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General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean **Scientific Advisory Committee for the Black Sea**

R E P O R T

FIRST SESSION

Trabzon, Türkiye
21–23 July 2026

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Executive summary

The first session of the Scientific Advisory Committee for the Black Sea (ACBS) of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was held in Trabzon, Türkiye, from 21 to 23 July 2026. The session was attended by delegates from five Black Sea contracting parties, one cooperating non-contracting party, as well as the GFCM Secretariat and invited experts. During the session, the Committee reviewed and welcomed the multiple activities implemented during the 2025–2026 intersession, including within the GFCM 2030 Strategy and in the context of BlackSea4Fish. In particular, the Committee reviewed progress in fisheries data collection and data quality, improvements in socioeconomic information, and technical advances in spatial management, vulnerable species and other cross-cutting areas. The Committee discussed the activities implemented under or supported by BlackSea4Fish, as well as the work of the GFCM Black Sea Technical Unit, which contributed to strengthening the scientific basis for the advisory process. The Committee reviewed the status of Black Sea priority stocks and provided advice on marine living resources, fisheries management, data collection, vulnerable species and small-scale fisheries. Finally, the Committee adopted its workplan for 2026–2028 and elected its Bureau for a two-year mandate.

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Opening and adoption of the agenda

1. The first session of the Scientific Advisory Committee for the Black Sea (ACBS) of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was held in Trabzon, Türkiye, from 21 to 23 July 2026. The session was attended by delegates from five Black Sea contracting parties, one cooperating non-contracting party, as well as the GFCM Secretariat and invited experts. The session was chaired by Mr Göktuğ Dalgıç, ACBS Chairperson. The adopted agenda is provided in Appendix 1, the list of participants in Appendix 2 and the list of documents in Appendix 3. On the basis of the discussions held, the Committee formulated the conclusions reported hereafter.

2. The Committee welcomed the active participation of Ukraine as a new contracting party and acknowledged its commitment towards the conservation and sustainable use of marine living resources and the effective management of fishing activities in the region. It took note of the information provided by Ukraine, made available to all participants, indicating that, owing to the ongoing war, fishing in a substantial part of its exclusive economic zone had not been possible since 2014 and that Ukrainian fishing activities in the Black Sea had completely ceased since 2022. The Committee acknowledged that these circumstances had significantly affected fisheries production, data collection, including through surveys at sea, and reporting, as well as expert participation and the availability of information relevant to the work of the GFCM and its subsidiary bodies. The Committee acknowledged that these factors should be taken into consideration in addressing its technical mandate and providing advice to the GFCM.

Overview of intersessional activities of relevance to the ACBS, including within the GFCM 2030 Strategy and in the context of BlackSea4Fish

3. The Committee commended the scope, quality and relevance of the intersessional activities carried out. It welcomed progress in fisheries data collection and quality, and improvements in socioeconomic information, alongside technical advances in spatial management, vulnerable species and other cross-cutting areas. Key regional developments included the launch of the regional platform on decarbonization, selectivity and vulnerable species and the operationalization of the GFCM Network of Experts on Fisheries and Climate Change. Continued emphasis was placed on ensuring that these activities remained focused on delivering robust scientific advice and supporting the effective implementation of the GFCM workplan.

4. The Committee commended the activities implemented under or supported by BlackSea4Fish, as well as the role of the GFCM Black Sea Technical Unit, which contributed to strengthening the scientific basis for the advisory process. It highlighted the value of coordinated field activities, stock assessment support, scientific surveys, monitoring programmes, capacity development and management-oriented research, together with efforts supporting small-scale fisheries, stakeholder engagement, value-chain analysis, awareness-raising and the dissemination of technical knowledge. The Committee underlined the consistent, comprehensive and continuous scientific work carried out during the intersession, noting that activities were selected based on identified needs, aligned with agreed priorities and implemented efficiently. It further recognized the active participation of Black Sea countries as a model of inclusive subregional cooperation, viewed BlackSea4Fish as a long-term investment to support the sustainable management of Black Sea fisheries and deliver tangible outputs, and acknowledged the important work undertaken by the Subregional Group on Stock Assessment for the Black Sea (SGSABS).

Formulation of advice on marine living resources and fisheries management

Status of Black Sea fisheries, including data issues, stock status and vulnerable species

Overall status of fisheries

5. The Committee acknowledged the overview of the main outcomes of *The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries 2025* (SoMFi 2025) and welcomed the positive trends observed, including the increasing number of active stock assessments, the reduction in the proportion of overexploited stocks from 87 percent in 2013 to 52 percent in 2023, the declining trend in fishing pressure approaching sustainable levels, and a 23 percent overall increase in biomass in the whole GFCM area of application. The Committee noted that these results highlighted the effectiveness of targeted management plans and management measures in reducing overexploitation and supporting stock recovery, as illustrated by the case of turbot, whose biomass had tripled and fishing mortality had declined approaching F target since the implementation of the first GFCM management plan. In light of these achievements, it encouraged exploring the development of management plans for other priority species whose status remained unfavorable and for which management measures were not yet in place.

Data issues, including socioeconomics

6. Acknowledging the outcomes of the Workshop on Data Collection and Submission (WKDATA) in streamlining GFCM data reporting procedures, the Committee agreed to include non-DCRF elements within existing submission frameworks, provided that these remained purely technical in nature and were intended to optimize reporting processes and reduce redundancies, without creating additional obligations for CPCs. The Committee endorsed the harmonization of stock assessment forms (SAFs) to further enhance reporting efficiency, including through the pre-population of SAFs with selected DCRF fields and, where feasible, the pre-population of DCRF fields using information submitted through SAFs (e.g. biological data). At the same time, the Committee recognized the challenges faced by Türkiye in submitting SAF input data based on year $n-1$ in time for data preparation meetings and took note of the efforts made to ensure yearly submissions despite the early timing with respect to the publication of official statistics. The Committee also took note of the technical discussions on the ongoing pilot initiative for the collection and submission of monthly effort data for turbot gillnet fisheries and agreed to continue the pilot. While recognizing its potential to improve the timeliness, availability and consistency of effort data, it acknowledged the challenges faced by Türkiye in collecting gear length data, given the complexity of the fishery and the extensive length of its coastline.

7. The Committee reaffirmed the importance of integrating socioeconomic information into the advisory process and, to this end, supported improving DCRF data quality controls for socioeconomic data, optimizing the use of available information and clearly defining socioeconomic management objectives to support indicator development and trade-off assessments. The Committee encouraged the use of local ecological knowledge (LEK) studies to fill socioeconomic data gaps, where needed, noting that the extensive experience already gained in the Black Sea with LEK studies could serve as an example for integrating such information into management and advisory processes. Finally, while recognizing that socioeconomic expertise remained limited, the Committee considered existing GFCM structures sufficient to support collaboration and expert contributions, without the need for additional mechanisms.

Compendium of GFCM decisions

8. The Committee acknowledged the conclusions of the Working Group on the Compendium of GFCM Decisions and recognized the importance of improving the accessibility and traceability of GFCM

decisions with a view to enhancing legal clarity, including through efficient version control systems and the consolidation of decisions to facilitate amendments and manage repeals. It supported the updating of drafting guidelines, as well as the establishment of minimum standards for the presentation of technical elements in management plans, and welcomed the proposed two-year roadmap for the consolidation, presentation and future maintenance of GFCM decisions. In this context, the Committee agreed to implement, for the Black Sea, a pilot phase in 2026–2027 centred on the turbot management plan.

Overall status of Black Sea priority stocks

9. The Committee acknowledged that of the eight priority species assessed in 2026 (Appendix 4), six provided quantitative advice. European sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) and whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*) were in sustainable exploitation ($F/F_{\text{target}} = 0.76$), turbot (*Scophthalmus maximus*) was assessed as being at increased risk of being overexploited and in overexploitation, horse mackerel (*Trachurus mediterraneus*) was in overexploitation ($F/F_{\text{target}} = 1.83$), while rapa whelk (*Rapana venosa*) was considered overexploited and in overexploitation, and piked dogfish (*Squalus acanthias*) was considered depleted with low fishing mortality. Qualitative advice was provided for Black Sea anchovy (*Engraulis encrasicolus ponticus*), which was considered to be possibly overexploited, and for red mullet (*Mullus barbatus*), considered possibly in sustainable exploitation. With a view to covering all stocks with consistent, robust assessments providing validated quantitative advice, the Committee encouraged the continuation of standardized fishery-independent surveys within the agreed timeframes, the timely submission of relevant data and the consideration of additional sources of fishing mortality (e.g. recreational fisheries and discards), while concurrently addressing identified data gaps for all priority species in the Black Sea. Finally, the Committee recalled that benchmark assessment processes were still underway for Black Sea anchovy and rapa whelk (Appendix 9) and encouraged their finalization according to previously endorsed roadmaps.

10. The Committee welcomed the increased involvement of Black Sea experts in the stock assessment process, noting that regional experts had led the assessments of six of the eight priority stocks and conducted complementary assessments for several stocks, enabling the comparison of alternative model configurations and assumptions. It recognized that this reflected strengthened technical capacity in the region and encouraged the continuation of capacity-development and knowledge-transfer activities, through BlackSea4Fish, to broaden the regional expert pool and further reinforce its ability to independently conduct stock assessments and develop scientific advice.

Management of Black Sea fisheries

Data submissions in response to GFCM decisions

11. The Committee reviewed the information submitted through the DCRF in line with relevant recommendations on European sprat, turbot, rapa whelk and piked dogfish (detailed report in Appendix 10). The Committee acknowledged the absence of fishing activities for all species in Ukraine since 2022, took note of the absence of catches in Georgia for European sprat and rapa whelk since 2017 and noted the non-applicability of landing obligation provisions for Türkiye.

Rapa whelk

12. The Committee expressed concern about the status of the rapa whelk stock, which was assessed as overexploited ($B/B_{\text{threshold}} = 0.75$) and in overexploitation ($F/F_{\text{target}} = 1.7$) and had further deteriorated in the last year, requiring a 41 percent reduction in fishing pressure to rebuild the stock above $B_{\text{threshold}}$ by 2031 (Appendix 4). The Committee also noted the recent decline in reported catches, which, together with observed decreasing catch rates and smaller individual sizes, provided further evidence of stock

deterioration, underscoring the need for timely management action. In this context, the Committee emphasized the need to improve and harmonize fishery-dependent and survey data and to review key biological assumptions in preparation for the finalization of the benchmark assessment in 2026, while treating potential differences between the western and eastern areas as a second priority. It reiterated the importance of performing a management strategy evaluation (MSE) to inform technical elements towards the development of a comprehensive multiannual management plan, including a harvest control rule and potential catch limits, on the basis of discussions to be held in a dedicated technical session in 2027 ahead of the next session of the ACBS.

Piked dogfish

13. The Committee expressed serious concern regarding the status of piked dogfish in the Black Sea, noting that the stock remained severely depleted ($B/B_{msy} = 0.088$) despite fishing mortality being well below the F_{target} reference point ($F/F_{tgt} = 0.49$). The Committee acknowledged the substantial research efforts undertaken to date but noted that no sign of stock recovery had been observed and that important uncertainties in stock dynamics continued to affect assessment and management. The Committee agreed on strengthening the research programme by implementing pilot sampling targeting females, including in shallow waters and using alternative fishing gear (e.g. longlines), while potentially expanding tagging efforts. The Committee supported the rollover of current transitional measures through 2027, while noting that the GFCM should adopt additional measures to secure the recovery of the stock, including a future precautionary increase of the current minimum conservation reference size (90 cm). It agreed on consolidation of all evidence through a dedicated technical meeting in the context of the SGSABS in 2027, in support of a future full management plan for the stock.

Turbot

14. The Committee took note of the stock status of turbot which was assessed to be in overexploitation ($F/F_{tgt} = 1.09$) and with biomass below B_{msy} ($B/B_{msy} = 0.66$), noting the increase in fishing mortality relative to the previous year. At the same time, the Committee acknowledged encouraging signs in the stock dynamics since the implementation of the management measures in 2013, characterized by a general upward trend of SSB and F decreasing towards F_{tgt} . It also noticed that both short- and medium-term projections indicated that the current catch limit remained precautionary and consistent with rebuilding biomass towards target levels. In this regard, the Committee recognized the positive impact of the multiannual management plan and commended the efforts of all CPCs in its implementation, which were contributing to the observed improvements in stock indicators, providing a solid basis for stock recovery. However, taking into account the slight increase in fishing mortality observed in the last assessment, it also stressed the importance of ensuring consistent implementation by all CPCs of the provisions within the relevant recommendations, with appropriate follow-up by the COC, and emphasized the need for continued improvements in data collection, quality and timeliness. Finally, acknowledging a 3.5-tonne underage in the total allowable catch (TAC) of European Union Member States in 2025, the Committee endorsed the possibility of a quota carry-over into 2027, consistent with the maximum of 15 percent set by the management plan, subject to evaluation by the COC and validation by the forty-ninth session of the GFCM.

15. With a view to supporting future discussions on turbot gillnet technical measures fostering sustainable turbot fisheries and reducing harbour porpoise bycatch, the Committee welcomed the technical elements and relevant toolbox of potential measures (Appendix 5), including the results of mesh size comparisons. In this context, the Committee praised the technical work undertaken at the national and regional levels on the evaluation of three mesh sizes (340 mm, 360 mm and 400 mm) for bottom-set gillnets in the turbot fishery (Appendix 8), which identified the 400 mm mesh size as the most

precautionary option both in terms of increased CPUE and reduced unwanted bycatch, while indicating the 360 mm mesh size as a suitable alternative for balancing conservation and optimal exploitation through the capture of legal-sized fish close to MCRS. On this basis, the Committee underlined the need to retain the existing 400 mm mesh size provision, agreeing that it could be complemented by the possibility of using a 360 mm mesh size, subject to the mandatory use of porpoise alerting devices (PALS), to mitigate harbour porpoise bycatch.

16. Ukraine requested a temporary increase of its national turbot quota from 170 tonnes to 250 tonnes for 2027 and 2028, having regard to the fact that a cumulative total of 820 tonnes of Ukraine's national quota had remained unused over the period 2022–2026. Ukraine indicated that this request did not entail any modification of Recommendation GFCM/47/2024/8, under which its national quota would remain at 170 tonnes, but was submitted as a temporary and exceptional measure applicable to 2027 and 2028 only, pending the revision of the Recommendation in 2028.

17. The Committee acknowledged that the absence of fishing activity in Ukrainian waters since 2022, and the resulting reduction in removals from the stock, could have contributed to its conservation, although the extent of this contribution had not been quantified. In this context, the Committee took note of Ukraine's request for a temporary increase of its national turbot quota as outlined in paragraph 16. While recognizing the exceptional challenges faced by Ukraine under the current circumstances, the Committee noted that, considering the remaining uncertainties concerning turbot stock status, there was insufficient scientific evidence to support an increase in total catches at this stage. The Committee nevertheless stressed that the quota issue would be considered in the context of the review of the management plan in 2028 (based on Recommendation GFCM/47/2024/8, paragraph 4).

European sprat

18. The Committee took note of the favorable status of European sprat and noted that fishing mortality remained below the F_{target} reference point ($F/F_{\text{tgt}} = 0.65$), indicating that the stock was in sustainable exploitation, and agreed to maintain the current management measures. The Committee praised the work conducted under the GFCM Network of Experts on Fisheries and Climate Change and the SGSABS to integrate climate information into the existing sprat assessment framework, which was developed in response to Recommendation GFCM/47/2024/7 (Appendix 8). The Committee considered the approach promising and relevant for improving the management of European sprat under changing climatic conditions, while noting that further development and evaluation were required before its formal incorporation into scientific advice supporting management. In light of this, it supported the implementation of the agreed roadmap (Appendix 7/A) and emphasized that climate-informed analyses should remain complementary to the operational benchmarked assessment until fully validated.

