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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

ATLANTIC, OUTERMOST REGIONS AND ARCTIC
STRUCTURAL ACTIONS: IRELAND, SPAIN, FRANCE, PORTUGAL AND UNITED KINGDOM;
HORIZONTAL MANAGEMENT OF DATA COLLECTION

Call for proposals
MARE/2014/19

**Strengthening regional cooperation in the area of
fisheries data collection**

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CALL FOR PROPOSALS – MARE/2014/19

STRENGTHENING REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE AREA OF FISHERIES DATA COLLECTION

1. INTRODUCTION – BACKGROUND

This call for proposals is published under the terms of Article 86.2 (f) of Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1198/2006 and Council Regulation (EC) No 861/2006 and Council Regulation No 1255/2011 on Integrated Maritime Policy.

The relevant Commission Implementing Decision concerning the adoption of the 2014 work programme for grants and procurement under the maritime affairs and common fisheries policy, serving as a financing decision was adopted on 18/06/2014 (C(2014)3975).

This document provides detailed information on the content, the selection process and the implementation of projects to strengthen regional cooperation in the area of fisheries data collection.

All the relevant information to this call for proposals can be found and downloaded in the following website:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/maritimeaffairs_fisheries/contracts_and_funding/calls_for_proposals/index_en.htm

2. OBJECTIVE(S) – THEME(S) – PRIORITIES

Background

Reliable and complete data are central to the well-functioning of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)¹. For this reason, an EU framework for the collection and management of fisheries data was established in 2000², and then reformed in 2008 resulting in the Data Collection Framework (DCF). The DCF establishes a harmonized set of EU rules governing the collection of biological, environmental, technical, and socio-economic data on the catching, aquaculture and processing sectors. It strives to ensure the availability of

¹ Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC. OJ L354, 28.12.2013, p.22

² Council Regulation (EC) No 1543/2000 of 29 June 2000 establishing a Community framework for the collection and management of the data needed to conduct the common fisheries policy

data to scientists, so that these data can be used to provide advice to end-users including the Commission.

The DCF consists of the following legal instruments:

- **Council Regulation (EC) No 199/2008** of 25 February 2008 concerning the establishment of a Community framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the Common Fisheries Policy framework for fisheries OJ L60, 5.3.2008, p.1
- **Commission Regulation (EC) No 665/2008** of 14 July 2008 laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 199/2008 concerning the establishment of a Community framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the Common Fisheries Policy OJ L186, 15.7.2008, p.3
- **Commission Decision 2010/93/EU** of 18 December 2009 adopting a multiannual Community programme for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector for the period 2011-2013 ((notified under document C(2009) 10121), as extended by Commission Implementing Decision of 13.8.2013 extending the multiannual Union programme for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector for the period 2011-2013 to the period 2014-2016 (C(2013)5243³).

Regulations (EC) 199/2008 and (EC) 665/2008 lay down general provisions regarding the collection, management and transmission of data whilst the Commission Decision 2010/93/EU sets out the data to be collected in the form of an EU Multiannual Programme. This EU Multiannual Programme initially covered the period 2011-2013 but was extended to cover the period 2014-2016.

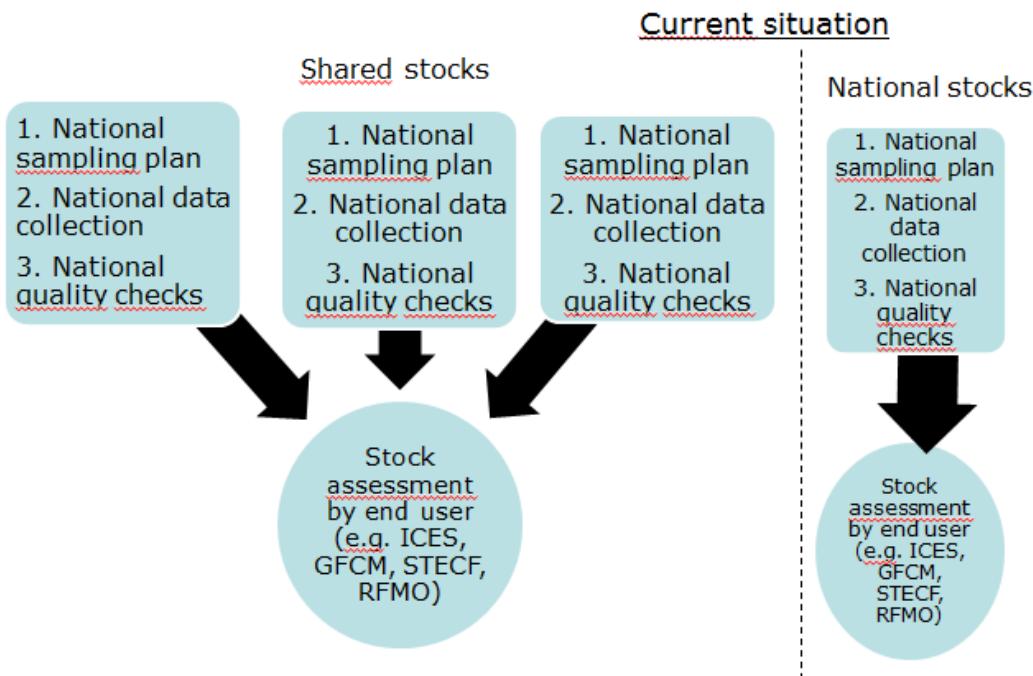
From data collection to stock assessment

