3)

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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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Editors

Edvin Fuglebakk • David Currie

Authors

Maciej Adamowicz • Bernardo Alcoforado • Anja Helene Alvestad • Marco Antonio Ámez Fernández •
Kirsten Birch Håkansson • Isabel Bruno • José Castro Pampillón • Liz Clarke • Jessica Craig •
Sébastien Demanèche • Mathieu Depetris • Tenno Dreves • Josefine Egekvist • Elise Eidset •
Solva Eliassen • Jon Elson • Suzana Faria Cano • Ana Fernandes • Jose Miguel García Rebollo •
Francisco Gómez • Terry Gooding • Sofie Gundersen • Anders Kagervall • Ruth Kelly •
Henrik Kjems-Nielsen • Joel Kostensalo • Katarzyna Krakówka • José Lorenzo González •
Richard Meitern • Karolina Molla Gazi • Siobhan Moran • Kay Panten • Duncan Parnell •
Christina Pettersson • Nuno Prista • Perttu Rantanen • Remigijus Sakas • Žiga Sanda • Petri Sarvamaa •
Ivo Šics • Rafn Sigurðsson • María Begoña Sotillo de Olano • Marijus Spegys • Christina Stefanou •
Marta Szymańska • Ioannis Thasitis • Julia Wischnewski



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i Executive summary

The aims of this workshop were to explain the data model developed for the commercial fisheries Regional Database and Estimation System (RDBES), assist in populating it with real data for the second test data call for the RDBES, and encourage participants to take part in ongoing testing of the RDBES data submission system.

This report documents the progress that participants have done to prepare their institutes for future use of the RDBES system. Some issues with data conversion have been identified and are documented in this report. None of the identified issues are thought to be serious impediments to moving forward with the RDBES development according to the roadmap decided by the Steering Committee of the Regional Fisheries Database in 2020. The RDBES Core Group (the group of people developing the RDBES data model) and ICES Data Centre will look at the results of this workshop and either respond to individual questions or adapt the data model and documentation as required.

The workshop concluded and reported before the deadline of the test data call. For a complete test of the data model, all participants were encouraged to complete the data call. A report on the degree of completion of the data call may be expected from WGRDBESGOV which convenes after the data call deadline.

ii Expert group information

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Expert group name | The Third Workshop on Population of the RDBES Data Model (WKRBD-POP3) |
| Expert group cycle | Annual |
| Year cycle started | 2021 |
| Reporting year in cycle | 1/1 |
| Chairs | David Currie, Ireland Edvin Fuglebakk, Norway |
| Meeting venue and dates | 14-18 June 2021, Online, 46 participants |

1 Introduction

Currently national institutes submit raised commercial fisheries data for use in ICES stock assessments using the InterCatch system. Most of them also submit detailed commercial fisheries data for use by the EU Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs) to the Regional Database (RDB) which is hosted by ICES.

The problems in the current system include:

- Lack of transparency;
- Duplication of effort;
- Lack of consistency;
- Lack of data quality indicators.

The Regional Database and Estimation system (RDBES) is currently in development and will replace both InterCatch and the existing RDB. It will store detailed commercial fisheries biological sample data (CS) alongside improved versions of the aggregated commercial effort (CE) and landings (CL) tables of the old RDB and will allow sample data to be raised for use in stock assessments in a transparent manner.

The aims of the RDBES are:

1. To make data available for the RCGs;
2. To provide a regional estimation system for ICES stock assessments;
3. To increase the data quality, documentation of data, and the use of approved methods;
4. To facilitate the production of fisheries management advice and reports;
5. To increase the awareness of fisheries data collected and the overall usage of these data.

The RDBES should be seen as part of the movements towards:

1. Statistically Sound Sampling Schemes (4S);
2. Greater regional coordination;
3. Transparent Assessment Framework (TAF);
4. Improved estimates to ICES stock assessments and advice.

The timeline for the transition between InterCatch/RDB to the new RDBES is given in Table 1.1.

