

GBYP Steering Committee Meeting (online, 19 October 2021 12:00-14:30)

Participants:

Steering Committee (SC) members: Gary Melvin (SCRS Chair), Camille Jean Pierre Manel (ICCAT Executive Secretary), John Walter (W-BFT Rapporteur), Enrique Rodriguez-Marín (E-BFT Rapporteur) and Ana Parma (SC External Member)

Invited: Miguel Neves dos Santos (ICCAT Assistant Executive Secretary), Haritz Arrizabalaga (future SCRS Vice-chair), Agatha Malczewska (EU representative), Franco Biagi (EU representative), Samira Khalil (EU representative), Francisco Alemany (GBYP Coordinator), Stasa Tensek (GBYP Assistant Coordinator) and Alfonso Pagá García (GBYP Database specialist)

The Executive Secretary welcomed all the participants and opened the meeting. Apart from the GBYP SC members and the Secretariat, the meeting was also attended by the representatives of the GBYP major funder, the European Union. None of the external members were included in the decision process but were allowed to intervene in the discussions. The meeting was chaired by the SCRS Chair, following the meeting agenda prepared by the GBYP Coordinator (**Annex 1**). Background documents were made available to the SC members before the meeting (List of background documents contained in **Annex 2**).

The GBYP Coordinator made an introductory presentation providing an overview of the current situation and highlighting the points on which decisions should be taken. Specifically, it was given information about the progress of the ongoing Phase 11, focusing on the issues that required a special attention from the SC, the outline of Phase 12 proposal, the received data requests and some information on external initiatives relevant for BFT research.

Due to the impact of covid pandemic on research activities, the SC recommended to **extend Phase 11** until the end of June 2022 and modify some activities. The EU representatives were informally asked on the possibility to amend the Phase 11 grant agreement and they clarified that providing an extension did not represent any problem, but any change in activities and/or budget was more complicated since it would require some internal discussions. It was agreed to request a six-month extension (until 30 June 2021) as already requested by the Secretariat to another grant agreement with the EU aiming science funding.

GBYP coordinator informed the SC that most of Phase 11 activities had been launched without major problems, but that **tasks 5.6, 5.10, 5.12** required special attention, since the support from GBYP for organizing the meetings related to these activities has not been required due to coronavirus impact, as well the pending workshops (**tasks 5.8, 5.9, 5.11 and 4.4.4**), which have been also delayed because of coronavirus derived constraints. The SC decided to modify activities 5.6 and 5.10, replacing them by the support to the BFT Data Preparatory meeting and the review of EBFT stock assessment. Nevertheless, it is still to be decided if these activities should be done within Phase 11 or would fit better within Phase 12. As regards task 5.12 (alternative stock assessment models), the SC was informed that one proposal related to this task, specifically to develop a multi-stock assessment model, had been submitted to GBYP Coordination team. Given that it was not received through the official channels (eg. application through a Call for tenders), and in order to keep transparency in the contracting procedure, this

proposal was not reviewed. However, it was acknowledged that getting a viable assessment framework that addresses multi stock and mixing was of utmost importance. Therefore, it was decided to issue a call for tenders for the development of alternative stock management models and engage the SCRS Methods group for guidance in making the TOR.

Regarding the **pending workshops**, given that they were initially planned as in-person activities, it was discussed the possibility of organizing **in-person** meetings in the following months. The Executive Secretary clarified that, due to current travel restrictions that affect participants from some CPC (ie. requirement for a quarantine), it has been decided that all workshop/meetings should be online, for at least another 6 months period, unless the global scenario change drastically. In-person meetings could potentially be scheduled if involving a smaller number of persons, once all participants have been previously identified and checked none have travel restrictions. As regards hybrid meetings, suggested by EU representative as an option to be taken into account, since this is a sensitive issue, and therefore a Commission decision should first be taken in this respect.

Taking that into account, the SC decided to modify the Phase 11 **workshops plan**, establishing priorities in relation to the timing of these workshops and looking for the more efficient way to held them. So, it was proposed to split some of the workshops, as the workshops on e-tagging and on larval surveys coordination in two: a first workshop focused on specific and urgent technical issues and a second workshop addressing broader objectives to be held within Phase 12. Also, having in mind the current SCRS meetings overload, it was decided that these technical workshops would not be officially announced as SCRS workshops. Moreover, to increase latter workshop's productivity and effectiveness, it was stressed the importance of elaborating and distributing in advance among the attendants some carefully prepared guidance documents.