The main aim of the DCF is to ensure that scientific data are available to end users to support scientific analysis as a basis for fisheries management. Concretely, one of the main ways in which the DCF contributes to fisheries management is by providing the data for stock assessments, which are carried out by organizations such as the International Council for Exploration of the Seas (ICES) for stocks in the North Atlantic and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) as well as the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) for stocks in the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

Currently, under their DCF National Programmes, Member States collect data on the stocks which they fish, assess the quality of these national data sets, and then provide them to end users such as those mentioned above, who in turn carry out stock assessments. Stocks in the North Atlantic are typically "shared" between several countries who fish a given stock and collect data on the stock. For such "shared" stocks, stock assessments require data from the different countries that collect data on this stock. In the Mediterranean Sea, in contrast, many stocks assessments are carried out at the national level, hence using only the data of a single Member State (see Figure 1 below).

³ Commission implementing Decision C(2013)5243 of 13.8.2013 extending the multiannual Union programme for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector for the period 2011-2013 to the period 2014-2016

Figure 1



Currently, whether for "national" or "shared" stocks, the data collection is planned nationally (under a National Programme), the data are collected at a national level, and quality assessment of the data is done at a national level. For shared stocks, the national data sets are then combined to carry out scientific assessments at the stock level.

Current regional coordination

Although the emphasis of the current DCF is essentially a national one, the current DCF Regulation (EC) No 199/2008 contains provisions whereby Member States should coordinate their national programmes with other Member States in the same marine region. For this purpose the Commission may organise Regional Coordination Meetings (RCMs) in order to assist Member States in coordinating their national programmes and the implementation of the collection, management and use of the data in the same region. The recommendations of the RCMs are aimed to encourage Member States to align their national programmes and to share tasks at regional level. In practice, regional coordination for data collection applies almost exclusively to biological data, for which differences across the marine regions are more pronounced.

There are currently five RCMs operating in the context of the DCF: Baltic, North Sea, Atlantic, Mediterranean/Black Sea and Long Distance fisheries in external waters.

Concretely, RCMs discuss regional issues such as review feedback and recommendations relating to data collection from end-users in their region, how regional tools could improve efficiency of DCF process. RCMs also carry out regional analyses of the data to identify such things as which metiers should be sampled, where Member States could benefit from establishing bilateral or multilateral agreements to task share, or how data quality could be further improved.

Future regional coordination

The Commission is preparing a proposal to amend the DCF Regulation to take into account new policy developments such as the Lisbon Treaty, the CFP Basic Regulation⁴ adopted in 2013, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund adopted in 2014, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Marine Knowledge 2020 initiative. The revision of the DCF should aim to simplify the current rules in line with the Commission's REFIT⁵ policy. It should also address needs identified through experience with implementation of the current DCF, such as improving the quality and availability of data as well as the relevance of the data for end-users. It should seek to introduce flexibility into the system to allow adaptation in a timely fashion to emerging data collection needs.

Regional co-operation is considered one of the big achievements of the DCF and over the past years, there has been a clear strengthening of regional coordination. In line with strengthened provisions on regionalisation contained in the CFP Basic Regulation, Member States have expressed the wish, both in RCMs and at the occasion of the Stakeholder consultation workshop on the revision of the DCF regulation that was held on 16 January 2014⁶, that the amended DCF Regulation should provide regions with a greater scope in tasks regarding planning and implementing data collection at a regional level.

This could be achieved through the establishment of Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs) that would increase contact between Member States over and above the current annual RCMs in which Member States consider already established national programmes and coordinate their implementation.

Such RCGs could play a broader role than the current RCMs in coordinating regional aspects of data collection, such as:

- A. **Identifying what data should be collected at regional level.** In addition to core data that would be defined in the future DCF, Member States in RCGs would agree on additional data that should be collected for their region, in consultation with end users of the data.
- B. **Planning and coordinating how data should be collected, processed and managed at regional level.** Member States in RCGs would coordinate the preparation of National Programmes by establishing regional sampling plans (this applies essentially to biological data) and then allocating tasks and effort between Member States. Member States in RCGs should also agree on the methodologies that should be followed to ensure that coherent regional data sets, of sufficient quality for end user needs, can be produced. Concretely, this involves agreeing on a) reference lists with standard codes on e.g. harbours, species, metiers, to ensure Member States in a region report in a standardized way on their data collection and b) on best practice methodologies for data collection, processing and management to be