In order to fulfil this timeline, it is necessary to explain the data model to data submitters and give them support in populating it with their national data. It is also necessary to get practical experience with using the data model for estimation so that the data model can be finalized with necessary improvements to support actual estimation. The work with data model population and development of estimation procedures was initiated in 2019 with the workshop WKRDB-POP and WKRDB-EST. The current WKRDB-POP3 and the WKRDB-EST2 and WGRDBES-EST are continuations of the workshop from 2020. The WKRDB-POP3 and the WGRDBES-EST should be considered two parts of the same process - the outputs from WKRDB-POP3 are vital as the inputs to WGRDBES-EST. The meetings of these groups are in 2021 organized around the second test data call issued for the RDBES.

Table 1.1. Timeline for RDBES development

| | RDB System | InterCatch | RDBES |
|------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| 2019 | Production Data in/out | Production Data in/out | Development Test data in/out |
| 2020 | Production Data in/out | Production Data in/out | Test by selected stocks |
| 2021 | Production Data in/out | Production Data in/out | Test by selected stocks and bycatch data, as well as complete landings data (all species) |
| 2022 | Stay alive Data in/out | Stay alive Data in/out | Data call for 2021 data |
| 2023 | Stay alive Data out | Stay alive Data out | Data call for 2022 and all older years |

The RDBES data model for sampled data has been developed over a series of ICES workshops and have only seen minor changes since WKRDB-POP 2019, and the 2020 test data call resulted in successful data submissions. WKRDB-POP 3 did not uncover major issues, and indicate that a similar data volume may be expected for the 2021 test data call.

The RDBES format for effort and landings data (equivalent to the CE and CL formats in the current RDB) was for the first time considered in detail outside of the RDBES Core Group at WKRDB-POP2. This also resulted in successful data submissions. WKRDB-POP3 uncovered a potential issue with obtaining complete landings records for all countries, which will be followed up by the Core Group. The workshop did not identify any new issues with submitting landing and effort data for select species for the test data call from 2020. It is reasonable to expect a higher data volume for the 2021 test data call, than for the 2020 test data call, since now all species have to be uploaded for landing and effort.

The RDBES development ties in with ICES Advisory Plan priority areas 1 (Assuring Quality) and 4 (Sharing Evidence). The aim is to continue the development of a comprehensive ICES quality management system for advice including implementing the Regional Database and Estimation System (RDBES) and integrating it with the Transparent Assessment Framework (TAF) that will, where possible, ensure that all advice products are based on data that adhere to the FAIR principles (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reusability).

The agreed funding requires the delivery of:

- A fully operational ICES Regional Database (RDBES) with a regional estimation system such that statistical estimates for stock assessment can be produced from detailed sample data in a transparent manner at the end of 2021;
- The ability to incorporate detailed data on Bycatch and PETS AND/OR Recreational data (to be determined by the RDBES Steering Committee) in the RDBES at the end of 2023.

2 Describe and explain the RDBES data model (ToR a)

Version 1.19 of the RDBES data model was used for the workshop and the details were provided both via the public GitHub repository (<https://github.com/ices-tools-dev/RDBES>) and the workshop SharePoint. This report will not duplicate the details of the data model.

The data model was explained using a combination of presentations, hands-on sessions, and bookable online support slots that were arranged based on the individual needs of participants. Participants that worked in the same institutes or countries were grouped together and generally attended the support slot together.

During the hands-on sessions, participants worked on mapping their national data to the RDBES data model with guidance from the Core Group members, and developing code to perform data extraction and conversion. Some participants were able to build on the work they did during the WKRD-POP and WKRD-POP2 workshops, while others were getting started with data adaptation this year. Participants were able to progress at their own pace.

2.1 New developments

Some features of the RDBES were presented for testing for the first time. This includes a revision of some code-lists to be shared with other ICES databases, a revised set of métier-codes, new features for recording incidental bycatch data, revised codes for selection methods, and some new fields for recording biological data (BV and FM table).

2.1.1 Code lists

The ICES vocabulary server (RECO) is the main ICES reference management system that has been around for nearly 20 years. To improve communications across projects and disciplines a Reference Management Group (RMG) was established in the ICES Secretariat at the end of 2020 to review requests for changes to code lists and manage cross-disciplinary work relating to controlled vocabularies. This group comprises ICES Data Officers and the Head of Data. As a result of this there has been an extra focus on using shared code lists within the RDBES in addition to those that are already in use (such as area and country codes).