The goal of the **first technical tagging workshop** should be establishing priorities for 2022 tagging campaigns (where, when and with which types of tags to deploy).However, it was mentioned also that GBYP SC could already decide on the tagging priorities based on the transition matrices feeding the MSE operating models. It should involve MSE modellers, as end users, to define needs, especially with respect to different age classes seasonal transitions. Taking into account the recent improvements in the European Tracking Network, as the pilot studies deploying receivers in the Gibraltar strait area, it was agreed to consider the possibility of deploying acoustic tags, in addition to the pop-up tags, within the GBYP e-tagging program.

Regarding the broader open **tagging workshop**, focusing on tagging data sharing and use, it will be held later in 2022, within Phase 12, and will be organized as an in-person WS if the global situation allows it.

As regards **CKMR technical workshop** for elaborating a proposal of a work plan to implement the CKMR approach in the Eastern stock, it was decided that it will count with the participation of invited experts only, selected through a transparent process. Although the Executive Secretary stressed the need to have inclusive meetings open to all interested SCRS scientists, it was acknowledged that, under the current situation, a large audience would not be productive in this case. It was also recommended not to hold this workshop until the preliminary results of the ongoing feasibility study on the application of epigenetic techniques for Atlantic BFT ageing are available, since it may have crucial impact on sampling requirements. It was also recommended to hold a preparatory meeting involving a small group of specialists on BFT biology, which would prepare a document describing the evidences that exists on stock

structure, based on available objective information. It is still to be decided who will draft the guidance document and if that would require additional funding.

It was also discussed the possibility to merge the technical CKMR workshop with the technical tagging workshop, to combine the two sets of objectives and in this way better address MSE gaps. However, no decision was taken in that respect.

With respect to the **larval survey**, the first technical workshop, to be held in the first semester of 2022, will be focused on the coordination of 2022 larval campaigns, involving only the teams in charge of ongoing BFT larval surveys. A broader workshop on this issue, addressing the long-term coordination, planning of new BFT larval surveys and joint use of data, should be considered during Phase 12.

As for the **biological sampling coordination workshop**, an on-line meeting should be organized after the next Close Kin next technical workshop, to allow to take into account potential sampling needs derived from the implementation of Close Kin approach

Phase 12 draft proposal was briefly discussed as well. It was acknowledged that the EU grant proposal should be not submitted until the SCRS proposal for activities in Phase 12 is accepted by the Commission. Also, given that the Secretariat is still not familiar with the new online format for applying to the EU grant, the EU representatives were asked if it would be possible to delay **the submission of the Phase 12 grant application to the beginning of 2022**. The EU representatives clarified that they had already asked the Agency to move the date for sending the invitations to submit applications, but it was still not known if this request would be granted. In any way, they recommended to carefully plan the timing for submission of the proposal, given that the online platform for submission of applications is not flexible with delays once the deadline is established. Also, they suggested to first prepare the entire application offline.

To better define Phase 12 activities, the GBYP Coordinator presented a list of BFT **research needs** compiled from different SCRS reports. Due to time constraints, this could not be discussed in depth. So, it was decided that GBYP coordinator elaborate a simplified table putting together all the recommendations and provide it to the SC as soon as possible.

The future strategy of **aerial surveys** was briefly discussed as well, but since the SC had not had time to analyze in depth the recently received relevant reports on this issue, it was decided to revisit this agenda item and decide on the future actions at the next SC meeting.

Therefore, it was decided to hold a **second session of this SC meeting** in the forthcoming weeks, to address the points of the agenda not fully addressed within this first session and to take the final decisions on them. In order to enhance the productivity and facilitate the decision-making process, the SC asked the GBYP Coordinator to prepare summaries of the most relevant background documents.