Spatial management

19. The Committee acknowledged the importance of the desk review on advancing the identification of sensitive benthic habitats and species in the Black Sea as a regional reference for a comprehensive inventory of sensitive benthic habitats and species, and agreed that it constituted a first step for future discussions on potential spatial management measures (Appendix 8). The Committee further noted that the review confirmed that existing (deep-sea) fisheries management frameworks, including concepts such as vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) and significant adverse impacts (SAIs), were not directly applicable to the Black Sea owing to its unique ecological characteristics. In this context, the Committee welcomed the identification of seven potential sensitive benthic habitats and species and supported the finalization of the review through continued cooperation with CPCs to address the remaining information gaps and assess potential interactions between fishing activities and these habitats.

Vulnerable species including sturgeon

20. The Committee welcomed the progress achieved under the Regional Plan of Action for Vulnerable Species (RPOA-VUL), including the identification of priority species-gear-area combinations and the development of a preliminary regional toolbox of technical mitigation measures to support future scientific advice and management actions. It recognized the importance of progressively advancing mitigation measures for vulnerable species, particularly elasmobranchs, through a risk-based approach, while strengthening data collection, monitoring and reporting to improve the evidence base for management. The Committee stressed the importance of engaging fishers in the co-design, testing and uptake of mitigation measures to ensure their effectiveness and practical applicability.

21. The Committee agreed on the importance of continuing efforts to monitor and mitigate fisheries interactions with sturgeons, recalling that they were covered by existing GFCM recommendations, supported through the Black Sea sturgeon pilot project, while data collection and reporting on the species was addressed by Appendix F of the Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF). It agreed on recognizing sturgeons as a priority species group of conservation concern, with a focus on the marine phase of their life cycle and interactions with fisheries and not implying stock assessment efforts, noting that this would provide a coherent framework linking these existing initiatives, while reinforcing the shared responsibility of CPCs and the GFCM for future monitoring, reporting and conservation actions. The Committee further encouraged CPCs to strengthen data collection, bycatch reporting, capacity development, awareness raising and cooperation, while supporting the implementation and further refinement of existing guidelines on the collection of scientific information on live bycaught sturgeons. The Committee encouraged further discussions on technical elements for future data collection and management of interactions with marine fisheries through a dedicated technical session in advance of its next session in 2027.

Issues related to the provision of advice

Small-scale fisheries

22. Recognizing the valuable role of the SSF Forum in enhancing peer-to-peer learning, capacity development and stakeholder engagement, the Committee encouraged its continuation and endorsed the concept note for the 2026–2028 phase (Appendix 6/A), including the proposed priority topics. It took note of the proposed shift towards a more implementation-oriented and extended format, while maintaining a cost-effective approach, enabling deeper exploration of selected topics through practical sessions, peer-to-peer exchanges and structured post-session follow-up. The Committee further stressed the importance of language accessibility in facilitating broader participation in SSF Forum activities and strongly encouraged facilitating the use of national languages through interpretation and translation of session materials.

23. The Committee welcomed the outcomes of the regional assessment of fishing gear use in Black Sea small-scale fisheries, based on the harmonized local ecological knowledge (LEK) survey conducted in Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania and Türkiye. It acknowledged that this comprehensive assessment provided the first harmonized regional overview of fishing gear use, target species, seasonal fishing patterns and operational characteristics. The Committee further noted that passive gear, particularly set gillnets and trammel nets, dominated Black Sea small-scale fisheries, and that the study identified clear gear-species associations and marked seasonal fishing patterns. Recognizing the value of these findings for informing future technical analyses, monitoring efforts and management measures, the Committee commended

the study as an important regional reference tool and encouraged the preparation of a publication to disseminate its results more widely.

Value chain, including rapa whelk pilot study

24. The Committee took note of advances in developing a harmonized regional value chain data collection methodology, aimed at guiding the implementation of ad hoc value chain studies in a consistent manner across the region. It commended the progress made in piloting the methodology for rapa whelk fisheries in Bulgaria and Türkiye, encouraging the continuation of this work and noting its positive contribution to national capacity development. The Committee also welcomed efforts to ensure that the methodology was applicable across a range of fisheries and aquaculture contexts at the regional level. In this regard, it supported the proposed modular approach, including the “lite” tier designed to facilitate rapid value chain assessments for fisheries management (Appendix 6/B), while encouraging further simplification, where feasible, to minimize the data collection burden on CPCs. The Committee noted that the forthcoming Technical Advisory Group on Value Chain and Market Access (TAG-VCMA) would provide an opportunity to review pilot study outcomes and further consider how to integrate value chain information within the fisheries advisory process, prior to finalizing the methodology.

Discards

25. The Committee welcomed the outcomes of the 2026 Workshop on discard monitoring programme and exchange of good practices among on-board observers (WKDISCARDS). It encouraged CPCs to strengthen and harmonize discard monitoring under the DCRF framework by improving data collection and reporting, expanding monitoring where appropriate and promoting the use of integrated and cost-effective approaches, including electronic monitoring and stakeholder participation, to support robust scientific advice.

Fishing capacity

26. Recognizing the need to identify a solution for the future implementation of an efficient and robust fishing capacity management plan in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, the Committee agreed on the elements for revised terms of reference (Appendix 7/B) for the Working Group on Fishing Capacity, to serve as initial technical building blocks provided by the SAC and the ACBS and for further completion by the COC. The Committee further agreed to proceed with the technical analysis on a case-by-case basis, focusing on the specific technical issues raised by CPCs, as reflected in the report of the 2026 Workshop on data collection and submission and its appendices.

Workplan for 2026–2028

27. The activities listed below are based on the outcomes of the work carried out during the intersessional period under BlackSea4Fish, the SGSABS, working groups and relevant workshops. Countries are expected to actively contribute to the implementation of the workplan, by making the necessary resources available, ensuring complete replies to requests for information and timely submission of appropriate data. Technical assistance will be provided upon request, in line with specific needs for the effective implementation of the ACBS workplan and the GFCM 2030 Strategy at the national level, within the framework of BlackSea4Fish.

Data issues

- Review and harmonize fishery-dependent biological data collection frameworks among countries.

- Progress on the improvement of the DCRF, including the modernization of the online platform, the continuation of the harmonization process, the update of the DCRF manual, the further development of the data tracker and consultation tool, and the implementation of quality fisheries indicators.
- Ensure that data transmissions in response to all management plans are complete, allowing for the effective monitoring of the management plan implementation.
- Continue ensuring robust cross-checks of DCRF data towards eliminating inconsistencies.
- Continue, within WKDATA, the harmonization and streamlining of GFCM fisheries and stock assessment data requests, reducing duplication between DCRF and SAF input data template submissions, while improving alignment with stock assessment operational requirements.
- Continue the streamlining and gradual integration of non-DCRF data calls and monitoring control and surveillance (MCS) - reporting into the DCRF online platform and the MCS Portal, with a view to reducing reporting burden and improving transparency and continuity in reporting.
- Continue working on Authorized Vessel List (AVL) temporal data, including historical records and reporting formats, where available, in view of supporting the Working Group on the Management of Fishing Capacity.
- Assess the performance and operational feasibility of the ongoing pilot for the collection and submission of monthly effort data for turbot gillnet fisheries.
- Continue the temporal analysis of data quality indicators.

Socioeconomic data

- Continue providing technical assistance to support countries in collecting, analysing and transmitting regular and complete socioeconomic data via Task VI DCRF.
- Explore opportunities for progressively rolling out dashboards or other data visualization tools.
- Continue the work on the integration of socioeconomic indicators in the evaluation the effectiveness of management measures.
- Explain the framework to support decision-makers in defining socioeconomic objectives for management, including when socioeconomic information should be considered within the fisheries advisory process.

Transversal issues and capacity development

- Continue training activities to increase capacity on new stock assessment models and/or quantitative assessments of management scenarios, including the use of socioeconomic models and data-limited methods across a number of assessment models, as well as model diagnostics and model selection and the standardization and estimation of surveys-at-sea.

Stock assessment and strengthened advice

- Enhance data collection efforts for priority species towards increasing the quality of stock assessment in the Black Sea and foster capacity development through the organization of relevant data preparation meetings in advance of assessment meetings.
- Ensure that fishery-independent surveys are conducted according to the agreed standardized protocols and schedule across countries, with timely processing and submission of all relevant

data, including standardized formats and statistical confidence intervals; document deviations in survey timing.

- Improve the use of discard data as an additional source of fishing mortality information for stock assessments, focusing on improving the consistency between onboard observer data and commercial landing length-frequency distributions, the treatment of missing data, and the estimation of length-specific discard probabilities, with the objective of supporting future assessment sensitivity analyses.

Black Sea anchovy

- Continue the harmonization of the Georgian and Turkish acoustic surveys by incorporating the results of planned parallel survey and refining the methodology, towards the development of a combined regional abundance index for future consideration in the operational stock assessment framework.

Horse mackerel

- Continue comparing the XSA, SAM/FLSAM and a4a models using the same diagnostic criteria.
- Further investigate the internal consistency of catch-at-age and landings.
- Perform an age reading workshop to standardize otolith readings, develop and apply a revised age-length key (ALK).

Whiting

- Further investigate the effect of survey timing on survey age composition and the abundance signal.
- Continue improving catch-at-age data construction and clearly document the methods assumptions and data sources used to develop the historical catch-at-age matrices.
- Continue exploring the incorporation of discard length-frequency distributions (LFDs) into the assessment model.

Red mullet

- Improve the survey time series and ensure that the survey is conducted consistently across years and within the agreed time window.
- Investigate the reconstruction of longer historical catch and survey index time series.
- Explore supplementary models, such as SPiCT or other models, using longer time series if reliable inputs can be recovered.
- Continue intersessional work on discard estimation.
- Ensure the availability of monthly LFDs of landings.

Management of Black Sea fisheries

Rapa whelk

- Finalize the rapa whelk benchmark.
- Perform MSE.

- Continue the research programme by performing the spring standardized scientific beam trawl survey.
- Update the growth estimates and biological assumptions, including possible differences by sex and between the western and eastern areas.
- Ensure the availability of data inputs for SS3 model as a complementary approach for the next benchmark session before October 2026.
- Organize a dedicated technical session on rapa whelk in 2027 to consolidate available evidence and support the second session of ACBS in developing future advice for the species.

Piked dogfish

- Continue data collection and analysis through the tagging study to better understand the movement patterns and habitat use under the research programme.
- Further investigate whether survey indices reflect stock biomass or changes in availability linked to aggregation, survey timing, depth distribution and sex composition.
- Develop a harmonized biological database in line with SAF input data templates across Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania and Türkiye, including sex, length, weight, depth, haul-level information and survey timing.
- Develop terms of reference to complement the existing research programme on piked dogfish with additional activities, as follows:
 - pilot sampling targeting females in shallow water and with complementary fishing gear with clearly defined scientific questions, sampling design, national contributions and expected management outputs.
 - Expansion of the tagging methodology underway in Türkiye to other Black Sea countries, as relevant.
- Where possible, compile and analyse sex-specific length-at-maturity, reproductive and length composition data for piked dogfish, together with relevant literature and expert knowledge, to support future consideration of a stock-specific MCRS.
- Organize a dedicated technical session on piked dogfish, in the context of the SGSABS meeting in 2027, to consolidate available evidence and support the second session of ACBS in developing future advice for the species.

Turbot

- Further explore the inclusion of discards LFDs into the assessment, due to the truncated LFDs.
- Check survey trends across countries and seasons to determine whether they reflect real stock dynamics or differences in survey timing.
- Improve the treatment of missing biological inputs, including catch-at-age, weight-at-age and length composition, where direct biological data are unavailable.

European sprat

- Include additional survey indices from all countries as they become available.

- Continue documenting the use of the Turkish 2017 ALK across years and test alternative ALKs, only after checking their representativeness for the catch.
- Continue comparing the short benchmark time series with the extended historical reconstruction, noting that the longer series may provide useful complementary diagnostics.
- Continue exploratory climate-related analyses, while keeping them separate from the operational advice model until further methodological testing and biological interpretation are completed (Appendix 7/A).

Spatial management

- Finalize the document on “Advancing on the identification of vulnerable marine ecosystem indicators in the Black Sea: a desk review” by addressing reporting gaps, in close cooperation with CPCs, and identifying potential existing interactions with fishing activities in each of the identified sensitive benthic habitats, with a view to informing the second session of ACBS in 2027.

Vulnerable species, including sturgeon

- Strengthen harmonized data collection, monitoring and reporting on fisheries interactions with vulnerable species, particularly elasmobranchs, to improve the evidence base for risk-based management and support the implementation and further refinement of the toolbox of technical mitigation measures.
- Promote the co-design, testing and uptake of mitigation measures with fishers and other relevant stakeholders, supporting participatory approaches, capacity development and the exchange of good practices.
- Continue raising awareness and supporting the implementation and uptake of multilingual sturgeon safe handling and release guidelines among relevant stakeholders, with a focus on the marine phase of the sturgeon life cycle and interactions with fisheries.
- Follow up on the completed Black Sea sturgeon pilot project by supporting officially designated scientific focal points in compiling sturgeon bycatch information, strengthening data collection (including length, weight and vitality condition), reporting and self-reporting mechanisms, and facilitating the submission of relevant data to the GFCM through the DCRF.
- Further clarify, as needed, existing guidelines for the collection of additional scientific information from live bycaught sturgeons during fisheries or research activities, while ensuring consistency with the objective of maximizing survival and in line with the GFCM mandate.
- Organize a dedicated technical session on sturgeon in 2027 to discuss data collection and consolidate available evidence in order to support the second session of ACBS in developing data collection and future advice for the species.

Stakeholder engagement

- Finalize country stakeholder dossiers, documenting existing national frameworks for stakeholder engagement, and the GFCM stakeholder database, towards producing a stakeholder mapping tool.
- Prepare a draft guidance document on better institutionalizing stakeholder engagement within the fisheries advisory process, based on documented good practices for stakeholder engagement within the GFCM context.

Compendium of GFCM decisions

- Pilot the roadmap towards the consolidation, presentation, future maintenance of and access to GFCM decisions using the multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries as a test-case.

Small-scale fisheries

- Implement the 2026–2028 phase of the SSF Forum programme, building on the results of the 2023–2025 phase, taking into account the specific challenges and opportunities faced by Black Sea SSF (including accommodating language needs) and fostering exchanges among fishers across the subregion, including women and youth, supporting the final implementation phase of the RPOA-SSF, and with the support of the Friends of SSF platform.
- Continue advancing on follow-up mechanisms to monitor the impact and local uptake of conclusions and solutions emerging from SSF Forum sessions, in line with the agreed *modus operandi* for stakeholder engagement.
- Continue advancing on the implementation of the RPOA-SSF in consideration of the progress made and emerging needs, in line with the revised monitoring framework and with the support of the Friends of SSF platform.
- Publish the outcomes of the regional assessment of fishing gear use in the Black Sea.
- Repeat and expand the SSF fishing gear LEK study across Black Sea countries, as feasible, including the collection of stakeholders' perceptions of how SSF are understood and characterized at national and local levels, and encourage countries to make use of existing data to improve understanding of SSF dynamics and specificities.
- Present and discuss the available study results through stakeholder consultations at the local and national levels across Black Sea countries, and facilitate a Black Sea subregional dialogue towards identifying a minimum set of common criteria to support a shared understanding and characterization of SSF, while retaining sufficient flexibility to reflect national and local specificities.
- Conduct targeted research to understand fishers' concerns about the future of SSF and develop strategies to enhance confidence in the long-term viability of the sector.
- Enhance youth engagement in SSF by developing training programmes, providing incentives, and encouraging their participation in co-management processes.
- Promote women's visibility and leadership in fisheries through targeted support to formalize their roles in on-board and on-land activities including processing sector and increase representation in decision making bodies.
- Continue supporting Georgia on the implementation of the agreed roadmap for SSF.