2.1.2 Métiers

During the last three years, the métier codes describing fisheries have been revised. In a 2018 workshop it was clear that métier codes are allocated differently across nations, and best practices were discussed. An intersessional group under the EU Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs) was established and in 2019 the group worked on a suggestion for harmonized métier codes without overlapping mesh sizes, and work on a script to allocate métier codes to transversal data was started. The RCG ISSG on Métier issues has developed a list of harmonized and standardized métier codes that are requested for the 2021 RDBES test data call. The list will be available as an ICES vocabulary. A manual is available on information about the new métier codes

<https://github.com/ices-eg/RCGs/blob/master/Metiers/Manual%20for%20assigning%20metiers%20to%20transversal%20data.zip>

The new métiers are very similar to the current format but the new codes are harmonised and standardised. The RDBES 2021 test data call will use the new métier codes - the new codes will also be requested to be used in ICES WGBYC, ICES VMS/Logbook data, and STECF FDI in 2022. The RCG Metiers group will evaluate the use of the new codes in the RDBES test data call in 2021.

2.1.3 Incidental by-catch

The RDBES development road-map includes the aim of including incidental bycatch data in the database. In line with this the ICES Secretariat met with the chair of the Working Group on By-catch of Protected Species (WGBYC) to discuss what was required (and possible). Nuno Prista then liaised with WGBYC and the RDBES “Core Group” to agree the way forward. There are requirements to record incidental bycatch data from both existing monitoring, and dedicated incidental bycatch monitoring programmes. The 2021 RDBES test data call already requests incidental bycatch data.

2.1.4 Selection method codes

The RDBES allows data-submitters to specify the selection method they used when selecting samples. Following discussions with WGCATCH it was agreed to expand and edit these codes - in particular the codes that relate to non-probabilistic selection.

2.1.5 Changes to data tables (BV and FM tables)

- Submitters can now record processing state and presentation separately to the sample (SA) table e.g. if fish are sampled fresh, but then frozen and defrosted before being measured
- Submitters can now record what they have measured (e.g. fork length), what length is required in the assessment (e.g. total length), and the conversion factor is required
- The tables use common code lists where possible
- Submitters can now record qualitative assessment of the certainty of the measurement - currently just used for WGBIOP age quality values but there is a plan to expand this to other variables in the future.
- Submitters can also record quantitative measure of certainty e.g. likelihood of being the assigned stock

For submission to the RDB, data submitters are requested to fill out an upload log that provides an overview of data uploaded and any data that could not be uploaded. A proposal for an RDBES upload log was presented at the meeting. None of the participants had comments to this, but a proper testing of that form may be conducted when data is actually submitted. The proposal for the upload log is available in the workshop sharepoint (“04. Working Documents /Upload_Log_Template-2021-RDBES-POP3”). Feedback may be presented to the RDBES developers at the time of the data call-deadline.

3 Practical guidance and assistance to national data submitters (ToR b)

Each participant worked with data from their respective countries, and attempted to adapt those to the RDBES data model. A summary of the data sets that was worked on, and the progress achieved at the end of the workshop is given in the table below. Participants were also asked to indicate if they expected to be able to complete the data call by the deadline in September. Their expectation in this regard is indicated in the rightmost column. Among the participating institutions 17 are answerable to the test data-call. Out of these 14 reported that they expect to fully upload the requested data, and 2 reported that they will be able to partially answer the data call.

Progress table goes here. Columns A, D-J, L and M from: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1YiofXTAhE5Am2Or36-BVPLGLAJNuIFOihb5IGai5ghM/edit#gid=0>

3.1 Progress after the workshop

Most participants will continue working on populating the data model towards the deadline for the test data-call in September. Many of these are enrolled in the testing group described in the next chapter, and will receive frequent updates about bug-fixes and updates to code-lists and documentation. For other participants and for the general public, periodic updates the data model documentation will be made available at the public RDBES github repository: <https://github.com/ices-tools-dev/RDBES>

The data model will not add new features in the period leading up to the deadline for the test data-call. Only corrections necessary to accommodate existing features will be made. Data-submitters are still encouraged to record feature requests or data-compatibility issues for consideration for future data model revisions. This is best recorded as an issue on the github issue-tracker: <https://github.com/ices-tools-dev/RDBES/issues>

ICES are currently in the process of updating and creating required code lists - this will be completed by 31st August. However, it will still be possible for data submitters to request new codes to be added to existing code lists after this point.

