Executive summary

The ICES Working Group on Baltic International Fish Surveys (WGBIFS) met at rented conference room in the conference and party centre Atlantis, Tartu, Estonia 21–25 March 2013 to compile the survey results from 2012 and first half of 2013 and to coordinate and plan the schedule for surveys in second half of 2013 and first half of 2014. 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) were coordinated. Totally, 20 participants, representing nine countries around the Baltic Sea, attended in the WGBIFS meeting. One of the participants was a representative of the ICES Data Centre. The group was chaired by Olavi Kaljuste, Sweden.

The results of the survey (BIAS, BASS, BITS) standard data compilation can be found under the relevant sections. Time-series of the 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. Only the results of the BIAS survey in the ICES Subdivision 30 in 2012 might be biased because of the reduced survey effort (in 2012 Sweden could not support the funding of the survey in the Bothnian Sea due to economic difficulties within the DCF program and therefore the coverage of the SD30 had to be based on Finnish funding which resulted in half the normal effort).

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 control-stations cannot be realized or planned areas cannot be covered due to technical failure or 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 currently there exists no functioning database for acoustic source data.

During the first two days of the meeting the questions concerning the DATRAS database and the necessary actions needed to improve the quality of the products provided by ICES Data Centre based on BITS data were intensively discussed. One person from ICES Data Centre - data systems analyst Vaishav Soni, who is mainly working with the development and maintenance of the DATRAS-database, was present in the meeting. He informed the Group about the current developments of DATRAS and advised WGBIFS in the process of preparation of requests addressed to ICES Data Centre.

Large part of the working time was committed by discussions of additional terms of reference based on recommendations of other expert groups of EU and ICES. All these requests are replied in the current report.