Value chain

- Finalize relevant value chain pilot studies.
- Finalize the preparation of a common methodology for value chain data collection.
- Hold a dedicated SAC/CAQ/ACBS session of the Technical Advisory Group on Value Chain and Market Access (TAG-VCMA), to examine pilot study results and finalize the common methodology for value chain data collection.

Discards

- Continue strengthening and harmonizing discard monitoring programmes in the Black Sea.
- Expand discard monitoring to priority fisheries, fleet segments, fishing gear types and under-represented areas, including SSF, while promoting discard mitigation measures.

Meetings

Meeting ¹	Modality/Place and dates
TAG-VCMA	Online, October 2026 (TBC)
SGSABS Rapa whelk benchmark session	October-November 2026 (TBD)
WGMSE on rapa whelk, followed by a dedicated ACBS technical session	November 2026 – July 2027 (TBD)
ACBS technical session on sturgeon	November 2026 – July 2027 (TBD)
WGRF	Online, TBD ²
SGSABS, including a dedicated ACBS technical session on piked dogfish	Hybrid, July 2027
Second session of the ACBS	In person, July 2027
WGANALYSIS on socioeconomic data	Hybrid, April 2028
WGCAP	TBD

Election of the ACBS Bureau

28. The Committee thanked and commended the Bureau of the former Working Group for the Black Sea, particularly during the transition to a GFCM subsidiary body. In light of the excellent work done during its mandate, the Committee unanimously agreed to elect for a second two-year mandate Mr Göktuğ Dalgıç (Türkiye) as ACBS Chairperson, Mr Georgi Ralchev (Bulgaria) and Mr George Tiganov (Romania) as first and second Vice-Chairpersons, respectively.

¹ All meetings organized in the context of research programmes, pilot projects, joint projects, SSF Forum and/or in relation to field activities are not reflected in this table. All assessment sessions, including benchmarks, are preceded by data preparation meetings organized in the context of BlackSea4Fish.

² Depending on the dates of the final meeting of the GFCM Research programme on recreational fisheries.

Any other matter

29. The Committee extended its heartfelt appreciation and warm thanks to Türkiye for its outstanding hospitality at the Central Fisheries Research Institute in Trabzon and for the excellent support provided for the smooth organization of the first session.

Date and place of the next session

30. The Committee agreed to defer the discussion on the date and place for the next session to the forty-ninth session of the GFCM (FAO headquarters, Italy, October 2026), in order to allow delegations additional time for further internal consultation.

Adoption of the report

31. The report, including its appendices, was adopted on 23 July 2026.

Agenda

1. Opening

- 1.1. Opening arrangement
 - 1.1.1. Welcome address and opening statements
 - 1.1.2. Session arrangements
- 1.2. Adoption of the agenda

2. Overview of intersessional activities of relevance to the ACBS, including within the GFCM 2030 Strategy and in the context of the BlackSea4Fish project

- 2.1. General intersessional activities
- 2.2. Black Sea-related intersessional activities

3. Formulation of advice on marine living resources and fisheries management

- 3.1. Status of Black Sea fisheries, including data issues, stock status
- 3.2. Management of Black Sea fisheries

4. Issues related to the provision of advice

- 4.1 Small-scale fisheries
- 4.2 Value chain, including rapa whelk pilot study
- 4.3 Discards
- 4.4 Fishing capacity

5. ACBS work plan for 2026–2028

6. Election of the ACBS Bureau

7. Any other matter

8. Date and place of the next session

9. Adoption of the report

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Appendix 3

List of documents

GFCM:ACBS1/2026/1	Provisional agenda and timetable
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/2	Executive report of ACBS intersessional activities, recommendations and workplan
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/3	Technical elements for the management of key fisheries, areas and data
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/4	Concept notes for research programmes, pilot studies/projects, methodologies and networks on priority topics
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/5	Advancing on the identification of sensitive benthic habitats and species in the Black Sea: a desk review
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.1	List of documents
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.2	List of participants
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.3	Report of the forty-eighth session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (Malaga, Spain, 4–9 November 2025)
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf. 4	Report of the eleventh meeting of the Working Group on the Black Sea (WGBS) (Constanta, Romania, 22–24 July 2025)
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.5	Conclusions of the Subregional Group on Stock Assessment for the Black Sea (SGSABS), including a session of the Working Group on Fisheries and Climate Change (Burgas, Bulgaria, 6–10 July 2026)
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.6	Report of the SGSABS Data preparation meeting for the Black Sea priority species (Hybrid, Batumi, Georgia, 8–12 June 2026)
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.7	Report of the Working Group on the Compendium of GFCM Decisions (Nice, France, 8–9 June 2026)
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.8	Report of the Working Group on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems and Essential Fish Habitats (WGVME-EFH) (FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy, 15–17 April 2026)
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.9	Report of the Working Group for the Analysis of Fisheries Monitoring Data (WGANALYSIS) on socioeconomic data (Online, 8–9 April 2026)
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.10	Report of the workshop on red mullet age reading (Trabzon, Türkiye, 30 March–3 April 2026)
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.11	Report of the Workshop on discard monitoring and exchange of good practices among on-board observers (GFCM headquarters, Rome, Italy, 1–2 April 2026)
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.12	Report of the Working Group on Vulnerable Species (WGVUL) (FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy, 30–31 March 2026)
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.13	Report of the Joint WGBS/SAC/CoC Workshop on data collection and submission (WKDATA) (FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy, 24–26 March 2026)
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.14	Conclusions of the SSF Forum “Empowering the next generation: youth engagement in SSF” (Athens, Greece, 29–30 January 2026)

GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.15	Report of the Workshop on horse mackerel age reading (Batumi, Georgia, 4–8 November 2025)
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.16	Data and information reported by CPCs in response to relevant GFCM decisions for the management of Black Sea fisheries
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.17	Results of the application of fisheries data quality indicators on the DCRF online platform
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.18	Analysis of fishing gear used in the Black Sea
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.19	Current status of Ukrainian marine small-scale fisheries in the Black Sea region
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.20	Standardization of winter acoustic indices for Black Sea anchovy using a joint spatio-temporal approach
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.21	Report on the BlackSea4Fish project activities (July 2025–July 2026)
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.22	Review of the questionnaires on the implementation of fisheries restricted areas
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Inf.23	Black Sea Sprat and Climate Variability: Methodological Developments, Key Findings and Roadmap Elements Emerging from the GFCM Network of Experts on Fisheries and Climate Change
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Dma.1	Manual of the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) – 2018, version 26.1
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Dma.2	FAO. 2025. <i>The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries 2025</i> . General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. Rome. https://doi.org/10.4060/cd7701en
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Dma.3	Russo, T., Marinchel, N., Galli, S., Sbrana, A., Maiello, G. & Mariani, S. 2026. <i>Integrating eDNA-based approaches into monitoring and sustainable fisheries practices</i> . FAO Technical Paper No. 725. Rome, FAO.
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Dma.4	FAO. 2026. <i>BlackSea4Fish – Activities and achievements 2024–2025</i> . Rome
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Dma.5	FAO. 2025. <i>Safe handling and release of piked dogfish in the Black Sea</i> . Rome (Available in English, Bulgarian, Georgian, Romanian, Ukrainian and Turkish)
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Dma.6	FAO. 2025. <i>Safe handling and release of sturgeons in the Black Sea</i> . Rome (Available in English, Bulgarian, Georgian, Romanian, Ukrainian and Turkish)
GFCM:ACBS1/2026/Dma.7	FAO. 2025. <i>Guardians of the Sea: Working together to tackle ghost gear</i> . General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. Rome. https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cd6255en (Available in English, French and Arabic)

Appendix 4

Status of Black Sea stocks

#	GSA	Species	Reference year	Method	Current levels	Reference points	Quantitative status	Percentage of F reduction ³	Stock status	Scientific advice	SGSABS comments
1	29	Turbot (TUR) (<i>Scophthalmus maximus</i>)	2025	SAM	Fc = 0.21, Bc = 9686	Fmsy = 0.19, Bmsy = 14616, Bpa = 7308, Blim = 3654	F/Ftarget = 1.09, B/Btarget = 0.66, B/Bthreshold = 1.33, B/Blimit = 2.65	8.21%	Increased risk of being overexploited and in overexploitation	Reduce fishing mortality	Updated benchmark. Validated Quantitative advice based on SAM. The model is applied to catch data from all GSA29 countries (1950-2025) and data from 8 surveys. Reference points are specified based on Fmsy and Bmsy (estimated in the last Benchmark-2022, 2025 reporting year onwards incorporating Biomass threshold (Bpa) and biomass limit (Blim). Since over the past six years, the Black Sea turbot stock biomass has shown an increasing trend toward the sustainable level (Bmsy).
3	29	Piked dogfish (DGS) (<i>Squalus acanthias</i>)	2025	SPICIT		Fmsy Bmsy Bpa Blim	F/Ftarget = 0.49, B/Btarget = 0.09, B/Bthreshold = 0.18, B/Blimit = 0.29	--	Depleted with low fishing mortality	Immediate reduction of fishing mortality and implement a recovery plan	Updated assessment. Validated Quantitative advice based on SPICIT. The model output interpretation should consider the biological component of the stock derived from the 5 surveys used in the assessment.
3	29	Horse mackerel (HMM) (<i>Trachurus mediterraneus</i>)	2025	XSA	Fc = 0.95, Bc = 13583	Fe40 = 0.521	F/Ftarget = 1.83	45.33%	In overexploitation	Reduce fishing mortality	Updated assessment. Validated Quantitative advice based on XSA. Complementary assessments with SAM and a4a provided comparable information on the trend's indicators.
4	29	Whiting (WHG) (<i>Merlangius Merlangus</i>)	2025	XSA	Fc = 0.33, Bc = 37583	F0.1 = 0.43	F/Ftarget = 0.76	--	Sustainable exploitation	Do not increase fishing mortality	Updated assessment. Validated Quantitative advice based on XSA. considering landings data and tuning index (surveys AUT EAST TUR) coming from Türkiye.

³ % F reduction = $(1 - (1/Fratio)) * 100$

#	GSA	Species	Reference year	Method	Current levels	Reference points	Quantitative status	Percentage of F reduction ³	Stock status	Scientific advice	SGSABS comments
5	29	Rapa whelk (RPW) (<i>Rapana venosa</i>)	2025	SPiCT		Fmsy Bmsy Bpa Blim	F/Ftarget = 1.7, B/Btarget = 0.37, B/Bthreshold = 0.75, B/Blimit = 1.25	41.05%	Overexploited and in overexploitation	Reduce fishing mortality immediately	Updated assessment. Validated Quantitative advice based on SPiCT. The model is applied on catch data from all GSA29 countries (1985-2025), nominal CPUE for Ukraine, Romania and Türkiye, and combined GSA 29 surveys (ROM, BUL, TUR_west and TUR_east) for Autumn and Spring. The model is updated for RefYear 2025 from catch and combined GSA 29 spring survey for TUR_east-TUR_west-BGR, including confidence interval information. The threshold (Bpa) and limit (Blim) reference points were set with Bmsy at Bpa = 0.5Bmsy and Blim = 0.3Bmsy.
6	29	Anchovy (ANE) (<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i>)	2025	SPiCT		Fmsy Bmsy Bpa Blim		NA	Possibly overexploited	Reduce fishing mortality	Updated assessment. Validated Qualitative advice based on SPiCT. The updated SPiCT assessment and an exploratory model using a combined Georgian–Turkish acoustic index provided a similar stock perception, indicating that the stock is possibly overexploited. Due to data limitations and retrospective convergence issues, the combined acoustic index was considered unsuitable for quantitative assessment. Therefore, further work is needed on the harmonization and validation of the regional acoustic indices.
7	29	Sprat (SPR) (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>)	2025	SAM	Fc (2023-2025) = 0.41, Bc (2023-2025) = 171271	Fe40 = 0.63	F/Ftarget = 0.65	--	Sustainable exploitation	Do not increase fishing mortality	Updated benchmark. Validated Quantitative advice based on SAM, considering the Romanian spring survey and standardized CPUE from Türkiye.

#	GSA	Species	Reference year	Method	Current levels	Reference points	Quantitative status	Percentage of F reduction ³	Stock status	Scientific advice	SGSABS comments
8	29	Red mullet (MUT) (<i>Mullus barbatus</i>)	2025	a4a	Fc = 0.41, Bc = 2356	F0.1 = 0.47		NA	Possibly sustainable exploitation	Do not increase fishing mortality	New assessment. Validated Qualitative advice based on a4a. New ALK, developed during the 2026 age-reading workshop, was applied in the assessment. The different assessment scenarios provided a broadly consistent perception of stock status. However, the results remain subject to uncertainty related to the treatment of age 0, the limited information available from the survey index, and the biological plausibility of the rapid changes in SSB estimated by some model configurations.

Technical elements for the management of turbot fisheries in the Black Sea

This document summarizes three pieces of information made available for the discussion of potential additional options for the management of turbot gillnets fisheries in the Black Sea at the first meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee for the Black Sea (ACBS1) in July 2026. It covers three tables as follows:

- Table 1. Toolbox of potential technical measures for Black Sea turbot gillnet fisheries along as discussed by the WGBS11 in 2025
- Table 2. Toolbox addressing interactions between harbour porpoise and turbot gillnet fisheries in the Black Sea (as emerging from the WGVUL (2026)
- Table 3. Summary of the regional evaluation of potential mesh-size options and management criteria, including interpretation and comments from the technical session preceding ACBS1 (2026)

General details

Area: Geographical subarea (GSA) 29

Species: Turbot (*Scophthalmus maximus*)

Sectors: Black Sea turbot gillnet fisheries

Relevant GFCM activities

- Pilot project to assess cetacean bycatch in Black Sea turbot gillnet fisheries and to test measures to mitigate the incidental catch of cetaceans (CetaByM)
- Ad hoc Working Group on Turbot Technical Measures (WGTUR) (2025)
- Working Group on Vulnerable species (2026)
- Test of alternative mesh sizes (340, 360 and 400 mm) for bottom-set gillnets in the Black Sea turbot fishery
- Turbot technical session preceding ACBS1 (2026)

Relevant GFCM decisions

- **Recommendation GFCM/47/2024/8** on a multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29), amending Recommendations GFCM/43/2019/3 and GFCM/41/2017/4 Recommendation GFCM/46/2023/20 on the establishment of a catch documentation scheme for turbot in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29)
- **Recommendation GFCM/46/2023/7** on the extension of the multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29), amending Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4 and repealing Recommendation GFCM/45/2022/9 on a multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29).
- **Recommendation GFCM/45/2022/9** (repealed) on a multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29), amending Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/3
- **Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/17** on a catch certificate scheme for turbot in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29)

- **Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/3** amending Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4 on a multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29), establishing TAC and quotas for each Black Sea country
- **Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4** on a multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (GSA 29) repealing Recommendation 40/2016/6 on the scientific monitoring, management and control of turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29).
- **Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/6** on the scientific monitoring, management and control of turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (GSA 29)
- **Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/3** on the establishment of a set of measures to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in turbot fisheries in the Black Sea
- **Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/2** on the establishment of a set of minimum standards for bottom-set gillnet fisheries for turbot and conservation of cetaceans in the Black Sea

Table 1. Toolbox of potential technical measures for Black Sea turbot gillnet fisheries along as discussed by the WGBS in 2025