For the WKRDB-POP2 workshop, the ICES Data Centre had created a development version of the data uploader and validator which was presented to the participants along with an explanation of the data upload format (following the same pattern as the RDB and InterCatch csv upload files). This upload tool was not available during WKRDB-POP3 as adaptation to data model revisions are still being implemented. The ICES Data Centre will continue developing the submission system to ensure it is ready to accept test data before the 31st of August 2021. It will be made available at: <https://sboxrdbes.ices.dk>. In the test-phase, bug reports can be sent to RDBsupport@ices.dk.

The workshop sharepoint contains a folder that is intended to hold example data sets. Participants with permission to share data, were encouraged to upload their data sets there as they finalize data preparation, even if that happens after the workshop is done. Such data sets can serve as illustrative examples for other users, and may form the basis for conducting tests of the RDBES upload tool. The folder for example data sets are located at "04. Working Documents / data_sets".

4 Data conversion issues identified (ToR c)

Data model issues and documentation issues are recorded in a github issue tracker¹ and have been considered by the Core Group in regular meetings for the last few years. Some new issues were identified at the workshop and recorded in this issue tracker, namely issues [#113](#), [#114](#), [#115](#), [#116](#), and [#117](#). Some already recorded, but yet unresolved issues resurfaced, namely issues [#46](#) and issues in comments to [#15](#).

Issue #46 concerns the mandatory status of the monetary value of landings in the CL table. As the test-data call this year was extended to all species for landings data, it revealed that complete recording of this information may not be practical, even when estimates from mean prices or mean historical prices are allowed. This issue was discussed in a plenary session. The discussion revealed that most countries can provide values for most species, but several countries will have problems filling in the value field for all species. Concerns raised included difficulty in obtaining prices for low-volume species, and that general concerns about anonymity were enhanced when prices are involved. Possibilities for softer mandatory status were discussed.

¹ <https://github.com/ices-tools-dev/RDBES/issues>

5 Facilitate participation in future testing of the RDBES (ToR d)

At WKRDB-POP2 a testing group was established. The intention was that the ICES Data Centre would inform the testing group of updates to the RDBES submission system and encourage them to test updates by resubmitting data. Apart from the process of submitting the 2020 test data call, this group has not been called upon. The ICES Data Centre still anticipates that the test group may be needed in the future. Participants in WKRDB-POP3 were therefore encouraged to volunteer for the test group. The current volunteers are listed in the table below. They will be followed up by the ICES Data Centre.

