WGBIFS – Baltic International Fish Survey Working Group

2017/MA2/EOSG01 **The Baltic International Fish Survey Working Group** (WGBIFS), chaired by Olavi Kaljuste, Sweden, will meet to work on ToRs and generate deliverables as listed in the table below.

	Meeting dates	Venue	Reporting details	Comments (change in Chair, etc.)
Year 2018	24–28 March 2018	Lyngby-Copenhagen, Denmark	The first interim report by 15 May 2018 to, SCICOM and ACOM	Olavi Kaljuste appointed as chair
Year 2019	25-29 March 2019	Klaipeda University, Lithuania	The second interim report by 15 May 2019 to SCICOM and ACOM	
Year 2020	30 March– 3 April 2020	By Correspondence/Skype	Final report by 7th January 2021 to SCICOM and ACOM	
Year 2020	1-3 December 2020	By Correspondence/Webex	Final report by 7th January 2021 to SCICOM and ACOM	

ToR descriptors

ToR	Description	Background	Science plan codes	Duration	Expected deliverables
a	Combine and analyse the results of spring and autumn acoustic surveys and experiments	Acoustic surveys provide important fishery-independent stock estimates for Baltic herring and sprat stocks	3.1	annually Year 1, 2 and 3	Updated acoustic tuning index for WGBFAS
b	Update the BIAS and BASS hydroacoustic databases and ICES database for acoustic-trawl surveys	The aim of BIAS and BASS databases is to store the aggregated data. The aim of ICES database is to ensure that the standardized and quality-controlled scrutinized data from the acoustic-trawl surveys will be stored centrally in a safe way and enables easy access to the data, which will facilitate usage for many different analyses by a wider range of users.	3.1	annually Year 1, 2 and 3	Updated databases with acoustic and biotic data for WGBIFS
c	Coordinate and plan acoustic surveys including any experiments to be conducted	Acoustic surveys provide important fishery-independent stock estimates for Baltic herring and sprat stocks	3.1	annually Year 1, 2 and 3	Finalized planning for the surveys for WGBIFS
d	Discuss the BITS surveys results and evaluate the characteristics of TVL and TVS standard gears used in BITS	Demersal trawl surveys provide important fishery-independent stock estimates for Baltic cod and flatfish stocks	3.1	annually Year 1, 2 and 3	Updated BITS data in DATRAS database for ICES Data Centre and WGBFAS

e	Coordinate and plan demersal trawl surveys and experiments to be conducted, and update and correct the Tow Database	Demersal trawl surveys provide important fishery-independent stock estimates for Baltic cod and flatfish stocks	3.1	annually Year 1, 2 and 3	Finalized planning for the surveys for WGBIFS, updated and corrected Tow Database
f	Conduct analyses related to the improvement of quality of acoustic indices and estimation of the uncertainty in the BIAS and BASS surveys	Acoustic surveys provide important fishery-independent stock estimates for Baltic herring and sprat stocks	3.1, 3.2, 3.3	Year 1-3	Improved quality of acoustic indices with estimates of the uncertainty for WGBFAS
g	Update on progress in development of the StoX software and implementation of it for the calculation of WGBIFS acoustic stock estimates, based on the IBAS methodology and data from ICES acoustic-trawl survey database	StoX software produces fish abundance estimations in a transparent and reproducible way. Planned development of the StoX post-processing program should allow implication this software by WGBIFS using the acoustic and biotic data from ICES database for acoustic-trawl surveys. Comparisons will be performed to validate whether the StoX software provides us similar results as the current IBAS calculation method in order to allow WGBIFS to use it as a new standard tool for the calculation of annual BIAS and BASS survey estimates.	3.1, 3.2	Year 1-3	Improved transparency and reproducibility of acoustic indices, improved pace of work on the level of national data compilation and verification
h	Define methods for the appropriate processing of the survey data and output products from the BITS survey to deliver input-data for calculation of the Baltic LFI and MML indicators.	The ground trawl surveys provide important fishery-independent stock estimates for Baltic cod and flatfish stocks and can be a source of the ecosystem indicators, recently requested by different scientific organizations	3.1, 3.2	Year 1, 2 and 3	Improvement the scientific knowledge about the demersal/benthic components (mostly fish) in the Baltic Sea
i	Coordinate the marine litter-sampling programme within the Baltic International Trawl Survey and registering the data in the ICES database.	Collected and registered information about the marine litter (mostly anthropogenic origin), occasionally appeared in the ground trawl fish control-catches, are additional source of data about present ecological status of marine seabed in investigated areas of the Baltic.	3.1	annually Year 1, 2 and 3	Coordinated the marine litter sampling programme in the Baltic International Trawl Survey (BITS).
j	Agree a standard pelagic trawl gear used in BIAS and BASS surveys	Acoustic surveys provide important fishery-independent estimates for Baltic herring and sprat stocks size and possible uncertainties, which result from, e.g. different type of fishing gears applied for fish control-catches, should be eliminated.	3.1, 3.2	Year 1-3	Agreement on the standard pelagic fishing gear which will be used in the BIAS and BASS surveys