Category	GFCM	Bulgaria	Georgia	Romania	Türkiye	Ukraine	Stakeholder views on existing measures	Proposed measures	Comments on proposed measures
Gear type	Bottom-set gillnet (Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/2)	Bottom-set gillnet	The main fishing gear for turbot is a gillnet. The bottom trawl is also used. The turbot is often caught as bycatch in purse seines during the anchovy fishing.	Bottom-set gillnet	Bottom-set gillnet. It is forbidden to fish for turbot using longlines and trammel nets. The turbot is caught as bycatch in trawlers.	Bottom-set gillnet	Bottom set-gillnets remain as the main gear type for turbot target fishery.	Proposal made by head of the Bulgarian Black Sea Sunrise Association is to implement experimental trials on traditional bottom trawl targeting turbot in the Black Sea.	The group acknowledges that when using bottom trawling, there is no cetacean bycatch, and decomposed turbot issue is eliminated. On the other hand, other environmental impact and management of proposed trawl fishery have to be taken into account as well as technical measures such as optimizing the minimum codend mesh size to align with the MCRS.
Mesh size	Mesh size is greater or equal to 400 mm. (Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/2)	Mesh size is greater or equal to 400 mm.	N.A.	Mesh size is greater or equal to 400 mm.	Mesh size is greater or equal to 400 mm.	Mesh size 360-400 mm (2 x 180-200 mm)	Stakeholder perception varies among CPCs, observation of experimental trials with different mesh sizes indicated 400 mm of mesh size is more suitable for catching individuals of around 53 cm TL. Remarkable demands from fishers to adjust existing mesh size. Additionally, there is no regulation specific	The proposal from Türkiye is 340 mm for catching individuals about 45 cm TL. The second proposal from Türkiye is 360 mm of mesh size, which is found to be effective for catching turbot around 48 cm TL.	Quota is expected to be caught by less fishing effort. This is expected to cause less cetacean bycatch due to reduced fishing effort, and as reduction in mesh size is not expected to affect any increase in cetacean bycatch. Smaller turbot individuals (< 45 cm TL) are expected to be caught but if released alive they are

Category	GFCM	Bulgaria	Georgia	Romania	Türkiye	Ukraine	Stakeholder views on existing measures	Proposed measures	Comments on proposed measures
							to turbot gillnet mesh size in Georgia, apart from the general minimum mesh size restriction for gillnets (>18 mm). Georgian experts noted that it would be beneficial for the GFCM to issue an official letter encouraging harmonization of mesh size regulations across CPCs, in line with relevant recommendations.		expected to show high survivability. Further research is required for all areas. Concerns about the idea "Quota is expected to be caught by less fishing effort". Work undertaken in 2026 (see Table 3 below for results)
Twine type	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	Monofilament (Prohibited fishing gear - the use of turbot gillnets made of multifilament yarn as of 1 January 2023)	The use of multifilament more than 6 km is forbidden. The use of monofilament and multi-monofilament more than 1 km is forbidden.	N.A.	CetaByM (WP4) results show that multifilament nets have more cetacean bycatch and more decomposed turbot in comparison to the monofilament nets. In addition to that, in the case of ALDFG, multifilaments are likely to be more persistent.	The use of monofilament is recommended.	
Twine diameter	Monofilament or twine diameter shall not exceed 0.5 mm. (Recommendation)	The diameter of monofilament or twine used in bottom-set gillnets must	N.A.	The diameter of monofilament or twine used in bottom-set gillnets must	N.A.	N.A.	The views are to maintain the status quo as reflected in the GFCM recommendation.		

Category	GFCM	Bulgaria	Georgia	Romania	Türkiye	Ukraine	Stakeholder views on existing measures	Proposed measures	Comments on proposed measures
	GFCM/37/2013/2)	not exceed 0.5 mm		not exceed 0.5 mm					
Maximum net length	N.A.	N.A.	In coastal fishery (within one mile zone), the maximum net length per string is 300 m.	N.A.	The use of multifilament more than 6 km is forbidden. The use of monofilament and multi-monofilament more than 1 km is forbidden.	Total number of gillnets allowed is 3400, each up to 100 m long.			
Maximum net height	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.		Reinforce the data collection also based on the monitoring programs currently in place.	
Soak time restrictions	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	Soak time in the Black Sea is traditionally long.	Reinforce the data collection also based on the monitoring programs currently in place.	
Selective gear modifications	N.A.	In NATURA 2000 protected sites for conservation of natural habitats, which include marine water	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	CetaByM (WP3 and WP4) results show that PALs significantly contribute to the reduction of bycatch of <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> without causing any commercial loss.	Use of PALs is recommended in the commercial fleet.	Implementation costs and maintenance needs should be considered.

Category	GFCM	Bulgaria	Georgia	Romania	Türkiye	Ukraine	Stakeholder views on existing measures	Proposed measures	Comments on proposed measures
		areas, fishing with turbot gillnets without cetacean-deterrent systems and devices (pingers and PAL devices) is prohibited							
Net Marking Requirements	Yes (Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/3)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	According to the Ukrainian fishery rules, each turbot gillnet must be marked (tagged). The tag must be attached to the float line, up to 1 m from one end of the net	The views are to maintain the status quo as reflected in the GFCM recommendation.		
Discard ban	N.A.	YES (existing derogation for turbot bycatches and specimen under MCRS)	Yes	YES (existing derogation for turbot bycatches and specimen under MCRS)	N.A.	N.A.		Strengthening the existing discards monitoring program and integrating the discard rates into stock assessments are proposed.	
Bycatch limits	N.A.	N.A.	The fishing vessels are obligated to	N.A.	Bycatch of up to 5% of the total catch by	Bycatch of turbot juveniles at	Countries are invited to align with the relevant GFCM		

Category	GFCM	Bulgaria	Georgia	Romania	Türkiye	Ukraine	Stakeholder views on existing measures	Proposed measures	Comments on proposed measures
			conduct fishing in such a way that the maximum allowable bycatch of fish must not exceed 20% (approximately). In the case of anchovy fishing, the maximum allowable bycatch of fish must not exceed 40% (approximately). Exceeding the maximum allowable bycatch of fish is considered a violation of fishing and fish stock conservation regulations. Governance Decree N423 issued in 2013 on Fisheries and Fish Stock Protection		weight is allowed. In bottom trawling, the amount of turbot in total catch by weight cannot exceed 30%.	specialized gillnet turbot fisheries is limited by 5%. Bycatch of other fish species at specialized gillnet turbot fisheries is limited by 50%.	recommendations such as GFCM/37/2013/2.		

Category	GFCM	Bulgaria	Georgia	Romania	Türkiye	Ukraine	Stakeholder views on existing measures	Proposed measures	Comments on proposed measures
			Measures, clause 10						
Electronic Monitoring	All vessels above 12 meters LOA authorized to fish for turbot shall be equipped with vessel monitoring system (VMS) or any other system of geo-localization allowing control authorities to track their activities. (Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4)	VMS for all FV (All vessels with LOA above 15 meters must be equipped with an Automatic Identification System (AIS))	Fishing vessels exceeding 24 meters in length overall and some small vessels with the length of <24m are equipped with a satellite-based VMS system. Boats with the length of <12m do not have any observers or electronic monitoring system	VMS or GPS transponder location with satellite transmission or mobile network	Vessel Monitoring System for all fishing vessels of 12 m or above in length is obligatory	Vessel monitoring system is at the stage of implementation. (Relevant Law Act by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved)	Countries are invited to align with the GFCM recommendation.		
MCRS	45 cm (Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/2)	45 cm	35 cm TL	45 cm	45 cm	35 cm SL	Countries are invited to align with the GFCM recommendation.		
Closed areas	N.A.	N.A.	Areas defined by the Governance Decree N423 issued in 2013	N.A.	Fishing is prohibited in 13 different areas in the Black Sea,	N.A.		Identification high risk area of interaction between <i>P. phocoena</i>	

Category	GFCM	Bulgaria	Georgia	Romania	Türkiye	Ukraine	Stakeholder views on existing measures	Proposed measures	Comments on proposed measures
			on Fisheries and Fish Stock Protection Measures, clause 4 - restricted areas and dates for fishing		covering a total area of 556 km2.			and turbot gillnet fishery.	
Closed seasons	2 months in the period April-June (CPCs determine the exact start and end but minimum 2 months)	15 April to 15 June	01 May to 30 June	15 April to 15 June	15 April to 15 June	01 November - 31 January 01 -30 May	Countries are invited to align with the GFCM recommendation.	Proposal from Romania is to advance the traditional prohibition period for turbot by at least two weeks. Countries are invited to re-evaluate spawning period in light of potential shifts driven by climate change, and up-to-date monitoring efforts.	

Table 2. Toolbox addressing interactions between harbour porpoise and turbot gillnet fisheries in the Black Sea (as emerging from WGVUL (2026))

Subregion	Main risks group	Key fisheries	Proposed measures
GSA 29 (Black Sea)	Harbour porpoise (<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>)	SSF (gillnet fishery for turbot)	Mesh size (change from 400 mm to 340 mm or 360 mm with the aim of reducing fishing effort to be able to catch the allocated quota) Work undertaken in 2026 (see Table 3 below for results)
		SSF (gillnet fishery for turbot)	Monofilament twine (compulsory in Bulgaria and Romania)
		SSF (gillnet fishery for turbot)	Use of PALs (tests conducted in 95 operations. Resulted in a 70% bycatch reduction without commercial loss of target species. PALs used with 200 m spacing)
		SSF (gillnet fishery for turbot)	Spatiotemporal closure (adapt closure periods to account for climate change. Adapt spatiotemporal closures by taking into account important marine mammal areas and migratory patterns)

Table 3. Summary of the regional evaluation of potential mesh-size options and management criteria, including interpretation and comments from the technical session prior to the first session of ACBS (2026)

Question of the concept note	Management criterion	340 mm	360 mm	400 mm	Interpretation	Technical meeting comments
1	Length composition	Closer to MCRS	Moderately above MCRS	Largest fish	Increasing mesh size shifted catches toward larger legal-sized turbot.	In all areas 400mm mesh size ensured capture of individuals above MCRS and provided the widest separation from the 45 cm threshold.
1	Use of legal-size fish close to MCRS	High	Intermediate	Low	The 400 mm mesh may allow some legally harvestable fish just above MCRS to escape.	In the eastern Black Sea trials, the 360 mm mesh was considered to support more efficient use of legal-sized fish just above 45 cm.
1	Catch of undersized turbot	High	Intermediate	Low	Smaller meshes increased the capture of fish below the 45 cm MCRS.	No additional comments
2	Turbot biomass CPUE	Intermediate	Low	High	The 400 mm mesh showed the strongest catch efficiency in biomass terms with significant variation.	No additional comments
3	Mortality of undersized turbot	Low	Low	Non observed	Recorded mortality of undersized fish was overall no undersized turbot were recorded as dead in the 400 mm mesh in the south-eastern dataset.	In the south-eastern trials, no undersized turbot were recorded as dead at hauling for any of the three mesh sizes. This should not be generalized to all eastern Black Sea trials, as mortality was reported in some areas.
6	Effort required to catch 1 tonne of marketable turbot	Intermediate	High	Low	Smaller mesh sizes did not reduce the effort needed to catch marketable turbot.	Previous studies in Eastern Black Sea showed that 360mm mesh size supported shorter soak times to catch the same amount of fish, conducive to

Question of the concept note	Management criterion	340 mm	360 mm	400 mm	Interpretation	Technical meeting comments
						lower probability of encountering unwanted bycatch
7	Bycatch CPUE	High	Intermediate	Low	No statistically significant bycatch differences were detected among mesh sizes. Numerically, bycatch CPUE values for some categories were lower in larger mesh sizes.	Very little bycatch was reported in the eastern Black Sea In the western Black Sea trials, the 400 mm mesh was associated with lower interactions with some vulnerable species, particularly harbour porpoise and piked dogfish.
8	Gear selectivity	Just above MCRS	Moderately above MCRS	Well above MCRS	All meshes selected legal-sized fish, but the 400 mm mesh provided the widest buffer above MCRS.	This factor is of importance for a species that is still overexploited and in overexploitation, whose continued positive evolution may have slowed down
Overall	Overall management signal	Limited support	Potential option providing a balance between conservation and optimal exploitation	Strongest conservation and CPUE performance	340 mm is weakly supported; 400 mm showed the strongest biological, conservation and CPUE performance; 360 mm may be retained for further discussion in relation to the use of legal-sized fish close to the MCRS.	In the south-eastern Black Sea trials, the 360 mesh was presented as the intermediate option in terms of conservation, sustainable use and practical implementation In the western Black Sea trials, results supported the 400mm mesh size in terms of conservation (both for reduced undersized turbot and lower unwanted bycatch) and CPUE performance.

Concept note for the 2026–2028 phase of the SSF Forum

Background and rationale

The 2023–2025 SSF Forum programme provided a participatory space for peer exchange and collective learning among SSF stakeholders. Through 4 thematic workshops, it also marked a consolidation phase for stakeholder engagement within the framework of the GFCM. The post-2023–2025 SSF Forum programme survey confirmed that the SSF Forum:

- Strengthened knowledge and capacities;
- Fostered meaningful perception shifts;
- Relied strongly on peer-to-peer learning;
- Reinforced leadership and self-perception as changemakers; and
- Built new collaborations and encouraged knowledge dissemination.

The SSF Forum has therefore been widely perceived as a valuable mechanism for social learning, capacity development, and creating regional connections. The next phase is therefore envisaged to move from consolidation of dialogue towards actively enhancing impacts and outreach, while preserving the participatory approach that defines the SSF Forum.

In addition, the RPOA-SSF reaches its current implementation horizon in 2028, which provides both a timeline and a strategic anchor for the design of the next phase. The period 2026–2028 can therefore be framed as a structured trajectory contributing to the final phase of RPOA-SSF implementation and reflection.

Strategic objectives for the next phase

Where do we stand now?

Since the beginning of the RPOA-SSF, the SSF Forum has been a capacity development initiative, giving space to fishers to share their experiences. Since 2023, with the co-design of the programme with fishers and SSF stakeholders, the GFCM has also used the SSF Forum as a valuable stakeholder consultation space. Feedback and insights gathered through these discussions have contributed to broader reflections and, where relevant, informed the development of scientific advice.

Where do we want to go?

While participants have consistently valued the SSF Forum as a space for exchange and peer learning, experience indicates a growing expectation for stronger responsiveness and follow-up. In addition, participants have highly appreciated sessions incorporating applied components and contributions from practitioners and external experts (e.g. market actors, social media professionals, entrepreneurs), highlighting the added value of more hands-on and implementation-oriented formats.

Looking ahead to 2026–2028, and in view of the 2028 horizon of the RPOA-SSF, the next phase of the SSF Forum should evolve toward a more action-oriented model while preserving its peer-to-peer learning base. This evolution will strengthen the SSF Forum's role as a proactive and structured capacity-development initiative, creating clearer pathways from dialogue to implementation. The proposed next phase aims to:

- Integrate more structured and action-oriented components into sessions;
- Include practical training modules delivered by practitioners/teachers and technical experts;
- Encourage structured follow-up commitments to strengthen implementation and continuity beyond SSF Forum sessions.

Strategic objectives for 2026-2028

The next phase could therefore be structured around three objectives:

- Objective 1 – Translate dialogue into operational capacity
- Objective 2 – Strengthen organizational capacity and socio-economic resilience
- Objective 3 – Consolidate the SSF Forum as a structured regional mechanism post-228

Proposed programme: deepening priority topics through solution-oriented sessions

The post-2023-2025 SSF Forum programme survey identified five priority areas provided by the respondents for future SSF Forum sessions:

1. SSF organizational capacity and occupational safety/safety at sea;
2. Navigating administrative procedures;
3. Building livelihood resilience and diversification strategies;
4. Interactions between small-scale and recreational fisheries;
5. Improving product valorization and access to markets.

The next phase of the SSF Forum aims to bring these topics into broader, interconnected thematic areas. Given their cross-cutting nature, this approach allows an in-depth exploration of sub-topics, while also fostering stronger links between issues that may be treated separately in practice. The proposed programme would therefore shift towards longer, more focused sessions designed to support in-depth exchange and exploration of practical solutions.

The objective is not to revisit the same issues, but to build continuity and momentum from previous discussions, and move towards more operational and actionable outcomes through the contributions of identified experts.