5.1 Participants in RDBES testing group

| Name | Institute | Country (of institute) | Email |
|--|------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Edvin Fuglebakk | IMR | Norway | Edvin.Fuglebakk@hi.no |
| Petri Sarvamaa | LUKE | Finland | petri.sarvamaa@luke.fi |
| Perttu Rantanen | LUKE | Finland | perttu.rantanen@luke.fi |
| Karolina Molla Gazi | WMR | Netherlands | karolina.mollagazi@wur.nl |
| Marco A. Ámez | IEO | Spain | marco.amez@ieo.es |
| Josefine Egekvist | DTU Aqua | Denmark | jsv@aqua.dtu.dk |
| Ana Fernandes | IPMA | Portugal | acfernandes@ipma.pt |
| Dália Reis | DRP- Azores | Portugal | dalia.cc.reis@azores.gov.pt |
| Suzana Cano | DGRM | Portugal | sfcano@dgrm.mm.gov.pt |
| Lídia Gouveia | DRP- Madeira | Portugal | lidia.gouveia@madeira.gov.pt |
| Richard Meitern | EMI | Estonia | richard.meitern@ut.ee |
| Maciej Adamowicz | NMFRI | Poland | madamowicz@mir.gdynia.pl |
| Marta Suska | NMFRI | Poland | msuska@mir.gdynia.pl |
| Katarzyna Krakówka | NMFRI | Poland | kkrakowka@mir.gdynia.pl |
| Francisco Gómez | IEO | Spain | francisco.gomez@ieo.es |
| Isabel Bruno | IEO | Spain | isabel.bruno@ieo.es |
| Sven Stötera | Thünen-OF | Germany | sven.stoetera@thuenen.de |
| Julia Wischnewski | Thünen-SF | Germany | julia.wischnewski@thuenen.de |
| Afra Egan | Marine Institute | Ireland | afra.egan@marine.ie |
| Siobhan Moran | Marine Institute | Ireland | siobhan.moran@marine.ie |
| Nuno Prista | SLU AQUA | Sweden | nuno.prista@slu.se |
| Federico Maioli | SLU AQUA | Sweden | federico.maioli@slu.se |
| Jose Rodriguez | IEO | Spain | jose.rodriguez@ieo.es |
| Sébastien Demanèche (esp. CE/CL data) | IFREMER | France | sdemanec@ifremer.fr |
| Liz Clarke | MSS | UK - Scotland | liz.clarke@gov.scot |
| M. Begoña Sotillo de Olano | IEO | Spain | begona.sotillo@ieo.es |

| Name | Institute | Country (of institute) | Email |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| José Miguel García Rebollo | IEO | Spain | miguel.garcia@ieo.es |
| Ioannis Thasitis | DFMR | Cyprus | ithasitis@dfmr.moa.gov.cy |

6 List of resources developed by participants

6.1 Ireland

- Code to validate national data using the RDBES BaseType.xsd file has previously been developed - this needs updating to the latest RDBES data model.
- Code to extract data and format it for HCL, HCE, HVD, HSL, H1, and H5 has previously been developed - this also needs updating to the latest RDBES data model.
- The existing code is publically available on GitHub at [davidcurrie2001/MI_RDBES_ExchangeFiles](https://github.com/davidcurrie2001/MI_RDBES_ExchangeFiles)

7 Conclusion

All Terms of Reference (ToR) were satisfactorily addressed at the workshop. With regards to ToR c) only minor incompatibilities were identified, none of which we consider to delay the RDBES development. However, it should be noted there are still some issues raised at both this workshop and the 2020 WKRDB-POP2 workshop that are unresolved and need further consideration. Development is still progressing according to the timeline referred to in the introduction to this report.