⁴ Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/refit/index_en.htm

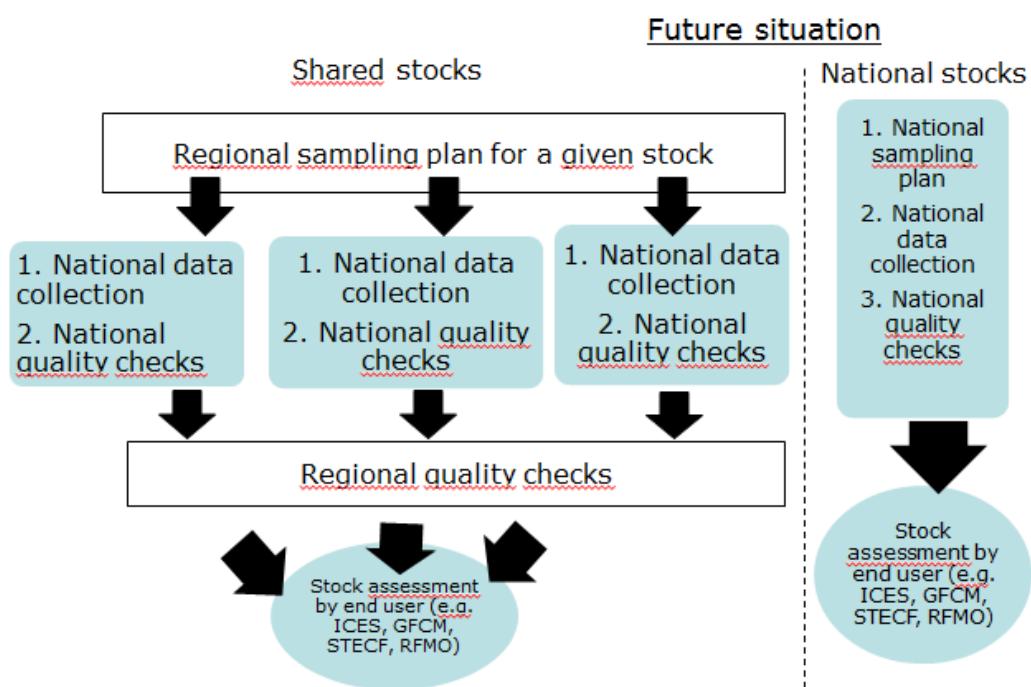
⁶ Minutes of the Stakeholder Meeting on the revision of the Data Collection Framework Regulation 16 January, Brussels (9.30-18.30)
http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/mare/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=14038&newsletter=114

followed by the Member States in the region. These reference lists and best practice methodologies may already have been developed in other fora, such as ICES, GFCM, RFMOs, STECF etc or they may need to be developed within the RCGs.

- C. **Evaluating the quality of biological data sets at the regional level** and sharing this quality evaluation with end users. This may require the development of methodologies and quality checks for regional data sets. In addition, RCGs could contribute to harmonizing and improving national data quality evaluations by developing a list of minimum quality checks that Member States should carry out on national data sets before the data are brought together in regional data sets.
- D. When end users express needs for **new data** to be collected (not falling under the EU Multiannual Programme referred to in point 2 under DCF legal instruments), Member States in RCGs may already start to trial the collection of certain variables in a coordinated manner.

In such a future set up, for shared stocks, even though data collection itself would continue to be carried out by Member States at a national level, it would be based on a regionally agreed plan. Furthermore, beyond the national quality checks currently carried out, quality checking of the regional data sets would be envisaged, to ensure that the data received by end users is of a similar quality across the region (see **Figure 2**).

Figure 2



The orientations presented above regarding possible future tasks of Member States in RCGs are currently not in the DCF legislation but they represent likely evolutions given the developments in regional cooperation in recent years and the outcomes of the consultations carried out to date in the context of the revision of the DCF.

Objectives of this call for proposals

Creating RCGs to replace the (annual) Regional Coordination Meetings represents a big step for Member States. This call for proposals aims to support projects to enable Member States to build up experience in new areas of regional cooperation along the possible evolutions set out above. It is not intended to support activities which already take place as part of the current RCMs.

The regions covered by this call for proposals are those defined in the current DCF, namely: the Baltic, the North Sea & Eastern Arctic, the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean & Black Sea and Long-distance fisheries in external waters.

This call for proposals covers work by regions relating to coordination of collection, management and use of data or provision of these data to end users of biological, economic or fisheries data.

This call for proposals will cover two grants for two projects. The two projects cannot take place in the same region (as defined above). However, the contractors receiving each grant should coordinate their work to ensure, as far as possible, that the outputs produced are compatible between the regions in which the projects take place. Each of the projects shall carry out the following elements:

1. An **analysis of the main coordination activities and tools** developed so far in the region, in the context of the existing RCM, focussing on achievements and failures and identifying areas of improvement.
2. A **regional sampling programme for 2016 covering commercial fisheries** for at least 4 stocks included in the current EU Multiannual Programme. The regional sampling plan should include both harbour sampling and at sea observer programmes. The regional sampling programme should cover both data collection and analysis (e.g. age reading). The choice of stocks should be based on those presenting wide scope for regional sampling and task sharing. The regional sampling plan should apply to all Member States in the region involved in the fisheries for the selected stock (even if they are not part of the consortium to which the grant is awarded).

Designing a regional sampling programme will require the following tasks to be completed:

- a. **Identifying and agreeing on guidelines and best practice methodologies** to be followed for sampling and data processing and management. These guidelines and best practice should be made available to all relevant actors in the region, for example through a website or SharePoint.
- b. **Agreeing on reference (or code) lists** to be used by Member States in the region to ensure harmonized reporting on their data, and to enable regional pooling and analysis of data. These reference lists should be made available to all relevant actors in the region, for example through a website or SharePoint.
- c. **Evaluate the cost implications** for 2016 if Member States implement this regional sampling plan, compared to the "business as usual" approach that consists of national sampling plans (as is the case to date).
- d. **Lessons learned:** Developing a set of rules and recommendations that could be followed by Member States in any region when establishing

(future) regional sampling plans. This could include, for example, rules on how to allocate tasks or costs between Member States.