Proposed programme for 2026–2028

Year	Theme	Main topics	Expected outcomes
2026	Capacity accelerator: Practical solutions for organizational strength and operational efficiency (3-4 days)	• Collective organization and cooperative models, and practical approaches to improve representation and management • Operational challenges related to occupational safety/safety at sea and identify replicable prevention practices • Key administrative bottlenecks faced and practical solutions to navigate procedures more effectively • Innovative tools and support mechanisms to improve organizational efficiency, and participation in consultation and decision-making processes • Managing interactions/conflicts with other sectors (e.g. recreational fisheries)	• Compilation of practical tools and good practices for stronger SSF organizational management • Repository of replicable safety-at-sea and occupational safety practices adaptable at local level • Mapping of priority administrative barriers and peer-tested solutions to address them

Year	Theme	Main topics	Expected outcomes
2027	Resilience accelerator: Developing entrepreneurship and innovation with small-scale fishers (3-4 days)	• Practical strategies to strengthen the economic resilience of SSF communities • Innovative approaches for developing alternative income-generating activities • Business models to improve product valorization, branding, traceability • Entrepreneurship to enhance market access, shorten value chains, and direct marketing opportunities • Negotiation and bargaining strategies • Digital/social media promotion strategies	• Collection of practical examples and replicable approaches • Repository of innovative product valorization and market access strategies • Peer-generated recommendations for strengthening economic resilience
	(TBD) Opening the dialogue with the recreational fisheries sector	• Dedicated session in coordination with the GFCM research programme on recreational fisheries, building on its stakeholder engagement component • Initiate dialogue with key recreational fisheries organizations to better understand their perspectives and priorities, and to inform the content of the session • Identify positive synergies and practical examples of cooperation between sectors towards collaboration opportunities	• Recommendations for improving dialogue and management of interaction points between SSF and RF • Strengthened relationship and communication channels • Improved understanding of stakeholder needs for future work
2028	(TBC) Reflecting post-RPOA-SSF and SSF Forum event (2 days)	Reflections: • Key achievements and gaps in RPOA-SSF implementation • Evolution and lessons learned from SSF Forum • Changes in representation capacity Future • Priorities for post-2028 regional cooperation • Recommendations for future support mechanisms • Strengthening monitoring and follow-up mechanisms	• Regional lessons learned • Strategic recommendations • Future of SSF Forum • Post-2028 orientations

**In terms of location: visa applications are increasingly difficult for North African participants; locations in non-EU countries could be prioritized.*

Proposed approach: Launching targeted calls for training proposals

To support the transition of the SSF Forum toward a more practical, solutions-oriented format, it is proposed to launch a targeted call for proposals or expressions of interest through relevant expert networks, with the support of the Friends of SSF. This mechanism would aim to identify qualified experts, facilitators and practitioners able to deliver hands-on sessions tailored to the needs of participants. For example, a negotiation or entrepreneurship expert could be engaged to facilitate a

2–3 hour applied session featuring simulations and practical exercises adapted to the realities of fishers.

Format evolution: enhancing impact keeping SSF Forum participatory approach

The SSF Forum’s added value lies in its participatory format. Any evolution should therefore preserve this approach while enhancing its practical impact and continuity. Rather than organizing two short sessions per year on separate topics, the next phase aims to organize a long, phased session centered on a single topic. A more extended format would allow time to explore themes in depth, move beyond surface-level discussion and integrate practical exercises.

A clear cycle to prepare each session

Pre-session preparation
• Circulate a briefing note with objectives, expected outputs and a preparatory questionnaire to clarify expectations, priorities and potential contributions; • Liaise with focal points to collect country notes providing contextual information relevant to the workshop theme; • Identify, with the support of the Friends of SSF, technical experts to contribute targeted practical sessions;
In-person workshop
• Summary of previous discussions, key takeaways and pending issues, ensuring continuity and cumulative learning (or webinar pre-session); • Maintain peer-learning through structured exchanges; • Integrate practical components and hands-on exercises facilitated by identified experts; • Conclude with the formulation of short, realistic action commitments;
Post-session follow-up and strengthening local dissemination
• Require participants to submit short reports on local dissemination activities and follow-up actions undertaken, using a standardized reporting template prepared in advance; • Introduce simple dissemination indicators to monitor participant engagement in post-session outreach (e.g. number of feedback meetings held, stakeholder groups reached, dissemination materials shared, photos; etc); • Provide standardized dissemination toolkits (e.g. presentation slides, summary briefs, visual infographics) that participants can easily adapt and use in their local contexts.

Participant selection

Key principles

Proposed set of core principles to guide the participant selection:

- Ensure geographical and gender balance;
- Maintain a balanced representation between SSF organizations and individual fishers;
- Ensure representation from both the Mediterranean and the Black Sea;
- Include women and youth participation, with a target of 50 percent when feasible;
- Ensure that fisher participants represent recognized organizations within their national fishing sector and have a clear mandate to report back to their members/communities*;

- Where relevant, align participant selection with pre-identified stakeholder groups reflected in country stakeholder dossiers or national consultation processes.

** Following a request by the SAC to ensure fishers participating are representative of their country's fishing sector, as agreed with national administrations, and have an obligation to report back to their members.*

Refining the selection process

As the SSF Forum evolves, participation criteria should also be refined as well. A balanced approach should combine continuity and renewal by maintaining a proportion of highly engaged returning participants to consolidate leadership, while keeping space for new participants. A two-phase selection process should be considered to support a more strategic selection:

1. General expression of interest through the standard registration process;
2. Targeted follow-up questionnaire to evaluate:
 - Motivation and expected contribution;
 - Relevance of profile to the specific session theme and format;
 - Capacity and mandate to report back to communities, organizations, or administrations;
 - Representational role within the national fishing sector; and
 - Potential suitability as an expert or country case speaker.

Where appropriate, this process could be complemented by consultation with national focal points, or pre-identified stakeholder groups reflected in country stakeholder dossiers to ensure that selected participants are representative of national sector structures and able to contribute effectively to follow-up and dissemination.

To increase stakeholder engagement, the SSF Forum could introduce “SSF Forum Stories” – with a group of active, experienced participants who have stories highlighting concrete impacts, and capturing what happens after SSF Forums sessions. These participants may have defined roles and expectations, potentially outlined in terms of reference. These “SSF Forum stories” will help build stronger storytelling and post-session outreach activities, as well as ensure momentum is maintained and participants remain deeply connected.

Strengthening the monitoring of impacts

The next phase could introduce light but structured monitoring indicators to better capture impact of participation and demonstrate the SSF Forum's added value. In this context, “impact” may refer to the extent to which participation contributes to improved knowledge dissemination, strengthened organizational capacity, enhanced stakeholder engagement, and concrete follow-up actions. Indicative key performance indicators may include:

- Number of local dissemination or feedback sessions organized by participants;
- Number of stakeholders reached through post-session dissemination activities;
- Number of collaborative initiatives, partnerships, or exchanges emerging from SSF Forum participation;
- Self-reported changes in organizational practices; and
- Engagement of participants in subsequent GFCM, Friends of SSF or national processes.

Conclusion: consolidating a regional mechanism beyond 2028

The 2026–2028 phase represents a pivotal transition for the SSF Forum. Anchored in the final implementation phase of the RPOA-SSF, this offers an opportunity not only to strengthen the SSF Forum’s practical impact, but also to clarify its long-term positioning within the GFCM and Friends of SSF framework. By progressively moving from dialogue to action, the SSF Forum can consolidate its role as:

- A regional platform for peer learning and leadership development among SSF stakeholders;
- A flexible mechanism contributing to scientific advice and stakeholder consultation;
- A catalyst for improvements in capacity building and representation.

The proposed trajectory is designed as a cumulative process, each session building upon previous work, introducing operational components, and strengthening follow-up mechanisms. The objective is to consolidate the SSF Forum as a hybrid and evolving space, grounded in dialogue, strengthened by practice, and capable of generating sustained impact.

Concept note towards streamlining value chain data collection and analysis

1. Background, context and objectives

The GFCM 2030 Strategy for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and Black Sea highlights, under its Targets 3 and 4, the importance of fostering dynamic, resilient and innovative fisheries and aquaculture value chains. In line with this strategic orientation, the SAC, CAQ and WGBS have emphasized the need to improve the understanding of the socioeconomic drivers influencing fisheries management effectiveness and, where relevant, strengthen the upgrading of value chains. This is increasingly critical to support sound decision-making and ensure effective management along fisheries and aquaculture value chains.

In the absence of a harmonized regional approach for data collection and value chain analysis (VCA), the comparability of existing studies and the development of new GFCM analyses remain limited. At its forty-seventh session (2024), the GFCM requested the Secretariat to develop “a methodology for the collection of data along the value chain, including data on employment and supporting specific actions linked to management efforts.” In response, in 2025 an extensive review of existing approaches was conducted to inform the design of a harmonized methodological approach that was both robust and adaptable to the diversity of fisheries and aquaculture systems in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. The proposed approach and initial findings were discussed, and a methodological concept note was endorsed by the SAC, CAQ and WGBS in 2025.

In line with the work plan adopted by the forty-eighth session of the GFCM, a first draft of a common methodology for value chain data collection was prepared, building on the endorsed concept note. It is designed to support the analysis of value chain structure, performance and sustainability, while providing a basis for identifying upgrading opportunities

The methodology aims to:

- Leverage existing GFCM social and economic data collection and analysis, complementing them with data along downstream segments of the value chain, including processing, end-markets and consumers;
- Provide a practical and adaptable framework applicable to a wide range of species, national contexts and institutional capacities across the region;
- Allow for a gradual scaling-up of analysis, starting from essential data collection to more comprehensive value chain development approaches;
- Generate evidence to inform fisheries management and support the assessment of social, economic and environmental implications.

The methodology is being progressively piloted through select studies for different species in GFCM CPCs⁴.

2. Proposed modular approach for data collection

Based on the experiences in setting up and conducting the aforementioned pilot studies, it has become apparent that there is a need for a modular approach that ensures the methodology can be adapted to different contexts and study objectives, while also ensuring a resource-efficient approach.

⁴ Pilot value chain studies in fisheries: Rapa whelk in Türkiye and Bulgaria, Blue crab in Tunisia and Spain and Round sardinella in Lebanon. Pilot value chain studies in aquaculture: Seabass on Tunisia, Red tilapia in Egypt, Rainbow trout in Lebanon.

To promote both practicality and analytical depth, it is proposed to introduce a tiered approach to the methodology in order to streamline value chain data collection and analysis. The proposed tiered approach is structured around three levels of analysis, each corresponding to different objectives, data requirements, and resource availability. This modular approach stresses the importance of determining study objectives and scope prior to implementing the study, while enabling the flexible application and progressive scaling of the methodology accordingly. It includes:

The first level of analysis (green) focuses on a minimum set of core indicators to provide a rapid and comparable overview of value chain structure and performance, including key metrics such as employment, production volumes and revenues. This first level analysis is aimed at supporting a rapid assessment, particularly with a view to supporting decision-makers in considering value chain implications for fisheries management.

The second level analysis (yellow) expands the analysis to a more detailed assessment of value chain functioning, performance and governance, allowing for a deeper understanding of constraints and opportunities relevant for management. This second level analysis is envisaged to be applied in scenarios where value chain aspects may be highly influential on fisher behaviour, thus importantly influencing management, or where there is a need to prepare the terrain for potential future value chain upgrading work.

The third level analysis (red), which is optional and resource-dependent, supports the design of value chain upgrading strategies, including investment needs and targeted interventions aimed at enhancing sustainability, competitiveness and resilience.

Furthermore, within each tier, data collection can be adapted to the specific objectives of the study or management effort. This may involve gathering more or less detailed information depending on whether the aim is to maximize economic returns, address social concerns, and/or minimize environmental impacts.

3. Proposed value chain analysis methodology

The proposed value chain analysis methodology consists primarily of two phases: the functional analysis and the sustainability analysis.

The **functional analysis** provides an assessment of the structure and dynamics of the value chain. It focuses on identifying and analysing the sequence of products, actors involved and functions, as well as the linkages between them and the overall governance of value chain operations. It helps understanding how value is generated, distributed and enhanced across the value chain. The central component of the functional analysis is the value chain mapping, consisting of developing a flow chart representing the sequence of nodes from production to end-markets (and, if relevant, consumption), including the functions performed, the actors involved and the linkages between them.

The **sustainability analysis** assesses value chain performance by measuring the economic, social and environmental impacts generated by actors at each node of the value chain (production, processing, end markets and consumers).

A third (optional) phase – **value chain upgrading** – is also introduced in the methodology, although it is not foreseen to be essential for informing the fisheries advisory process. The upgrading analysis builds on the findings of the functional and sustainability assessments. It aims to identify constraints, opportunities and priority interventions that can improve the performance, resilience and sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture value chains. Depending on the scope of the study and the resources available, the analysis may range from a simple identification of constraints and opportunities to the preparation of a comprehensive upgrading strategy.

Key indicators to be produced at each phase, according to the tiered approach, are proposed below.

Functional analysis and value chain mapping

Functional analysis	First level analysis	Second level analysis	Third level analysis
Value chain mapping	• Identification of main value chain nodes • Main products and product forms traded • Number of actors by node • Volumes handled by node • Main domestic and export channels	• Product flows between actors and channels • Values generated and transferred between nodes • Seasonal patterns and supply dynamics • Quantification of product losses and by-products where relevant	• Identification of bottlenecks, hotspots and leverage points • Mapping of opportunities for value addition and diversification
End-market analysis	• Main market outlets (wholesale, retail, Ho.Re.Ca, export) • Main destination markets and countries • Product forms sold	• Market size and growth trends • Consumer preferences and purchasing patterns • Market requirements and standards • Price trends and market drivers	• Identification of market opportunities and diversification options • Assessment of premium market potential, certification and branding opportunities
Value chain actors analysis	• Identification of core actors (producers, processors, traders, retailers) • Identification of supporting actors and service providers • Main functions performed by each actor category	• Assessment of technical, managerial and commercial capacities • Access to inputs and support services • Workforce availability and skills • Constraints affecting performance and competitiveness	• Identification of upgrading needs and capacity development priorities • Opportunities for strengthening service provision and actor coordination
Enabling environment analysis	• Main institutions involved in the value chain • Existing policies and regulatory framework • Key infrastructure supporting value chain operations	• Assessment of resource management conditions • Infrastructure gaps and deficiencies • Availability and accessibility of services • Institutional coordination and effectiveness	• Identification of infrastructure investment needs • Policy and institutional improvement opportunities • Prioritization of enabling environment interventions
Governance analysis	• Main commercial relationships between actors • Existing coordination mechanisms • Presence of formal and informal arrangements	• Price-setting mechanisms • Contractual arrangements and payment modalities • Information flows and access to market information • Access to finance and decision-making processes	• Governance strengthening measures • Mechanisms to improve transparency, participation and accountability • Actions to promote equitable distribution of

Functional analysis	First level analysis	Second level analysis	Third level analysis
			benefits across the value chain

Sustainability analysis (economic, social, environmental)

VC node: Production/fishing

Production/ Fishing dimension	First level analysis	Second level analysis	Third level analysis
Social	• Crew size (average annual workers on-board, incl. owner) • Workers on shore (average annual) • Gender-disaggregated counts (female on-board, female on shore)	• Social protection coverage (% with health insurance; unemployment benefits; pension) • Safety trainings (participated and interested in future trainings) • Education level of crew	• Contracting modality (seasonal, daily/monthly contract, share-based, other) • Livelihoods conditions and households depending on fisheries. • Structured identification of labour and safety hotspots such as working conditions, skills gaps via open-ended questions to be addressed by public authorities; • Workflow narrative (process of fishing, typical day) to locate leverage points for improving conditions
Economic	• Total landed quantity of target species (kg/year) • Total estimated landed value of target species (currency) • Average first-sale price (currency/kg) • Destination shares of target species by outlet (% split across wholesaler, auction, exporter, processing, fishmonger, direct consumers, Ho.Re.Ca, retail, self-consumption, other)	• Landed quantity of other species (kg/year) • Landed value of other species (currency) • Gears used: main gears (up to 3) and share of deployment • Effort: trips targeting VC species • Effort: trips targeting other species • Effort: average trip duration • Operating costs: a. Fuel and other energy costs b. Crew compensation (avg per crew and/or total personnel costs)	• Price formation mechanism (negotiation, buyer-set price, auction, reference price, informal) with explanation • Value of assets (to compute depreciation): current boat value, purchase price and purchase year, vessel age, license value • Income/catch trends: catch change over past 5 years + reasons (open-ended) • Constraints and feasibility of management measures to inform upgrading options (e.g. infrastructures, services)