Annex 1: List of participants

| Name | Institute | Country (of institute) | Email |
|------------------------------|---|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Maciej Adamowicz | National Marine Fisheries Research Institute | Poland | madamowicz@mir.gdynia.pl |
| Bernardo Alcoforado | Directorate-General for Natural Resources, Safety and Maritime Services | Portugal | balcoforado@dgrm.mm.gov.pt |
| Anja Helene Alvestad | IMR | Norway | anja.helene.alvestad@hi.no |
| Marco Antonio Ámez Fernández | IEO | Spain | marco.amez@ieo.es |
| Kirsten Birch Håkansson | DTU Aqua | Denmark | kih@aqua.dtu.dk |
| Isabel Bruno | IEO | Spain | isabel.bruno@ieo.es |
| José Castro Pampillón | IEO | Spain | jose.castro@ieo.es |
| Liz Clarke | Marine Scotland | UK-Scotland | Liz.Clarke@gov.scot |
| Jessica Craig | Marine Science Scotland | UK-Scotland | Jessica.Craig@gov.scot |
| David Currie | Marine Institute | Ireland | David.Currie@Marine.ie |
| Sébastien Demanèche | IFREMER | France | Sebastien.Demaneche@ifremer.fr |
| Mathieu Depetris | IRD | France | mathieu.depetris@ird.fr |
| Tenno Dreves | Estonian Marine Institute | Estonia | tenno.dreves@ut.ee |
| Josefine Egekvist | DTU Aqua | Denmark | jsv@aqua.dtu.dk |
| Elise Eidset | IMR | Norway | Elise.Eidset@hi.no |
| Solva Eliassen | Faroe Marine Research Institute | Faroe Islands | Solvae@hav.fo |
| Jon Elson | CEFAS | UK-England | jon.elson@cefasc.co.uk |
| Suzana Faria Cano | Directorate-General for Natural Resources, Safety and Maritime Services | Portugal | sfcano@dgrm.mm.gov.pt |
| Ana Fernandes | IPMA | Portugal | acfernandes@ipma.pt |
| Edvin Fuglebakk | IMR | Norway | Edvin.Fuglebakk@hi.no |
| Jose Miguel García Rebollo | IEO | Spain | miguel.garcia@ieo.es |
| Francisco Gómez | IEO | Spain | francisco.gomez@ieo.es |
| Terry Gooding | CEFAS | UK-England | Terry.Gooding@cefasc.co.uk |
| Sofie Gundersen | IMR | Norway | sofie.gundersen@hi.no |
| Anders Kagervall | SLU | Sweden | Anders.Kagervall@slu.se |
| Ruth Kelly | AFBI | Northern Ireland | Ruth.Kelly@afbini.gov.uk |
| Henrik Kjems-Nielsen | ICES Secretariat | Denmark | Henrikkn@ices.dk |
| Joel Kostensalo | LUKE | Finland | joel.kostensalo@luke.fi |
| Katarzyna Krakówka | National Marine Fisheries Research Institute | Poland | kkrakowka@mir.gdynia.pl |
| José Lorenzo González | IEO | Spain | jose.lorenzo@ieo.es |
| Richard Meitern | Estonian Marine Institute | Estonia | richard.meitern@gmail.com |

| Name | Institute | Country (of institute) | Email |
|-------------------------------|--|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Karolina Molla Gazi | WUR | Netherlands | karolina.mollagazi@wur.nl |
| Siobhan Moran | MI | Ireland | Siobhan.Moran@Marine.ie |
| Kay Panten | Thünen Institute of Sea fisheries | Germany | kay.panten@thuenen.de |
| Duncan Parnell | CEFAS | UK-England | Duncan.parnell@cefass.co.uk |
| Christina Pettersson | SLU | Sweden | christina.e.pettersson@slu.se |
| Nuno Prista | SLU | Sweden | nuno.prista@slu.se |
| Perttu Rantanen | LUKE | Finland | Perttu.Rantanen@luke.fi |
| Remigijus Sakas | Marine Research Institute, Klaipeda University | Lithuania | remigijus.sakas@apc.ku.lt |
| Žiga Sanda | Fisheries Research Institute | Slovenia | ziga.sanda@zzrs.si |
| Petri Sarvamaa | LUKE | Finland | Petri.Sarvamaa@luke.fi |
| Ivo Šics | BIOR | Latvia | ivo.sics@bior.lv |
| Rafn Sigurðsson | Marine and Freshwater Research Institute | Iceland | rafn.sigurdsson@hafogvatn.is |
| María Begoña Sotillo de Olano | IEO | Spain | begona.sotillo@ieo.es |
| Marijus Spegys | Marine Research Institute, Klaipeda University | Lithuania | marijus.spegys@apc.ku.lt |
| Christina Stefanou | Department of Fisheries and Marine Research | Cyprus | cstefanou@dfmr.moa.gov.cy |
| Marta Szymańska | National Marine Fisheries Research Institute | Poland | msuska@mir.gdynia.pl |
| Ioannis Thasitis | Department of Fisheries and Marine Research | Cyprus | IThasitis@dfmr.moa.gov.cy |
| Julia Wischnewski | Thünen Institute of Sea fisheries | Germany | julia.wischnewski@thuenen.de |

Annex 2: Resolution

Third Workshop on Populating the RDBES data model (WKRDB-POP3)

2020/WK/DSTSG05 The **Third Workshop on Populating the RDBES data model (WKRDB-POP3)** chaired by David Currie, Ireland and Edvin Fuglebakk, Norway will be held online from 14th - 18th June 2021 to:

- a. Describe and explain the RDBES data model to national data submitters using worked examples ([Science Plan Codes: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3](#)).
- b. Provide hands-on guidance and assistance to national data submitters to write working data extraction scripts to convert national data formats to the RDBES data format ([Science Plan Codes: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3](#)).
- c. Identify and document any problems in converting national data formats to the RDBES format ([Science Plan Codes: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3](#)).
- d. Facilitate wider participation in testing of the RDBES data submission system ([Science Plan Codes: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3](#)).