- e. **If required, any other activity to help overcome obstacles to regional cooperation** on data collection e.g. work relating to identification of stocks and stock boundaries.
3. A **regional sampling programme** for 2016 covering the following: **the collection of data on fisheries impacts on the ecosystem that is not included in the current EU Multiannual Programme.** Consultations with bodies using DCF data to produce advice for fisheries management, such as STECF, ICES, GFCM and other RFMOs, have identified several new categories of "ecosystem" data that are not covered by the current EU Multiannual Programme but that have been recommended by these bodies for inclusion in a future EU Multiannual Programme to improve the understanding of fisheries impacts on the ecosystem. This includes: 1) data on stomach content of fish in order to contribute to knowledge on predator-prey relations, which are required for multi-species stock assessments, and 2) data on by-catch of non-target species, such as protected, endangered or threatened species.

The regional sampling programme should cover at least one stock regarding stomach content data and at least one fishery regarding the by-catch of protected, endangered and threatened species. The regional sampling programme should cover both data collection and analysis (e.g. stomach content analysis). The regional sampling programme should involve at least three Member States in the region.

Establishing such a **regional sampling programme** will require the following tasks to be completed:

- a. **Identifying**, in consultation with relevant end users in the region, **the exact data to be collected.** The grant application should demonstrate that there is an end user need for the data that will be covered by the regional sampling programme.
- b. **Developing methodologies for the collection of these new data.**
- c. **Allocating tasks** to Member States for the collection and analysis of these data.
4. **Procedures to assess the quality of biological data at regional level.** This will require the following tasks to be completed:
 - a. Preparing a **compilation of national quality checks** that could be carried out by Member States on their national data sets. This compilation should be divided into the essential minimum quality checks that all Member States should carry out before regional quality assessment can take place, and additional ones that Member States could choose to carry out.
 - b. Preparing a compilation of **regional quality checks**, such as comparison of age-length keys between Member States, or tools to coordinate age-reading between Member States, and identifying which set of information/results of the regional quality assessments should be shared with end users.

- c. **Establishing an annual calendar** for the national and regional quality checking process, bearing in mind the timing when end users would need the data.

If automatic quality checks are developed, the IT products developed should be open-source so as to be available to other potential users including other regions.

5. **A regional work programme** laying out the planned activities and the corresponding timeframe necessary to implement the outputs developed above (points 2-4), namely: the **regional sampling programme for 2016 covering commercial fisheries, the regional sampling programme for 2016 covering the collection of data on fisheries impacts on the ecosystem, and the procedures to assess the quality of biological data at regional level**. In addition, this regional work programme should include any other activities to be carried out within the region to further strengthen regional cooperation, going beyond those covered by this grant (as identified under point 6 below).
6. **Input from a regional consultation:** The grant holders should consult all Member States from their region on the outputs developed under points 1-5 above, and should include in the report an overview of this consultation, including whether there was consensus on each output, and if not, what the main points of disagreement were. The grant holders should make proposals on how any potential points of disagreement could be tackled in future as well as directions/measures to be taken to strengthen regional coordination.

3. TIMETABLE

The *indicative* planning foresees:

	Stages	Date and time or indicative period
a)	Publication of the call	October/November 2014
b)	Deadline for submitting applications	(15 January 2015 – 17h00 Brussels' Time)
c)	Evaluation period	February-March 2015
d)	Information to applicants	March 2015
e)	Signature of grant agreement or notification of grant decision	March-April 2015
f)	Starting date of the action/ work programme	March-April 2015

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE

The total budget earmarked for the co-financing of the projects is estimated at 800,000 € (eight hundred thousand euros) and shall be financed from budget line 11.066201 of the General Budget of the European Union for 2014.

The indicative maximum grant per project will be 400,000 (four hundred thousand euros).

The Commission expects to fund 2 projects in the context of the present call for proposals.

The Commission reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available.

5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Applications must be sent no later than the deadline for submitting applications referred to in section 3 (**15 January 2015 – 17h00 Brussels' Time**).
- Applications must be submitted in writing (see section 16), using the application form in Annex 1.
- Applications must be drafted in one of the EU official languages. For practical reasons a translation into English would be appreciated.

Failure to comply with those requirements will lead to the rejection of the application.

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applications will only be evaluated if all documents mentioned in section 16 of this call are submitted and if they comply with the following eligibility criteria:

6.1. Eligible applicants

- a) The following applicants of Member States are eligible:
 - Public authorities (national, regional, local);
 - Research centres;
 - Universities;
 - Educational institutions;
 - Non-profit organisation (private or public).

In order to assess the applicants' eligibility, the following supporting documents are requested:

- **private entity:** extract from the official journal, copy of articles of association, extract of trade or association register, certificate of liability to VAT (if, as in certain countries, the trade register number and VAT number are identical, only one of these documents is required);
- **public entity:** copy of the resolution or decision establishing the public company, or other official document establishing the public-law entity;
- **consortium:** in addition to the supporting documents referring to their legal status, consortium partners will submit letters confirming their participation to the project.

- b) Only an application of a consortium of partners established in several Member States of the same marine region will be considered eligible. The consortium must include at least three Member States fishing in one, and the same, of the following 5 regions: Baltic Sea, North Sea & Eastern Artic, North Atlantic, Mediterranean & Black Sea, Long distance fisheries beyond EU waters.
- c) The application must be submitted by one Lead Partner. Among the number of Partners who carry out the project, one is appointed to act as Lead Partner and thus forms the link between the project Partners and the European Commission.
Moreover, the Lead Partner is responsible for the management, communication, implementation and coordination of activities amongst the Partners in the selected regions.
- d) The partners, whether the lead partner or the others, shall be engaged in marine activities that involve DCF data collection planning, implementing, managing, processing, analysing or transmitting.
- e) Applicants whether the lead partner or the others must be public authorities or bodies of an EU Member State.
- f) Only applications from legal entities established in the EU Member States are eligible.