Production/ Fishing dimension	First level analysis	Second level analysis	Third level analysis
		c. Bait/ice/boxes/package ng/food costs d. Repair and maintenance costs e. Port fees/insurance/book- keeping/legal/bank costs f. License costs • Subsidies received (value) • Investments	
Environment al	Fuel consumption (litres/year) as a proxy for energy use	- Self-reported actions to reduce environmental impacts (energy/waste/water/product loss) - Product handling mode from vessel to sale point (alive/boxed/frozen/refrigerated/dried/other) to inform loss/waste risks	- Incentives received for impact reduction (e.g.: solar panels, recycling) - Change of catch in the last 5 years due to environmental reasons (open-ended) - Open-ended questions to explore practices and constraints of environmental <i>hotspots/hope-spots</i>

VC node: Processing

Processing Dimension	First level analysis	Second level analysis	Third level analysis
Social	- Number of workers employed - Gender-disaggregated counts	- Social protection coverage (% with health insurance; unemployment benefits; pension) - Affiliation to professional association and satisfaction - Education level by role - Years of experience	- Contracting modality (seasonal, daily/monthly contract, share-based, other) - Livelihoods conditions and households depending on fisheries - Identification of labour bottlenecks and upgrading needs via open-ended constraints on working conditions and proposals to enhance selling/operations
Economic	- Total volume of VC species purchased (kg/year) - Total value of VC species purchased (currency)	- Total volume of other species processed (kg) - Total value of other species processed (currency)	Purchase price formation mechanism (negotiation, buyer-set price, auction, reference price, informal) with explanation

Processing Dimension	First level analysis	Second level analysis	Third level analysis
	• Total volume of VC species products sold (divided by type of product, e.g.: meat/shells/bones/by-products) (kg/year) • Total value of VC species products sold (divided by type of product, e.g.: meat/shells/bones/by-products) (currency) • Destination shares of product sales by outlet (% split across direct export; exporting companies; wholesaler; consumer; Ho.Re.Ca; retail; self-consumption) + export destinations by country	• Suppliers structure (fishers/auction/wholesaler/aquaculture/import/other) • Operating costs: a. Fuel and other energy costs b. Water costs c. Personnel costs d. Ingredients; packaging; transport; e. Repair and maintenance f. Fixed costs (insurance, legal, financial, social security) • Subsidies received (value) • Investments • Process description (flow chart from reception of raw material to final products) • Active months for VC species and for other species	• Buying agreement type (contract, formal, informal, privileged relation, payment modalities) • Value of assets (to compute depreciation): current volume/machine value, purchase price and purchase year, age of factory, license value • Strategic constraints and margins: drivers affecting purchase and sale prices (open-ended) • Constraints and feasibility of management measures to inform upgrading options (e.g.: infrastructures, services, technology, market access)
Environmental	• Fuel and electricity consumption or costs as a proxy for energy use • Water consumption (litres/year)	• Renewable/clean energy share (type and %) • Solid waste generated • By-product management approach • Water treatment/recycling • Actions to reduce losses, save energy/water, improve waste management	• Incentives received for impact reduction (e.g.: solar panels, recycling water, by-products) • Identification of priority environmental upgrading pathways (valorization of shells/by-products, circular economy options) (open-ended)

VC node: End-markets (wholesale, retail, HoReCa, export)

End-markets dimension	First level analysis	Second level analysis	Third level analysis
Social	• Number of workers employed • Gender-disaggregated counts	• Social protection coverage (% with health insurance; unemployment benefits; pension) • Affiliation to professional association and satisfaction • Education level by role	• Constraints related to labour, informality, skills and working conditions, livelihoods and household dependency on fisheries, competitiveness (open-ended)

End-markets dimension	First level analysis	Second level analysis	Third level analysis
		Years of experience	
Economic	- Total volume of VC species purchased (kg/year) - Total value of VC species purchased (currency) - Total volume of VC species products sold (divided by type of product, e.g.: meat/shells/bones/by-products) (kg/year) - Total value of VC species products sold (divided by type of product, e.g.: meat/shells/bones/by-products) (currency) - Destination shares of product sales by outlet (% split across buyer abroad; exporting companies; wholesaler; consumer; Ho.Re.Ca; retail; self-consumption) + export destinations by country	- Total volume of other species sold/traded (kg) - Total value of other species sold/traded (currency) - Suppliers structure (fishers/auction/wholesaler/aquaculture/import/other) - Operating costs: <i>a. Fuel and other energy costs</i> <i>b. Water costs</i> <i>c. Personnel costs</i> <i>d. Ingredients; packaging; transport;</i> <i>e. Repair and maintenance</i> <i>f. Fixed costs (insurance, legal, financial, social security)</i> - Subsidies received (value) - Investments	- Purchase price formation mechanism (negotiation, buyer-set price, auction, reference price, informal) with explanation - Buying agreement type (contract, formal, informal, privileged relation, payment modalities) - Strategic constraints and margins: drivers affecting purchase and sale prices (open-ended) - Constraints and feasibility of management measures to inform upgrading options (e.g.: infrastructures, services, technology, market access, challenges in selling/marketing)
Environmental	- Fuel and electricity consumption or costs as a proxy for energy use - Water consumption (litres/year)	- Renewable/clean energy share (type and %) - Solid waste generated - By-product management approach - Water treatment/recycling - Actions to reduce losses, save energy/water, improve waste management	- Incentives received for impact reduction (e.g.: solar panels, recycling water, by-products) - Identification of priority environmental upgrading pathways (cold chain losses, packaging waste, valorization of shells/by-products, circular economy options) (open-ended)

Upgrading analysis and strategy development

SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis	First level analysis	Second level analysis	Third level analysis
SWOT assessment	Identification of major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats	Participatory validation with stakeholders and prioritization of key issues	Detailed strategic assessment and scenario analysis

Identification of upgrading actions

Upgrading actions	First level analysis	Second level analysis	Third level analysis
Intervention identification	Broad list of potential actions	Assessment of feasibility, costs and expected benefits Prioritization of actions	Detailed intervention packages and investment plans

Strategy development

Strategy development	First level analysis	Second level analysis	Third level analysis
Strategic planning	required	Preliminary roadmap	Comprehensive upgrading strategy and implementation framework

4. Conclusion

This concept note presents a proposed modular methodology for value chain analysis in support of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture management in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, based on the experience of setting up and/or executing pilot studies. The proposed approach responds to the need for a harmonized yet flexible approach that can be applied across different species, production systems, national contexts and management objectives.

The tiered structure allows users to move from a rapid assessment based on a core set of indicators to more detailed analyses supporting management decisions and, where appropriate, the design of value chain upgrading strategies. By combining secondary information, targeted primary data collection and stakeholder consultations, the methodology seeks to generate practical evidence on value chain performance, governance arrangements, socioeconomic impacts and sustainability outcomes.

The draft methodology will be further refined based also on CAQ and ACBS guidance, as well as through lessons learned from the continued execution of the pilot studies. A final draft methodology document incorporating this streamlined three-tiered approach, as well as the pilot study results, are foreseen to be presented and further discussed at a special meeting of the Technical Advisory Group on Value Chain and Market Access (TAG-VCMA).

Roadmap for the further development of climate-informed assessment approaches for European sprat in the Black Sea

- Continue improving and testing the extended sprat assessment, with particular attention to sensitivity analyses on natural mortality, index selection, historical CPUE, source-specific uncertainty and the treatment of the long historical time series.
- Evaluate how alternative assessment assumptions affect recruitment estimates, stock–recruitment relationships, process residuals and the resulting climate signals.
- Systematically compare climate-informed stock–recruitment models using biologically plausible environmental drivers, including CIL, autumn heat fluxes, mixed layer depth and chlorophyll, while testing alternative seasonal windows and lag structures.
- Further investigate the strong autumn OND signal to identify the ecological mechanisms through which pre-winter conditions, mixing, productivity, plankton dynamics or predator–prey processes may affect sprat recruitment.
- Continue analysing recruitment efficiency and its multi-year periodicity, including its coherence with large-scale climate indices, to better understand how basin-scale or global climate variability may be translated into local environmental conditions affecting recruitment.
- Further develop the integration and evaluate of climate-informed stock–recruitment relationships within the EqSim to explore climate-conditioned biological reference points (BRPs) under plausible climate scenarios, and assess their potential implications for future scientific advice, while keeping these analyses as complementary to the operational advice framework until fully validated.

Elements for the terms of reference of the Working Group on Fishing Capacity

Background

This appendix comprises elements for the terms of reference for the Working Group on Fishing Capacity (WGCAP) as emerging from the twenty-seventh session of the GFCM Scientific Advisory Committee on fisheries (SAC) in 2026 and the Scientific Advisory Committee for the Black Sea (ACBS) and the Compliance Committee (CoC) for submission to the forty-ninth session of the GFCM in 2026.

Elements for WGCAP terms of reference

The WGCAP in 2027 shall:

- be supported by the GFCM Secretariat, the CoC Bureau and the SAC Bureau, as well as contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs), and be chaired by the SAC and COC chairpersons;
- be tasked to discuss the relevant fishing capacity data per CPC, based on a working document developed by the GFCM Secretariat in which they will present an analysis of:
 - the fishing capacity data in 2007, 2008, 2009 as reported to the GFCM Secretariat in 2010 by CPCs in the context of Recommendation GFCM 34/2010/2;
 - the fishing capacity data in 2023, 2024, 2025 as reported by CPCs under the Authorized Vessels List Task describing the precise state of play for the fleet segment above 15 m LOA;
 - the comparison of capacity data and their evolution since 2010; and
 - information from CPCs on their specificities relevant to the fishing capacity of their fleet segment above 15 m LOA.
- be tasked to provide a comprehensive technical analysis of the data and information provided to the GFCM Secretariat, following a case-by-case approach and focusing on the particular technical issues raised by CPCs, as included in the report of the 2026 Workshop on Data Collection and Submission (WKDATA) and its appendices (Appendix 5) in order to advise the CoC, SAC and ACBS on the capacity ceilings per CPC;
- hold one meeting in 2027 before the next sessions of the CoC, SAC and ACBS; and
- report its conclusions and advice to the CoC, SAC and ACBS for their consideration in 2027 in view of capacity ceilings per CPC.

Summary of the outcomes of the technical sessions in support of ACBS

Session 1. Technical session on Black Sea turbot gillnets

1.1. Regional mesh-size comparison trials for Black Sea turbot gillnets

Background

The Black Sea turbot fishery is managed under the regional GFCM multiannual management plan, including a 45 cm minimum conservation reference size (MCRS) and a minimum legal stretched mesh size of 400 mm for bottom-set turbot gillnets. Following discussions at WGTUR and WGBS11 in 2025, alternative mesh sizes of 340 mm and 360 mm were proposed for testing against the currently regulated 400 mm mesh.

The main question was whether smaller mesh sizes could improve catch efficiency and support quota uptake, while remaining compatible with the 45 cm MCRS and without increasing risks to undersized turbot or vulnerable bycatch species. In response, coordinated regional trials were carried out in Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania and Türkiye between March and May 2026. The targeted technical session was organized to present the national results, followed by a regional synthesis of the combined dataset, and to discuss how the evidence could inform future technical advice under the Black Sea turbot management framework.

The trials compared three stretched mesh sizes: 340 mm, 360 mm and 400 mm. The experimental design aimed to test the three mesh sizes under the same or as similar as possible fishing conditions within each participating country. Mesh size was the main variable to be changed, while other operational parameters were kept constant within each country as far as possible. The regional dataset included 29 comparable fishing operations and 87 mesh-specific set records. Overall, 978 turbot were recorded, together with information on catch weight, total length, sex, vitality condition of undersized turbot and bycatch species. Fishing effort was standardized as day·km, calculated from net length and soak time.

The regional analysis addressed the practical questions defined in the concept note, including average turbot length, biomass CPUE, mortality of undersized turbot, sex ratio of marketable-size turbot, length–girth relationship, effort required to catch 1 tonne of marketable turbot, standardized bycatch CPUE and gear selectivity. The analysis was designed to provide a broad regional synthesis for management discussion. The technical session noted that the dataset should be interpreted with caution because country contributions to total effort were uneven, catch rates were highly variable, and operational conditions differed among countries and fishing areas.

Conclusions

Detailed comments emerging from the targeted technical session on turbot are summarised in Table 1, and overall conclusions reported are as follows:

Turbot is still overexploited and in overexploitation in GSA 29, and while the assessment results show a positive evolution, the 2025 surveys estimates showed a declining trend that warrant caution. This should provide the starting point for any discussion on new or additional technical measures under the regional management plan.

The comparative regional analysis showed strong biological and conservation support for the 400 mm mesh, including higher biomass CPUE, stronger size selectivity, lower capture of undersized turbot and the widest buffer above the 45 cm MCRS. At the same time, there were grounds to retain the 360 mm

mesh as a balanced option between conservation and optimal exploitation, related to the capture of legal-sized fish close to the MCRS (detailed results are provided in GFCM:ACBS1/2026/3(Rev.2)).

National studies showed different patterns, reflecting national and subregional conditions. Romania reported increasing mean turbot size with larger meshes, while Bulgaria recorded no undersized turbot catches with 400 mm meshes and a reduction in thornback ray bycatch. Türkiye found similar catch efficiency across all mesh sizes, but noted that the 360 mm mesh size allowed fewer losses of individuals above 45 cm. Georgia identified both the 360 and the 400 mm mesh sizes as the most efficient. Larger mesh sizes also enhanced protection of vulnerable species, eliminating spiny dogfish catches in Romanian trials and reducing interactions with harbour porpoises and common dolphins, with bycatch declining as mesh size increased.

Table 1. Summary of possible mesh-size options, management criteria, interpretation and technical meeting comments

Question of the concept note	Management criterion	340 mm	360 mm	400 mm	Interpretation	Technical meeting comments
1	Length composition	Closer to MCRS	Moderately above MCRS	Largest fish	Increasing mesh size shifted catches toward larger legal-sized turbot.	In all areas 400mm mesh size ensured capture of individuals above MCRS and provided the widest separation from the 45 cm threshold.
1	Use of legal-size fish close to MCRS	High	Intermediate	Low	The 400 mm mesh may allow some legally harvestable fish just above MCRS to escape.	In the eastern Black Sea trials, the 360 mm mesh was considered to support more efficient use of legal-sized fish just above 45 cm.
1	Catch of undersized turbot	High	Intermediate	Low	Smaller meshes increased the capture of fish below the 45 cm MCRS.	No additional comments
2	Turbot biomass CPUE	Intermediate	Low	High	The 400 mm mesh showed the strongest catch efficiency in biomass terms with significant variation.	No additional comments
3	Mortality of undersized turbot	Low	Low	Non observed	Recorded mortality of undersized fish was overall no undersized turbot were recorded as dead in the 400 mm mesh in the south-eastern dataset.	In the south-eastern trials, no undersized turbot were recorded as dead at hauling for any of the three mesh sizes. This should not be generalized to all eastern Black Sea trials, as mortality was reported in some areas.
6	Effort required to catch 1 tonne of marketable turbot	Intermediate	High	Low	Smaller mesh sizes did not reduce the effort needed to catch marketable turbot.	Previous studies in Eastern Black Sea showed that 360mm mesh size supported shorter soak times to catch the same amount of fish, conducive to

Question of the concept note	Management criterion	340 mm	360 mm	400 mm	Interpretation	Technical meeting comments
						lower probability of encountering unwanted bycatch
7	Bycatch CPUE	High	Intermediate	Low	No statistically significant bycatch differences were detected among mesh sizes. Numerically, bycatch CPUE values for some categories were lower in larger mesh sizes.	Very little bycatch was reported in the eastern Black Sea In the western Black Sea trials, the 400 mm mesh was associated with lower interactions with some vulnerable species, particularly harbour porpoise and piked dogfish.
8	Gear selectivity	Just above MCRS	Moderately above MCRS	Well above MCRS	All meshes selected legal-sized fish, but the 400 mm mesh provided the widest buffer above MCRS.	This factor is of importance for a species that is still overexploited and in overexploitation, whose continued positive evolution may have slowed down
Overall	Overall management signal	Limited support	Potential option providing a balance between conservation and optimal exploitation	Strongest conservation and CPUE performance	340 mm is weakly supported; 400 mm showed the strongest biological, conservation and CPUE performance; 360 mm may be retained for further discussion in relation to the use of legal-sized fish close to the MCRS.	In the south-eastern Black Sea trials, the 360 mesh was presented as the intermediate option in terms of conservation, sustainable use and practical implementation In the western Black Sea trials, results supported the 400mm mesh size in terms of conservation (both for reduced undersized turbot and lower unwanted bycatch) and CPUE performance.