WKRDB-POP3 will report by 31 August 2021 for the attention of the Data Science and Technology Steering Group, ACOM and SCICOM.

Supporting information

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| Priority | <p>The activities of this workshop will promote the development of a Regional Database and Estimation System, RDBES. This workshop will help countries to correctly convert their national data formats to the RDBES format. The RDBES when it is implemented works as a database for the Baltic Sea, North Sea & Eastern Arctic, North Atlantic and Long Distance Fisheries Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs). The RDBES will also function as a database and estimation system for ICES Fisheries Advice. The development will concentrate on harmonisation, quality assuring, documentation, approved estimation methods and transparency. Consequently, these activities are considered to have a very high priority.</p> <p>ICES will issue a data call in 2021 for 2020 samples for selected stocks, and 2020 landings and effort data for all stocks, in the new RDBES format. The ideal conclusion is that at the end of this workshop each person attending has developed working scripts to extract the data that will be requested by the RDBES data call</p> |
| Scientific justification | <p>The RDBES will be extensively used by the RCGs and ICES both to store detailed fisheries sample data and use it for estimation - therefore it is essential that national data submitters are familiar with the RDBES format and confident in correctly converting their national data to this format. The WKRDB-POP in 2019 and WKRDB-POP2 in 2020 started this process but it is necessary to hold a third workshop because (i) there have been minor changes to the RDBES data model since the last workshop, and (ii) not all institutes submitting data was able to submit data to the 2020 test data call, and support for further work on data conversion routines are indicated.</p> <p>ToR a) – Describe and explain the RDBES data model to national data submitters using worked examples</p> |

The RDBES data format will be explained using its documentation, and a number of worked examples. These worked examples will play an important role in illustrating the types of decisions that data submitters will need to make.

ToR b) – Provide hands-on guidance and assistance to national data submitters to write working data extraction scripts to convert national data formats to the RDBES data format

This is the most important part of the workshop and will occupy the majority of the workshop’s time - it will entail the RDBES Core Group providing practical online assistance to the attendees. The workshop attendees must be familiar with their own national sampling programme designs, and must have made preparations necessary to provide real data sets of their national samples to the workshop. The Core Group will then help them to convert their data to the new RDBES format. The more work that attendees have done in trying to populate the RDBES format with their own data before the workshop the more value they will gain from this work.

When new questions are identified and resolved they can be added to the RDBES “Frequently Asked Questions” so that other people can benefit from the answers.

ToR c) – Identify and document any problems in converting national data formats to the RDBES format problems

If it is not clear how particular data should be converted to the RDBES format then this will be recorded for future discussion and resolution.

ToR d) - Encourage national data submitters to join the RDBES testing group

WKRDB-POP 2 participants contributed significantly to testing the RDBES data submission system in the interim between that workshop and the deadline for the test-data call. This was key in addressing many specific software issues, and it would be desirable to expand this testing group to a wider selection of national data-submitters. Rigorous and in-depth testing is vital to ensure RDBES can meet its deliverables and to ensure the system and all supporting facilities are functioning as envisioned and designed.

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| Resource requirements | Members of the “RDBES Core Group” will be requested to participate as hands-on instructors/demonstrators. The ICES Data Centre will provide technical support for RDBES data uploading. |
| Participants | ~60 people |
| Secretariat facilities | SharePoint, Online meeting room support |
| Financial | No financial implications. |
| Linkages to advisory committees | There are no direct linkages with the advisory committees, but most of the stock assessment Working Groups will be impacted by the development of the RDBES. |
| Linkages to other committees or groups | There is a link to WGCATCH, WGQUALITY and WGBYC. |
| Linkages to other organizations | The RDBES will support the work done by the RCGs under the European Commission, EC. The aim is also allow the RDBES to support the countries in providing data for the data calls under the EC. |