k	Review and update the International Baltic Acoustic Surveys (IBAS) manual and address methodological question raised at the last review of the SISP	Acoustic surveys provide important fishery-independent stock estimates for Baltic herring and sprat stocks	3.1, 3.2	Year 3	Updated IBAS manual for WGBIFS (SISP 8)
l	Review and update the Baltic International Trawl Survey (BITS) manual and address methodological question raised at the last review of the SISP	Demersal trawl surveys provide important fishery-independent stock estimates for Baltic cod and flatfish stocks	3.1, 3.2	Year 3	Updated BITS manual for WGBIFS (SISP 7)

Summary of the Work Plan

Year 1	Compilation the survey results from 2017 and the first quarter of 2018 and reporting to WGBFAS. Coordination and planning the schedule for surveys in 2018 and first half of 2019. Review the development and validation progress of the StoX software. Coordinate the marine litter-sampling programme in the BITS surveys and registering the data in the ICES database. Define methods for the appropriate processing of the survey data and output products from the BITS survey to deliver input-data for calculation of the Baltic LFI and MML indicators. The approach to designing the standard pelagic fishing gear used in BIAS and BASS surveys.
Year 2	Compilation the survey results from 2018 and first quarter of 2019 and reporting to WGBFAS. Coordination and planning the schedule for surveys in 2019 and first half of 2020. Review the development and validation progress of the StoX software. Coordinate the marine litter-sampling programme in the BITS surveys and registering the data in the ICES database. Define methods for the appropriate processing of the survey data and output products from the BITS survey to deliver input-data for calculation of the Baltic LFI and MML indicators. The approach to designing the standard pelagic fishing gear used in BIAS and BASS surveys.
Year 3	Compilation the survey results from 2019 and first quarter of 2020 and reporting to WGBFAS. Coordination and planning the schedule for surveys 2020 and first half of 2021. Implementation of the StoX software linked with the ICES acoustic-trawl survey database for the calculation of stock estimates for Baltic herring and sprat. Coordinate the marine litter-sampling programme in the BITS surveys and registering the data in the ICES database. An attempt to calculate the LFI and MML indicators based on the Baltic research surveys (e.g. BITS). Reviewing and updating the BITS and IBAS survey manuals according to SISP standards. Final decision concerning the possible implementation of the standard pelagic fishing gear for control-catches in BIAS and BASS surveys and assignment of the intercalibration exercises between the new and old fishing gears.

Supporting information

Priority	The scientific surveys coordinated by this Group provide major fishery-independent tuning information for the assessment of several fish stocks in the Baltic Sea. Consequently, these activities are considered to have a very high priority.
Resource requirements	The research programmes which provide the main input to this group are already underway, and resources are already committed. The additional resource required to undertake additional activities in the framework of this group is negligible.
Participants	The Group is normally attended by about 25 members and guests.
Secretariat facilities	None.
Financial	No financial implications.

Linkages to ACOM and groups under ACOM	The survey data are prime inputs to the assessments of Baltic herring, sprat, cod and flatfish stocks carried out by WGBFAS. Linked to ACOM through the quality of stock assessments and management advice.
Linkages to other committees or groups	There is a very close working relationship with WGBFAS. It is also relevant to the HAPSISG, WGFAST and the new working group on Marine litter (WGML).
Linkages to other organizations	No direct linkage to other organizations.