1.2. Turbot gillnet fishing effort data collection pilot

Background

It was recalled that WGBS11 had emphasized the need to strengthen effort data collection and had highlighted the importance of reporting effort not only in terms of the number of vessels, but also through soak time and gear length, expressed as day·km.

A standardized Excel template had been developed and shared with CPCs to support user-friendly reporting, data validation and consistency. The template requested information on vessel identification, gear setting and retrieval dates, gear length, landed turbot and estimated discards. It automatically calculated soak time and produced monthly summaries of fishing operations, gear length, soak time, fishing effort, landings and discards. Data had been received from Bulgaria, Romania and Türkiye, and the WKDATA discussion recognized the usefulness of the proposed monthly effort template while also noting practical challenges related to operation-level effort data, including the proportion of registered gillnet length actually deployed and the recording of exact gear setting dates.

Conclusions

The Technical Group acknowledged the progress made in collecting effort data and recommended that the ongoing pilot activity be continued.

Session 2. Technical session on European sprat, including climate considerations

Background

European sprat was selected by the GFCM as a pilot case study to explore how climate-related considerations could be progressively integrated into fisheries assessment and advisory processes in the Black Sea. The work was undertaken under the GFCM Network of Experts on Fisheries and Climate Change, with the support and coordination of the GFCM Secretariat, following requests from the WGBS and the Commission to investigate potential climate-related drivers of sprat population dynamics and explore climate-informed assessment approaches.

The work was motivated by the substantial variability observed in sprat recruitment and by the recognition that the current operational assessment framework, based on the benchmark FLSAM assessment covering the period 2009–2025, provides a relatively short perspective for investigating long-term climate influences on stock productivity.

To investigate long-term stock dynamics and climate influences, the GFCM Network of Experts on Fisheries and Climate Change developed a complementary assessment framework based on an extended historical time series. The analyses provided additional perspectives on stock dynamics and recruitment variability beyond the current benchmark assessment framework, supporting the investigation of climate-related signals while highlighting uncertainties associated with historical data and assessment assumptions that warrant further evaluation.

The work explored relationships between recruitment variability and a range of environmental indicators, with particular attention to processes linked to winter cooling and the formation of the Cold Intermediate Layer (CIL), identified as a potentially important ecological mechanism linking climate variability and sprat dynamics in the Black Sea. The analyses suggested a measurable climate signal in recruitment variability and provided new insights into the possible influence of environmental conditions on stock productivity. At the same time, the analyses highlighted remaining uncertainties regarding the ecological interpretation of the observed relationships and the mechanisms through which climate variability may affect recruitment.

Building on these analyses, exploratory climate-informed stock–recruitment relationships were developed and integrated into the equilibrium simulation framework (EqSim) to investigate climate-conditioned

biological reference points and their potential implications for future scientific advice. Complementary analyses using alternative assessment approaches were also conducted to evaluate the consistency of long-term stock patterns and climate-related signals. The work was reviewed during the Data Preparation Meeting, the Working Group on Fisheries and Climate Change and SGSABS, resulting in the development of a roadmap to guide future work on climate-informed assessment approaches for European sprat in the Black Sea.

Conclusions

The work undertaken by the GFCM Network of Experts on Fisheries and Climate Change, with the support and coordination of the GFCM Secretariat, represented the first practical application of the Network in support of the GFCM fisheries advisory process for the Black Sea. The main achievement was not only the identification of climate-related signals in sprat recruitment, but also the development and exploratory testing of a practical pathway to incorporate climate information into the existing stock assessment and advisory framework through climate-informed stock-recruitment relationships, EqSim and climate-conditioned BRPs. The Group expressed appreciation for the work and welcomed the methodological approach adopted, noting that it built upon and complements the existing stock assessment framework and advice process.

The meeting supported the proposed roadmap and highlighted the importance of further investigating the mechanisms linking environmental change and sprat productivity, including trophic and ecosystem processes, as well as evaluating key assessment assumptions such as natural mortality and historical ecosystem changes. The meeting further emphasized that future developments should focus on environmental indicators that are both biologically relevant and suitable for forecasting and climate-informed stock projections and advice, and noted the potential applicability of the approach to other species.

Session 3. Technical session on spatial management

Background

In 2019, the GFCM defined Vulnerable Marine Ecosystem (VME) Indicators in the Mediterranean Sea to identify sensitive “hotspot” areas subject to potential Significant Adverse Impacts (SAIs) from fisheries. Over the years the non-applicability of the VME Indicators to the Black Sea emerged owing to peculiarity of the Black Sea underwater environment. Its hydrography, salinity gradients, stratification patterns define a system that differs profoundly from most semi-enclosed seas, however benthic habitats and species are affected by fishing and other stressors in the Black Sea as well. In addition to this, the Black Sea is characterized by anoxic conditions at depths beyond 100 m that determine the absence of (deep-sea) fisheries in this layer. These conditions called for a revision of the VME concept in favour of the identification of sensitive benthic habitats and species instead. A desk review was prepared in 2025-2026 to list sensitive benthic habitats and species (SBHS) that could be vulnerable to fishing activities in the Black Sea, presented to the WGVME-EFH in April 2026 and shared to the Black Sea CPCs in June in view of the discussions foreseen at the ACBS1 in July. The desk review allowed the identification of seven sensitive habitats with several associated important species and six of these habitats were found to occur between 0 and 80 m meters and thus potentially impacted by bottom-contact fishing gear, while two of them were considered not directly impacted by fisheries.

Conclusions

The meeting recognized the importance of the desk review as a regional reference for a comprehensive inventory of sensitive benthic habitats and species occurring in the Black Sea. The review was considered scientifically robust, and the meeting further acknowledged the ecological value of the various benthic habitats identified therein. Experts agreed that the review provided a solid basis for future discussions on spatial management measures within the framework of the ACBS. At the same time, they noted that the review confirmed that the existing framework for the management of deep-sea fisheries, together with associated concepts such as Vulnerable Marine Ecosystem (VME) indicators and Significant Adverse Impacts

(SAIs) from fisheries, were not applicable to the Black Sea owing to its unique ecological characteristics. Looking forward, experts agreed that future work should focus on finalizing the review by addressing remaining species reporting gaps in close cooperation with CPCs as well as identifying the potential existing interactions with fishing activities of each of the identified sensitive benthic habitats, with a view to undertaking an external peer review and subsequently publishing the review. Discussions on potential spatial management measures for the conservation of sensitive benthic habitats and species would continue within the framework of the ACBS.

List of benchmark assessments

Benchmark assessments				
Species	GSA	Notes	Requested by	Comments
<i>Rapana venosa</i> (RPW))	29	Finalization of open benchmark	SGSABS 2024; WGBS 2024	Benchmark to be finalized in 2026 prior to performance of MSE requested under Recommendation GFCM/47/2024/9
<i>Engraulis encrasicolus ponticus</i> (ANE)	29	Finalization of open benchmark	SGSABS 2024; WGBS 2024	Benchmark to be finalized after implementation of the roadmap

Data and information reported by CPCs in response to relevant GFCM decisions for the management of Black Sea fisheries

Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4 on a multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29)

This decision has been periodically amended (GFCM/43/2019/3, GFCM/45/2022/9, GFCM/46/2023/7 and GFCM/47/2024/8) with updates on the allocated quota for the key species.

Applicable CPCs: Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Türkiye and Ukraine. During the WGBS11 Ukraine reported that there is no fishing activity for turbot since 2022, therefore no data/information were expected to be received

The management plan sets transitional precautionary management measures for the Black Sea in order to ensure that the stocks and fisheries are kept at biologically sustainable levels.

Applicable CPCs shall submit annually information on designated landing points (par. 47), authorized fishing vessels (par. 30; 35), and fishing activities reported by quarters (par. 31) through the DCRF online platform.

DATA REPORTED

CPC	2025 LANDING POINTS - PAR. 47- [DCRF Task II.4.2 by 30 Nov]	2026 AUTHORIZED VESSELS - PAR. 30; 35- [DCRF Task IV.4.16 by 31 Jan]	2025 FISHING ACTIVITIES - PAR. 31- [DCRF Task II.3.2- Quarterly]
Bulgaria	15 landing points	127 vessels	Reported
Georgia	1 port in 2024	2 vessels	Reported
Romania	13 landing points	51 vessels	Reported
Türkiye	91 landing points	757 vessels	Reported
Ukraine	No activity	No activity	No activity

FISHING CAPACITY AND FISHING EFFORT

The management plan establishes to maintain the fishing fleet capacity or fishing effort at the levels authorized and applied in **recent years** for the exploitation of turbot in GSA 29.

Fishing capacity

CPC	NUMBER OF AUTHORIZED VESSELS									
	Reference year									
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Bulgaria	111	115	116	124	126	126	119	121	124	127
Georgia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	2
Romania	41	48	55	58	59	59	59	59	68	51
Türkiye	NR	910	985	1 244	1 303	1 172	981	761	751	757
Ukraine	NR	NR	NR	461	NR	No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity

Source: DCRF Subtask IV.4.4 and IV.4.16

NR = Not reported

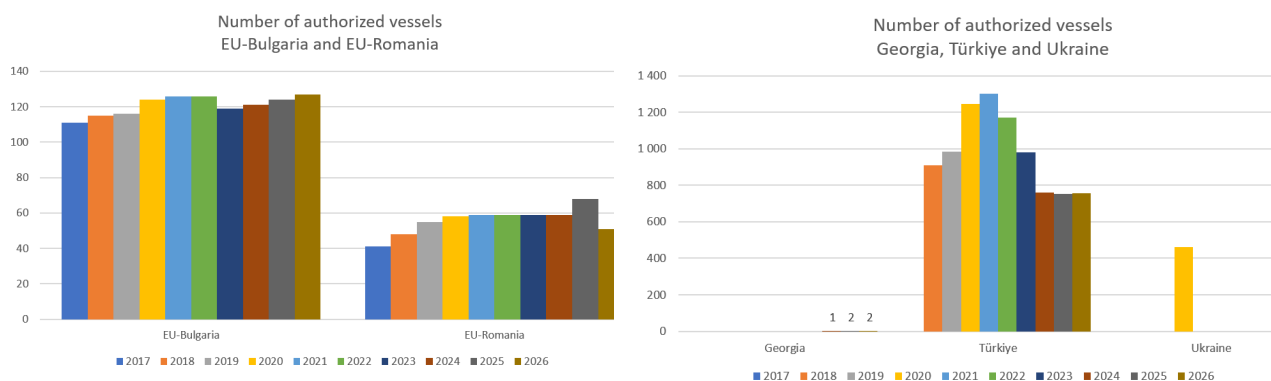


Figure 2 - Number of fishing vessels for turbot fisheries of Georgia, Türkiye and Ukraine

FISHING CAPACITY (GT)										
CPC	Reference year									
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Bulgaria	2 110	2 266	2 341	2 364	2 762	2 742	2 538	2 394	2 423	2 484
Georgia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	89	124	124
Romania	905	1 049	930	1 232	990	825	1 142	1 031	1 266	1 065
Türkiye	NR	2 885	2 886	3 616	4 391	4 137	3 234	2 889	2 892	2 643
Ukraine	NR	NR	NR	461*	NR	No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity

Source: DCRF Subtasks IV.4.4 and IV.4.16

NR = Not reported

*Data coverage: 81%

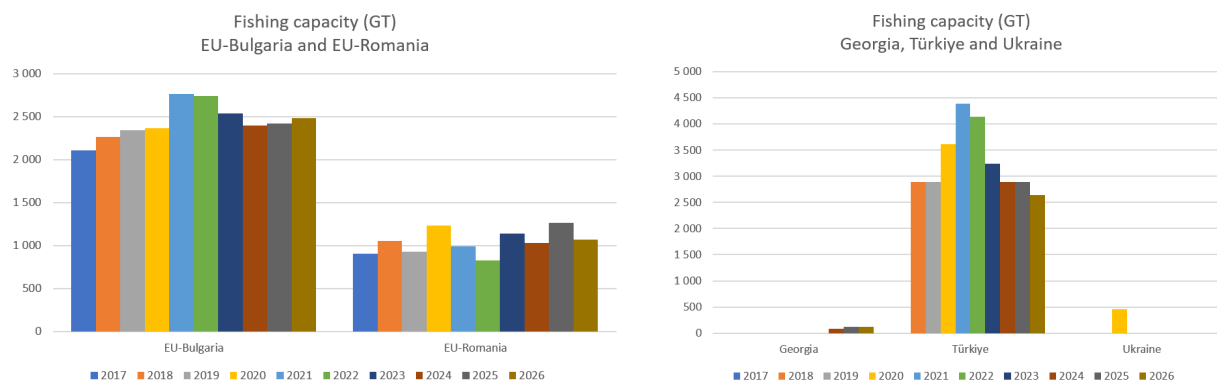


Figure 4 - Fishing capacity (GT) for turbot fisheries of Georgia, Türkiye and Ukraine

ENGINE POWER (kW)										
CPC	Reference year									
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Bulgaria	14 306	15 403	15 911	16 678	17 765	17 553	16 755	16 517	17 254	17 096
Georgia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	331	648	648
Romania	4 875	4 943	4 473	5 019	4 381	4 161	5 043	4 427	5 249	5 249
Türkiye	NR	39 701	40 654	53 440	58 904	59 778	52 514	47 697	48 860	48 699
Ukraine	NR	NR	NR	24 051	NR	No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity

Source: DCRF Subtask IV.4.4 and IV.4.16

NR = Not reported

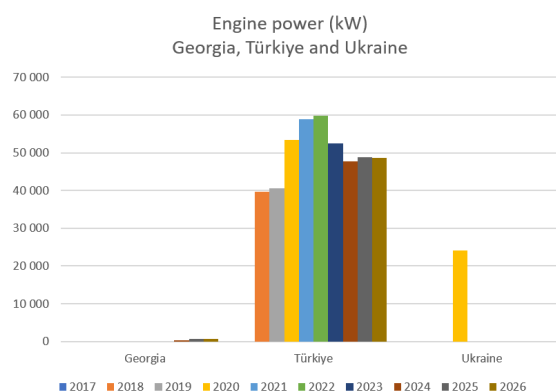
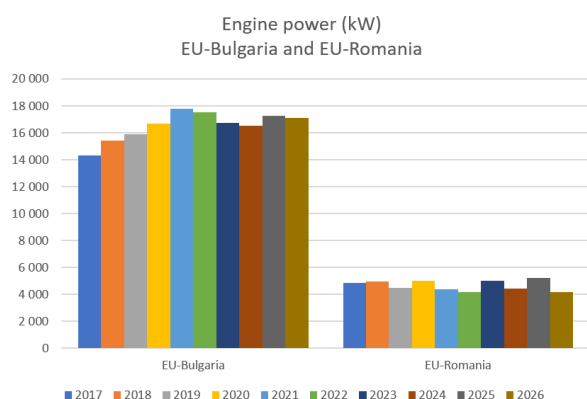


Figure 6 - Engine power (kW) for turbot fisheries of Georgia, Türkiye and Ukraine

Fishing effort

In line with par. 39, vessels authorized to fish for turbot in GSA 29, irrespective of the vessel length overall (LOA), shall not exceed **180 fishing days per year**. The calculation of the maximum number of fishing days per vessel is summarized in the following table, communicated by mail (2019-2020) and through DCRF Task II.3.2 – Fishing activities- Black Sea/Turbot (from 2021 onwards)

		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Bulgaria	Total fishing days	2 434	2 393	2 128	1 668	2 137	2 092	2 425
	Max	131	87	92	75	78	111	103
	Min	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
	Average	22	21	18	15	19	19	21

		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Romania	Total fishing days	241	346	376	377	356	407	424
	Max	21	19	25	29	27	30	22
	Min	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Average	7	6	7	7	6	7	7

		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Türkiye	Total fishing days*	-	-	-	-	-	-	41 194
	Max	-	-	-	-	-	-	165
	Min	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Average	-	-	-	-	-	-	44

* Fishing days data not provided for 2019-2024.