The Lead Partner must fill in the "Legal entity form" (if they are not already registered as service providers of the Commission) and the "Financial identification form" available at the following addresses:

Legal entity form:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm

Financial information form:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/financial_id/financial_id_en.cfm

6.2. Eligible activities

- (a) The project must address the objectives defined in section 2 above and meet the requirements of this Call.
- (b) Applications should demonstrate the cross-border nature of the proposed project, inter alia through the proposed Partnership composition and the selected region, which must be characterised by multiple and cross-border activities (existing or potential).
- (c) The activities under these projects may not be included in the EU co- Maritime and financed activities covered by a member States' Operational Programme under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund⁷.

⁷ REGULATION (EU) No 508/2014 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 15 May 2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2328/2003, (EC) No 861/2006, (EC) No 1198/2006 and (EC) No 791/2007 and Regulation (EU) No 1255/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council

- (d) Activities under these projects should go beyond the activities covered by the data collection programmes 2014-2016 of the Member States⁸.

7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

7.1. Exclusion from participation

Applicants will be excluded from participating in the call for proposals procedure if they are in any of the following situations:

- (a) they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- (b) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment of a competent authority of a Member State which has the force of res judicata;
- (c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify including by decisions of the EIB and international organisations;
- (d) they are not in compliance with their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the RAO or those of the country where the grant agreement is to be performed;
- (e) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation, money laundering or any other illegal activity, where such an illegal activity is detrimental to the Union's financial interests;
- (f) they are currently subject to an administrative penalty referred to in Article 109(1) of the Financial Regulation⁹.

7.2. Exclusion from award

Applicants will not be granted financial assistance if, in the course of the grant award procedure, they:

- (a) are subject to a conflict of interest;

⁸ C(2013)5568 Commission Implementing Decision extending the national programmes for the collection of primary biological, technical, environmental and socio-economic data in the fisheries sector for the period 2011-2013 to the period 2014-2016

⁹ REGULATION (EU, EURATOM) No 966/2012 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002

- (b) are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the Commission as a condition of participation in the grant award procedure or fail to supply this information;
- (c) find themselves in one of the situations of exclusion, referred to in section 7.1.

Administrative and financial penalties may be imposed on applicants who are guilty of misrepresentation.

7.3. Supporting documents

The Lead Partner (Coordinator) must sign a declaration on his honour certifying that none of the applicants is in one of the situations referred to in articles 106(1) and 107 to 109 of the Financial Regulation, filling in the relevant form attached to the application form accompanying the call for proposals.

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

8.1. Financial capacity

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out or the year for which the grant is awarded and to participate in its funding. The applicants' financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the following supporting documents to be submitted with the application:

- the profit and loss account, the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts were closed;
- for newly created entities, the business plan might replace the above documents.

On the basis of the documents submitted, if the responsible authorising officer (RAO) considers that financial capacity is not satisfactory, he may:

- request further information;
- propose a grant agreement without pre-financing;
- propose a grant agreement with a pre-financing paid in instalments;
- propose a grant agreement with a pre-financing covered by a bank guarantee (see section 13.7 below);
- where applicable, require the joint and several financial liability of all the co-beneficiaries;
- reject the application.

8.2. Operational capacity

Applicants must have the technical competencies as well as appropriate qualifications necessary to complete the proposed projects. In this respect, applicants have to submit the following supporting documents:

- An inventory of staff (scientist, technicians, IT staff, etc..) and the curriculum vitae or description of the profile of the people primarily responsible for managing and implementing the project (accompanied where appropriate, like in the field of research and education, by a list of relevant publications);

- an exhaustive lists of previous projects and activities performed and connected to the actions to be carried out;
- a description of the technical equipment and tools or facilities at the disposal of the applicant.

9. AWARD CRITERIA

The Grant will be awarded to the proposal which reaches the highest score on the basis of the following award criteria and which demonstrates efficiency and cost-effectiveness. A maximum of 100 points will be awarded for the quality of the proposal. The minimum overall score required is 60 points and the minimum for each criterion is 50%. The criteria for the assessment of the quality are:

- *Relevance (minimum required 10 points - maximum 20 points)*: all activities proposed within the project should be in line with the overall and specific objectives of the Call and should clearly contribute to strengthen regional coordination in the field of fisheries data collection, going beyond existing the tasks of Regional Coordination Meetings. Applicants should therefore describe how they understand the objectives of the project, how their proposal addresses these objectives and to which extent the project will have an impact in relation to existing situations. This added value should be examined in comparison to the existing degree of cooperation between Member States, the activities carried out at national level by Member States, and the costs/benefits and efficiency gains in implementing fisheries data collection by strengthening regional coordination in the region concerned. Another aspect of relevance is that of the regions in which the applicants will propose to carry out the project. In this respect, the current situation and needs of the regions which the applicant's proposal relates to will be taken into consideration.

- *Methodology (minimum required 8 points - maximum 16 points)*: Applicants should describe their proposed working methodology to achieve a timely and successful implementation of the project. In particular, applicants should provide a comprehensive business plan for the project that includes a detailed timetable and work plan, taking into account the timing of processes under the Common Fisheries Policy, and also the training and organisational needs; the project should favour an integrated approach to deliver services in an inclusive, collaborative and iterative way of working.

