Executive summary

The ICES Working Group on Baltic International Fish Surveys (WGBIFS) met at Atlantic Scientific Research Institute of Marine Fisheries and Oceanography (AtlantNIO), Kaliningrad, Russia 21–25 March 2011 to compile the survey results from second half of 2010 and first half of 2011 and to coordinate and plan the schedule for surveys in second half of 2011 and first half of 2012. Furthermore, the common survey manuals were updated according to decisions made during the meeting. All fish stock assessment relevant surveys in the Baltic Sea with international participation (both bottom-trawl surveys and acoustic surveys) are coordinated. The number of participants was 22 including eight countries around the Baltic Sea. The group was chaired by Henrik Degel, Denmark.

The results of the standard data compilation can be found under the relevant sections for bottom-trawl and acoustic surveys respectively. Time-series of acoustic tuning fleets are presented in Annex 5.

The evaluation of the realized trawl and acoustic surveys showed that stock indices based on the surveys present realistic estimates of the current stocks. The discussion of the survey results and the planning of the next surveys clearly showed that it is necessary that the cruise leaders inform the coordinators of the surveys very fast if planned stations cannot be realized or planned areas cannot be covered due to technical failure of weather conditions to offer the opportunity of alternative solutions.

Different methodical aspects of the acoustic surveys were discussed. However, statistical analyses were commonly based on a subset of the data because the database of acoustic source data does not work. The group strongly recommends that ICES hosts this database and realizes necessary further development. Based on an available database methods can be developed and validated to improve the quality of the stock indices based on the acoustic surveys.

Large part of the working time was committed by discussions of additional terms of reference based on recommendations of other expert groups of EU. Unfortunately, the requests very general in some cases like the requirement of stomach samples without information concerning the required spatial and temporal resolution, clear definition of the required analyses, etc. so that clear decision by WGBIFS were not possible to avoid changes of the survey design. Changes of the survey design (lower coverage) influence the quality of the stock indices. Therefore, very clear defined demands are necessary as basis for discussing possible effects of the additional work concerning the survey design.