Annex 1

GBYP SC meeting 19th October 2021 ANNOTATED AGENDA

The main objectives of this SC meeting, and hence the proposed agenda points, are:

1. To inform SC about the progress and current status of the Phase 11
2. To draft a proposal of amendment for Phase 11 (duration of the extension and budget adjustments)
3. To concretize the new Phase 12 proposal
4. To decide on some data requests from third parties
5. To present info and discuss on “other matters”

- ❖ In relation to point 1, to set the basis for further discussions, the GBYP coordinator will summarize, in an introductory presentation:

-the current situation of Phase 11, justifying the need of an extension and pointing out the activities, and its related budget, that would require adjustments
-the outline of phase 12 proposal
-the data requests received (turtles, e-tagging data)
-some information on external initiatives relevant for GBYP (EU RCG LP meetings, research proposal from Tom Carruthers, progress in European Tracking Network under current EU COST action, potential international Italy funded project for BFT larval surveys coordination, IMR/UPV initiatives on tuna acoustic indices)

- ❖ Regarding objective 2, the specific issues that probably will require more discussions, and on which decisions should be taken, are:

- *-Activities 5.6, 5.10 and 5.12 of Phase 11 (Please see them in the October monthly report sent on 15th October).*

These activities were planned as logistical and budgetary support to meetings of different groups related to modelling issues, but up to now this support have not been requested because meetings have been held online, or simply have not been held yet. The budget and titles of these activities could be modified in the Phase 11 amendment proposal to accommodate other similar activities recently decided by the SCRS. In addition, activity 5.12 could consist not only in a support to held meetings of the technical SCRS subgroups, but also in a Call for funding directly new models development or improvement of existing ones (this could be done both in phase 11 and 12)

- *-Decide on the way to organize the pending workshops*

To delay them a bit more, carrying them out along Phase 11 extension -till May 2022??- or moving them to phase 12, in the second semester of 2022), to allow them to be presential, as they were initially conceived, or organize them as on-line meetings? It must be taken into

account that this type of scientific workshops requires some sessions of live discussions, for which the on-line format maybe is not the best one...

In relation to the pending “Close-Kin” workshop, it should be decided the composition of the “technical group” in charge of the drafting of sampling program proposal for CKMR implementation in Eastern stock.

❖ As regards objective 3, the specific points to be addressed are:

- -Go through the SCRS research recommendations and needs, to elaborate a prioritized list of activities as a reference for the specific activities within Phase 12 proposal
- -Decide on the sampling strategy and methodology for 2022 aerial surveys and how to address the issue of model-based approach implementation (investment in improved habitat models) and who should analyze the 2021 and future data sets (CREEMS?)
- -Decide on priorities for Phase 12 e-tagging program and what type of e-tags could be used

❖ Regarding objective 4, we have data requests from:

- SCRS subgroup on marine turtles, asking for GBYP aerial surveys data on turtles
 - IFREMER (Tristan Rouyer), asking for e-tagging data (or only metadata) of fish going in and out from Mediterranean Sea.
 - Antonio DiNatale, asking for e-tagging data in a specific area SW of Sardinia
 - Lisa Ailloud request for e-tags drifting data for improving hydrodynamic models
- ❖ Under point 5, the implications for GBYP of the external activities described by the GBYP coordinator in the introductory presentation could be discussed (ETN COST project, advances in tuna acoustics, larval surveys....), as well any other matter proposed by the SC members

Annex 2

List of background documents

Available at: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1NxqOpzl9OkYcWLBofdKCCbIBK2-hDg-c?usp=sharing>

1. GBYP SC meeting 19th October 2021 annotated agenda
2. GBYP SC meeting Oct2021 – presentation by the GBYP Coordinator
3. Status GBYP activities September 2021 – report by the GBYP Coordinator
4. Contracts deliverables ph11 –Phase 11 budget and current costs/payments
5. BFT research needs 2021-2022 – a compilation of research needs identified at SCRS/ BFT SG meetings and workshops
6. BFT research needs 2021-2022 with comments
7. Figure Map Tunatrack – overview of acoustic receivers deployed or to be deployed under ongoing pilot projects the Mediterranean
8. MSA 2-page proposal – proposal for alternative assessment model received by Blue Matter Science
9. Petition Tristan tagging – petition for tagging data received by Tristan Rouyer
10. Request extension from AZTI – request for the extension of contract for biological studies in Phase 11
11. SMART-MED Proof of concept English version – overview of the external BFT research project SMART-MED
12. Sonar proposals BFT 2022 – research proposals

Available at GBYP web page: <https://www.iccat.int/gbyp/en/asurvey.asp>

13. Aerial Survey Phase 10 Independent Review CIE
14. Aerial Survey Phase 10 CREEM Reanalysis Model Based
15. Aerial Survey Phase 10 CREEM Reanalysis Design Based
16. Aerial Survey Phase 10 Action Air Area A Automatic Images
17. Aerial Survey Phase 10 Action Air Area A