- *Project management (minimum required 8 points - maximum 16 points)*: Applicants should demonstrate that the organisation and management structure proposed for the project are sufficient and adequate to achieve the required quality, meet the deadlines and establish a real partnership between the members of the consortium, and possibly beyond.

- *Means of implementation of the project (minimum required 7 points - maximum 14 points)*: Applicants should demonstrate that the resources (personnel, crew, equipment, vessels, financial etc.) necessary to achieve a timely and successful implementation of the project will be mobilised by all partners and will be adequate. Applicants should demonstrate that their implementation means are cost-effective.

- *Sustainability and transferability of the expected results (minimum required 10 points - maximum 20 points)*: Applicants should describe how the sustainability of the project will be ensured within the region once the project is completed, how they will produce

outcomes that can also be used by other marine regions and in what manner expected results are compatible with other relevant initiatives in the field of fisheries data collection.

- *Dissemination and impact (minimum required 7 points - maximum 14 points):* Applicants should describe their dissemination plan and how they intend to ensure that the results of the project can be optimally used by others. If not all Member States in a region for which a project will be carried out are included in the consortium carrying out the grant, the grant holders should ensure that they inform and involve all Member States in their region throughout the project and make proposals to that effect.

10. **LEGAL COMMITMENTS**

In the event of a grant awarded by the Commission, a grant agreement, drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be sent to the beneficiary, as well as the procedure in view to formalise the obligations of the parties.

The 2 copies of the original agreement must be signed first by the beneficiary on behalf of the consortium and returned to the Commission immediately. The Commission will sign it last.

The award of a grant does not establish any entitlement for subsequent years.

11. **Duration of the grant agreement**

The grant agreement will be concluded for a period of 12 months with effect from the date on which it is signed by the last contracting party (the Commission).

12. **TIMETABLE AND REPORTS**

All reports are to be submitted in English. All meetings are to be held on premises of the Commission in Brussels.

- **Kick-off meeting:** The grant holders shall present the detailed approach and a work plan for the implementation of the project. The kick-off meeting shall be held within one month of the signature of the contract.

- **Interim report:** an interim report shall be submitted 6 (six) months after the signature of the grant agreement. This report shall include the work plan for the duration of the project, developed by the grant holders in order to prepare the report and the 6 elements contained therein, as specified in the Objectives of this call for proposals. The interim report shall also present, where relevant: i) problems that arose in the interim period and how these were addressed; ii) mitigation measures and adjustment resulting from unforeseeable events.

- **Mid-term meeting:** the grant holders shall present the interim report at the mid-term meeting to be held maximum one month from the approval of the interim report at a date and time to be mutually agreed with the Commission services

- **Final report**: a final report shall be submitted by the end of the 12 (twelve) months period. It shall provide details of the implementation and results of the project, including the 6 elements specified in the Objectives of this call for proposals. In addition, it shall contain a complete overview of the difficulties encountered throughout the project.

-**Presentation of outcomes**: the grant holders shall present the outcomes of the project at a meeting to be held maximum one month after the approval of the final report, at a date and time to be mutually agreed with the Commission services.

Signature of the contract	
Kick-off meeting	Within 1 month after the signature of the grant agreement
Interim report	6 (six) months after the signature of the grant agreement
Mid-term meeting	Within 1 month after the approval of the interim report
Final report	By the end of the 12 (twelve) months period
Presentation of outcomes	Maximum 1 month after the approval of the final report

13. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

13.1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

a) Non-cumulative award

An action may only receive one grant from the EU budget.

In no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the Union budget. To ensure this, applicants shall indicate the sources and amounts of Union funding received or applied for the same action or part of the action or for its functioning during the same financial year as well as any other funding received or applied for the same action.

The costs claimed under this grant may not be included in the EU co- Maritime and financed activities covered by a member States' Operational Programme under the European Fisheries Fund¹⁰.

b) Non-retroactivity

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for actions already completed.

¹⁰ REGULATION (EU) No 508/2014 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 15 May 2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2328/2003, (EC) No 861/2006, (EC) No 1198/2006 and (EC) No 791/2007 and Regulation (EU) No 1255/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council

A grant may be awarded for an action which has already begun only where the applicant can demonstrate the need to start the action before the grant agreement is signed or the grant decision is notified.

In such cases, costs eligible for financing may not have been incurred prior to the date of submission of the grant application

c) Co-financing

Co-financing means that the resources which are necessary to carry out the action or the work programme may not be entirely provided by the EU grant.

Co-financing of the action or of the work programme may take the form of:

- the beneficiary's own resources,
- financial contributions from third parties.

Co-financing may also take the form of in-kind contributions from third parties, i.e. non-financial resources made available free of charge by third parties to the beneficiary or to the consortium. The corresponding costs are not eligible.

d) Balanced budget

The estimated budget of the action or work programme is to be attached to the application form (see model budget attached in Annex 4) It must have revenue and expenditure in balance.

The budget must be drawn up in euros.

Applicants who foresee that costs will not be incurred in euros, are invited to use the exchange rate published in the Official Journal of the European Union on the Infor-euro website available at http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm.

e) Implementation contracts/subcontracting

Where the implementation of the action or the work programme requires the award of procurement contracts (implementation contracts), the beneficiary must award the contract to the bid offering best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate), avoiding conflicts of interests and retain the documentation for the event of an audit.

In the event of procurement exceeding € 60 000, the beneficiary must abide by special rules as referred in the grant agreement annexed to the call. Moreover the beneficiary is expected to clearly document the tendering procedure and retain the documentation for the event of an audit.

Entities acting in their capacity of contracting authorities in the meaning of Directive 2004/18/EC¹¹ or contracting entities in the meaning of Directive 2004/17/EC¹² shall abide by the applicable national public procurement rules.

Sub-contracting, i.e. the externalisation of specific tasks or activities which form part of the action/work programme as described in the proposal must satisfy the

¹¹ Directive 2004/18/EC on the coordination of procedures for the award of public work contracts, public supply contracts and public service contracts

¹² Directive 2004/17/EC coordinating the procurement procedures of entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors.

conditions applicable to any implementation contract (as specified above) and in addition to them the following conditions:

- it may only cover the implementation of a limited part of the action (maximum 25%);
- it must be justified having regard to the nature of the action and what is necessary for its implementation;
- it must be clearly stated in the proposal.

13.2. FUNDING FORM

The EU grant is calculated on the basis of a detailed estimated budget indicating clearly the costs that are eligible for EU funding. The grant amount may neither exceed the eligible costs nor the amount requested. Amounts are indicated in euros.

➤ Maximum amount requested

The EU grant is limited to a maximum co-funding rate of 90 % of eligible costs. The maximum grant amount is referred to in section 4.

Funding sources other than the EU grant is referred to in section 13.1c.

13.3. ELIGIBLE COSTS

Eligible costs are costs actually incurred by the beneficiary of a grant which meet all the following criteria:

- ✓ they are incurred during the duration of the project, with the exception of costs relating to final reports;

The period of eligibility of costs will start as specified in the grant agreement.

If a beneficiary can demonstrate the need to start the action before the agreement is signed, expenditure may be authorised before the grant is awarded. Under no circumstances can the eligibility period start before the date of submission of the grant application (see section 3).

- ✓ they are indicated in the estimated budget of the project;
- ✓ they are necessary for the implementation of the project which is the subject of the grant;
- ✓ they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary;
- ✓ they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- ✓ they are reasonable, justified, and comply with the requirements of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

The beneficiary's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the costs and revenue declared in respect of the action/project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

13.3.1 Eligible direct costs

The eligible direct costs for the project are those costs which, **with due regard for the conditions of eligibility set out above**, are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the project and which can therefore be booked to it directly. The following categories of direct costs are eligible:

- **Personnel:** the costs of personnel working under an employment contract with the applicant or equivalent appointing act and assigned to the action, comprising actual salaries plus social security contributions and other statutory costs included in the remuneration, provided that these costs are in line with the applicant's usual policy on remuneration.

The costs of the personnel of national administrations to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned were not undertaken;

- **Travel costs:** (for meetings, including kick-off and mid-term meetings where applicable, conferences etc.), provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices on travel;
- **Subsistence allowances:** (for meetings, including kick-off and mid-term meetings where applicable, conferences etc.) provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices;
- **External expert's costs:** travel and subsistence costs of experts from countries other than those of the applicants but fishing in the region concerned by the project.
- **Depreciation cost of equipment:** (new or second-hand): only the portion of the equipment's depreciation corresponding to the duration of the action/project and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the action may be taken into account by the Commission;
- **Costs of consumable materials and supplies:** provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the action/project;
- **Computing costs:** eligible computing costs concern the establishment and supply of software for the hosting, management, maintenance and development of Databases/IT applications (including websites);
- **Subcontracting/external assistance:** costs entailed by implementation contracts awarded by the beneficiaries for the purposes of carrying out the project, provided that the conditions laid down in the grant agreement or grant decision are met;
- **Pre-financing guarantee:** costs relating to a pre-financing guarantee lodged by the beneficiary of the grant, where required.

13.3.2 Eligible indirect costs (overheads)

- A flat-rate of 7% of the total eligible direct costs of the action is eligible under indirect costs, representing the beneficiary's general administrative costs which can be regarded as chargeable to the action/project.

Indirect costs may not include costs entered under another budget heading.

Applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that in case of organisations receiving an operating grant, indirect costs are not eligible under specific actions.

13.4. INELIGIBLE COSTS

- VAT, value added tax is not eligible
- return on capital;
- debt and debt service charges;
- provisions for losses or debts;
- interest owed;
- doubtful debts;
- exchange losses;
- costs of transfers from the Commission charged by the bank of a beneficiary;
- costs declared by a beneficiary and covered by another action receiving a European Union grant. In particular, indirect costs shall not be eligible under a grant for an action awarded to a beneficiary who already receives an operating grant financed from the Union budget during the period in question;
- contributions in kind;
- excessive or reckless expenditure.
- others (in accordance with the relevant legal base).

13.5. CALCULATION OF THE FINAL GRANT AMOUNT

The final amount of the grant to be awarded to the beneficiary is established after completion of the action or work programme, upon approval of the request for payment containing the following documents including relevant supporting documents where appropriate:

- a final report providing details of the implementation and results of the project ;
- the final financial statement of costs actually incurred,

EU grants may not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit. **Profit shall be defined as a surplus of the receipts over the eligible costs incurred by the beneficiary**, when the request is made for payment of the balance. In this respect, where a profit is made, the Commission shall be entitled to recover the percentage of the profit corresponding to the Union contribution to the eligible costs actually incurred by the beneficiary to carry out the action or work programme.

13.6. PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

- **Pre-financing:** A pre-financing payment corresponding to 30% of the grant amount will be transferred to the beneficiary within 30 days of the date of the Commission signature of grant the agreement.

- **Final payment:** The final payment shall clear 100% of the amount of the pre-financing. The Commission will establish and transfer the amount of the final payment to be made to the beneficiary after approval of the final report and the presentation of the outcomes of the project on the basis of the maximum contribution and of the eligible costs claimed (see section 13.2 above). If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, the beneficiary will be required to reimburse the amount paid in excess by the Commission through a recovery order.

13.7. PRE-FINANCING GUARANTEE

A pre-financing guarantee for up to the same amount as the pre-financing may be requested in order to limit the financial risks linked to the pre-financing payment.

The financial guarantee, in euro, shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the Member State of the European Union. Amounts blocked in bank accounts shall not be accepted as financial guarantees.

The guarantee may be replaced by a joint and several guarantees by a third party or by a joint guarantee of the beneficiaries of an action who are parties to the same grant agreement

The guarantee shall be released as the pre-financing is cleared against the final payment to the beneficiary, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement. Amounts overpaid shall be reimbursed to the Commission.

14. PUBLICITY

14.1. By the beneficiaries

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union's contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the grant is used.

In this respect, beneficiaries are required to give prominence to the name and emblem of the European Commission on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products realised under the co-financed project.

To do this they must use the text, the emblem and the disclaimer available at http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/flag/index_en.htm

If this requirement is not fully complied with, the beneficiary's grant may be reduced in accordance with the provisions of the grant agreement or grant decision.

14.2. By the Commission

All information relating to grants awarded in the course of a financial year shall be published on an internet site of the European Commission no later than the 30 June of the year following the financial year in which the grants were awarded.

The Commission will publish the following information:

- name of the beneficiary,
- address of the beneficiary,
- subject of the grant,
- amount awarded.

Upon a reasoned and duly substantiated request by the beneficiary, the publication shall be waived if such disclosure risks threatening the rights and freedoms of individuals concerned as protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union or harm the commercial interests of the beneficiaries.

15. DATA PROTECTION

The reply to any call for proposals involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the EU institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data.

Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested are required to evaluate the application in accordance with the specifications of the call for proposal will be processed solely for that purpose by the Head of Unit MARE.C3. Details concerning the processing of personal data are available on the privacy statement at:

http://ec.europa.eu/dataprotectionofficer/privacystatement_publicprocurement_en.pdf

Personal data may be registered in the Early Warning System (EWS) only or both in the EWS and Central Exclusion Database (CED) by the Accounting Officer of the Commission, should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in:

- the Commission Decision 2008/969 of 16.12.2008 on the Early Warning System (for more information see the Privacy Statement on:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm),

or

- the Commission Regulation 2008/1302 of 17.12.2008 on the Central Exclusion Database (for more information see the Privacy Statement on

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm).

16. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the formal requirements and by the deadline set out under section 5 (**15 January 2015 – 17h00 Brussels' Time**).

No modification to the application is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed. However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects or for the correction of clerical mistakes, the Commission may contact the applicant for this purpose during the evaluation process.

Applicants will be informed in writing about the results of the selection process.

➤ Submission on paper

Application forms are available at http://www.cc.cec/budg/imp/grants/imp-090_014_agreement_en.html.

Applications shall be submitted on the correct form, duly completed, dated, showing a balanced budget (revenue/expenditure), submitted in 3 copies (one original clearly identified as such, plus 2 copies), and signed by the person authorised to enter into legally binding commitments on behalf of the applicant organisation.

Where applicable, all additional information considered necessary by the applicant can be included on separate sheets.

Applications must be submitted as follows:

The date must be the same in both cases

either sent by post (registered mail) or by courier service to the following address:

Post:

European Commission
Directorate-General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Unit MARE/C3
(Ref. MARE/2014/19)
Office: J-99 03/011

Courier service:

European Commission
Directorate-General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Unit MARE/C3
(Ref. MARE/2014/19)
Office: J-99 02/011

B – 1049 BRUSSELS

Avenue du Bourget 1
B – 1140 BRUSSELS (Evere)

In this case, the evidence of the date of dispatch shall be constituted by the postmark (registered mail) or the date of dispatch on the deposit slip (courier service).

or delivered by hand (by the tenderer in person or by an agent) to the following address:

European Commission
Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Unit MARE/C3 (Ref. MARE/2014/19)
Office: J-99 03/011
Avenue du Bourget 1
B – 1140 BRUSSELS (Evere)

no later than **15 January 2015 – 17h00 Brussels' Time**. In this case, a receipt must be obtained as proof of submission, signed and dated by the official in the Commission's central mail department who takes delivery.

The department is open from 08.00 to 17.00 from Monday to Thursday, and from 8.00 to 16.00 on Fridays. It is closed on Saturdays, Sundays and Commission holidays.

➤ Contacts

All questions related to the call may be sent by electronic means (e-mail) to:

MARE-C3@ec.europa.eu, indicating the call reference **MARE/2014/19** and the subject title "**Strengthening regional cooperation in the area of fisheries data collection**".

Such questions, together with their answers, if of a general interest, will be published on: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/maritimeaffairs_fisheries/contracts_and_funding/calls_for_proposals/2013_09/index_en.htm

In addition, important information for the applicants may, if need be, be published on this website. Applicants are thus strongly recommended to consult this website regularly.

In order to ensure equal treatment, questions will only be answered if submitted no later than 10 working days before the deadline for the submission of proposals.

➤ Annexes (documents to be found on the website):

- **Annex 1**: Application form
- **Annex 2**: Draft grant agreement
- **Annex 3**: Estimated budget form