		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Ukraine*	Total fishing days	Not reported	Not reported	89*	No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity
	Max	Not reported	Not reported	15*	No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity
	Min	Not reported	Not reported	3*	No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity
	Average	Not reported	Not reported	7*	No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity

*Low values due to poor data coverage (18%)

CATCH LIMITS

The management plan foresees a total allowable catch (TAC) allocated by CPC. The following table shows the annual total catch by CPC (in tonnes) as reported by CPCs by mail (2019-2020) and through DCRF Task II.3.2 – Fishing activities- Black Sea (Turbot) (from 2021 onwards) compared to such allocated TAC:

CPC	2019			2020		
	Allocated quota	Catches (tonnes)	% quota consumption	Allocated quota	Catches (tonnes)	% quota consumption
European Union	114	108.06	95%	150	131.47	88%
Georgia	5	-	-	20	-	-
Türkiye	374	272.00*	73%	497	412.25**	83%
Ukraine	101	56.68	56%	160	111.80	70%

*Data communicated by mail, including by-catch quantities.

** Displayed data include catch reported through DCRF subtask II.3.2 and integrated with by-catch as officially communicated via email to the GFCM Secretariat.

CPC	2021			2022		
	Allocated quota	Catches (tonnes)	% quota consumption	Allocated quota	Catches (tonnes)	% quota consumption
European Union	167.94*	155.50	93%	150	128.82	86%
Georgia	20.00	-	-	20	-	-
Türkiye	497.00	487.39**	98%	497	490.77**	99%
Ukraine	160.00	41.18	26%	160	No activity	-

*Quota includes carry-over from 2020.

**Displayed data include catch reported through DCRF subtask II.3.2 and integrated with by-catch as officially communicated via email to the GFCM Secretariat.

CPC	2023			2024		
	Allocated quota	Catches (tonnes)	% quota consumption	Allocated quota	Catches (tonnes)	% quota consumption
European Union*	172.50	152.98	89%	170.00	160.40	94%
Georgia	20.00	0.014**	0.1%	20.00	0.15	0.8%
Türkiye	497.00	490.36***	99%	497.00	495.80***	100%
Ukraine	160.00	No activity	-	160.00	No activity	-

* Quota includes carry-over from previous years.

**Communicated in advance of WGBS11. Not officially transmitted through DCRF subtask II.3.2.

***Displayed data include catch reported through DCRF subtask II.3.2 and integrated with by-catch as officially communicated via email to the GFCM Secretariat.

CPC	2025		
	Allocated quota	Catches (tonnes)	% quota consumption
European Union*	183.53	179.64	98%
Georgia	21.00	0.38	2%
Türkiye	529.00	525.62	99%
Ukraine	170.00	No activity	-

* Quota includes carry-over from 2023.

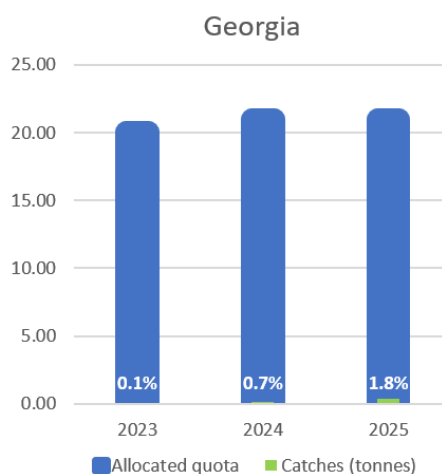
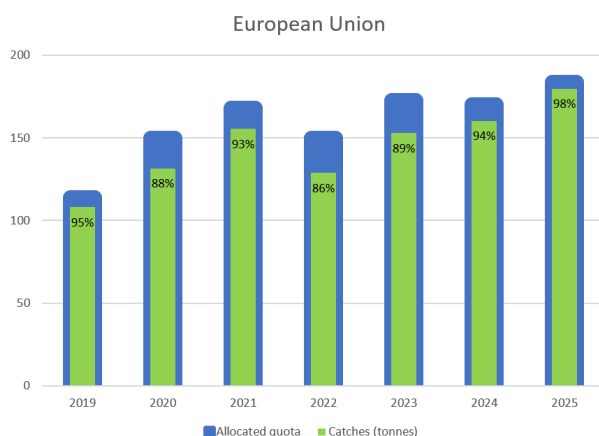


Figure 8 - Turbot catches (tonnes) by Georgia

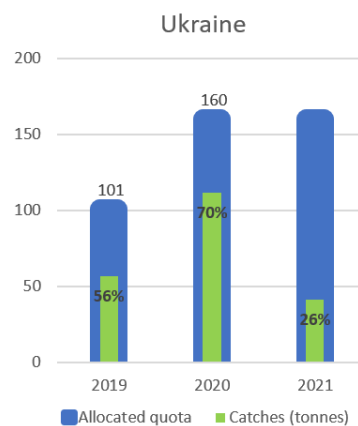
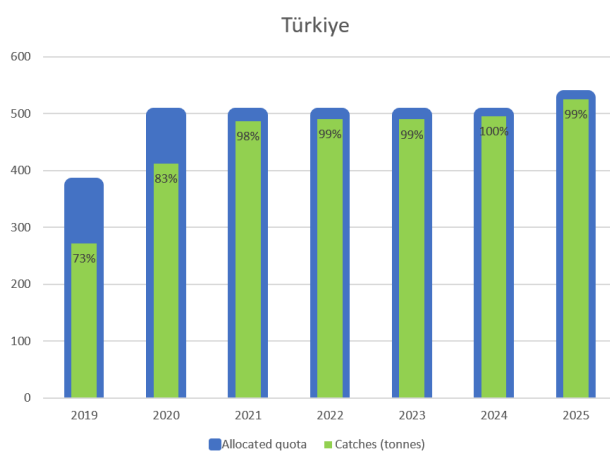


Figure 10 - Turbot catches (tonnes) by Ukraine

Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/10 on management measures for the sustainable piked dogfish fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29)

Applicable CPCs: Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine. During the WGBS11 Ukraine reported that there is no fishing activity for piked dogfish since 2022, therefore no data/information were expected to be received. Georgia does not target piked dogfish.

This recommendation establishes transitional management measures and integrates the measures introduced by Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/4, in view of reinforcing their effectiveness.

Applicable CPCs shall submit information on Landing obligations scheme (par. 24), designated landing points (par. 44), authorized vessels (par. 33) and fishing activities by semester (par. 31).

INFORMATION

2026 LANDING OBLIGATION SCHEME -Par. 24- [Before the WGBS]	
Bulgaria	Landing obligation as provided for in article 15 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 applies.
Romania	
Ukraine	

DATA REPORTED

CPC	2025 DESIGNATED LANDING POINTS -Par. 44- [DCRF Task II.4.11 by 30 Nov]	2026 AUTHORIZED VESSELS -Par. 33- [DCRF Task IV.4.16 by 31 Jan]	2025 FISHING ACTIVITIES -Par. 31- [DCRF Task II.3.7 biannually by 31 July and 31 Jan]
Bulgaria	13 landing points	127 vessels	Reported
Romania	13 landing points	49 vessels	Reported
Ukraine	-	-	-

HISTORICAL DATA ON PIKED DOGFISH CATCHES (TONNES)

CPC	Reference year			
	2022	2023	2024	2025
Bulgaria	17.13	11.65	13.01	20.99
Romania	0.67	3.13	0.33	1.25
Ukraine	-	-	-	-

Source: DCRF subtask II.3.7

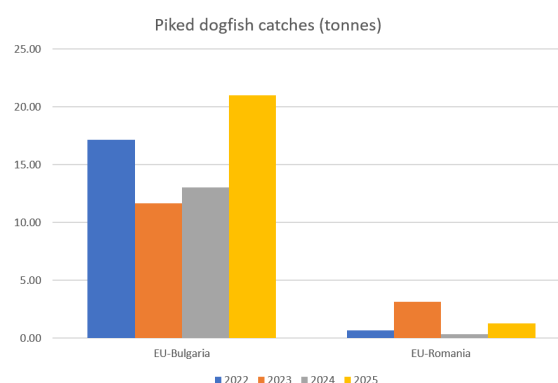


Figure 8 - Piked dogfish catches (tonnes)

FISHING CAPACITY AND FISHING EFFORT

This decision foresees to maintain the fishing fleet capacity or fishing effort at the levels authorized and exerted during the years 2015 – 2021 for the exploitation of piked dogfish in the Black Sea. The GFCM Secretariat has no information on fishing capacity for the reference point years, whereas the information on fishing effort was submitted in response to the data call of the historic level of fishing effort (par. 33).

Fishing capacity

NUMBER OF AUTHORIZED VESSELS						
CPC	Reference year					
	2015-2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Bulgaria	Not available	132	119	145	128	127
Romania		39	55	56	56	49
Ukraine		-	-	-	-	-

Source: DCRF subtask IV.4.12 and IV.4.16

FISHING CAPACITY (GT)						
CPC	Reference year					
	2015-2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Bulgaria	Not available	2 175	1 616	2 223	2 114	2 087
Romania		524	1 132	949	949	1 098
Ukraine		-	-	-	-	-

Source: DCRF subtask IV.4.12 and IV.4.16

ENGINE POWER (kW)						
CPC	Reference year					
	2015-2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Bulgaria	Not available	15 513	12 831	16 108	15 114	14 927
Romania		2 899	4 972	4 110	4 110	4 531
Ukraine		-	-	-	-	-

Source: DCRF subtask IV.4.12 and IV.4.16

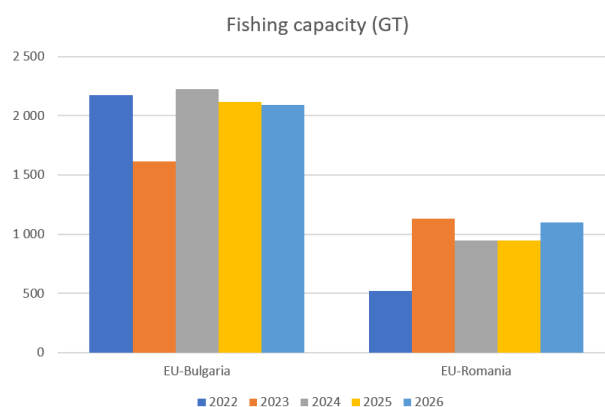
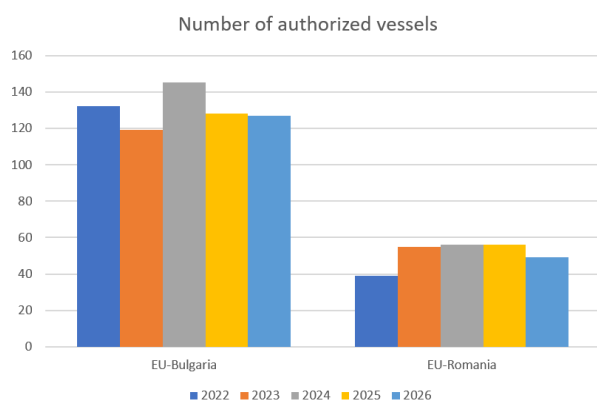


Figure 13 - Fishing capacity (GT) for piked dogfish fisheries

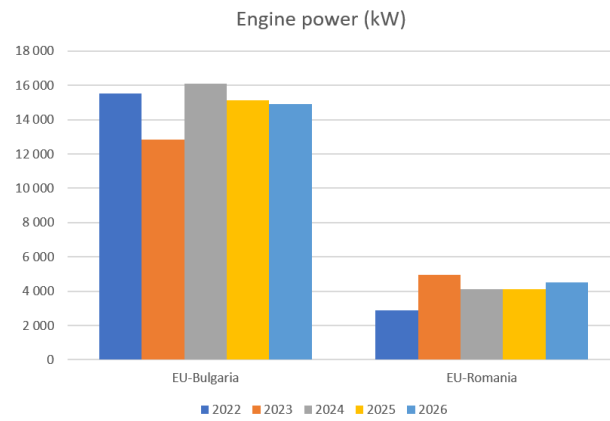


Figure 14 - Engine power (kW) for piked dogfish fisheries

Fishing effort

		Reference period*										
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022**	2023**	2024**	2025**
Bulgaria	Num vessels	43	41	34	28	52	35	51	46	33	33	43
	Fishing days	278	363	320	238	436	651	445	373	133	151	158
Romania	Num vessels	10	10	9	7	4	9	8	6	9	4	10
	Fishing days	31	27	23	10	8	19	13	15	20	6	19
Ukraine	Num vessels	Not reported							-			
	Fishing days								-			

*Source: DCRF subtask IV.4.12 (2022)

**Source: DCRF subtask II.3.7

Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/9 on management measures for the sustainable exploitation of sprat in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29)

Applicable CPCs: Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Türkiye and Ukraine. During the WGBS11 Georgia confirmed the lack of quota established for European sprat and fishing activity, while Ukraine reported that there is no fishing activity since 2022, therefore no information or data were expected to be submitted from both countries

This recommendation establishes transitional management measures consistent with the precautionary approach.

Applicable CPCs shall submit the landing obligation scheme (par. 16) if implemented, and the authorized vessel list (par. 13, 17) and fishing activities report by semester (par. 14) through the DCRF online platform.

INFORMATION

2025 LANDING OBLIGATION SCHEME -Par. 16- [before GFCM annual session]	
Bulgaria	According to the Bulgarian legislation, commercial fishing in the Black Sea shall be carried out only by vessels that are included in the fishing fleet register, provided with a valid license for commercial fishing and a valid fishing authorization for the current year. 26 landing points were designated for landings of sprat.
Romania	Landing obligation as provided for in article 15 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 applies
Türkiye	Specific landing obligation scheme not implemented

DATA REPORTED

CPC	2026 AUTHORIZED VESSELS -Par. 13, 17- [DCRF Task IV.4.16 by 31 Jan]	2025 FISHING ACTIVITIES -Par. 31- [DCRF Task II.3.8 biannually by 31 July and 31 Jan]
Bulgaria	90 vessels	Reported
Romania	53 vessels	Reported
Türkiye	192 vessels	Reported

HISTORICAL DATA ON EUROPEAN SPRAT CATCHES (TONNES)

European sprat catches (tonnes)				
CPC	Reference year			
	2022	2023	2024	2025
Bulgaria	1 561	3 264	2 837	3 620
Romania	62	94	30	34
Türkiye	11 162	45 764	16 085	28 388

Source: DCRF subtask II.3.8

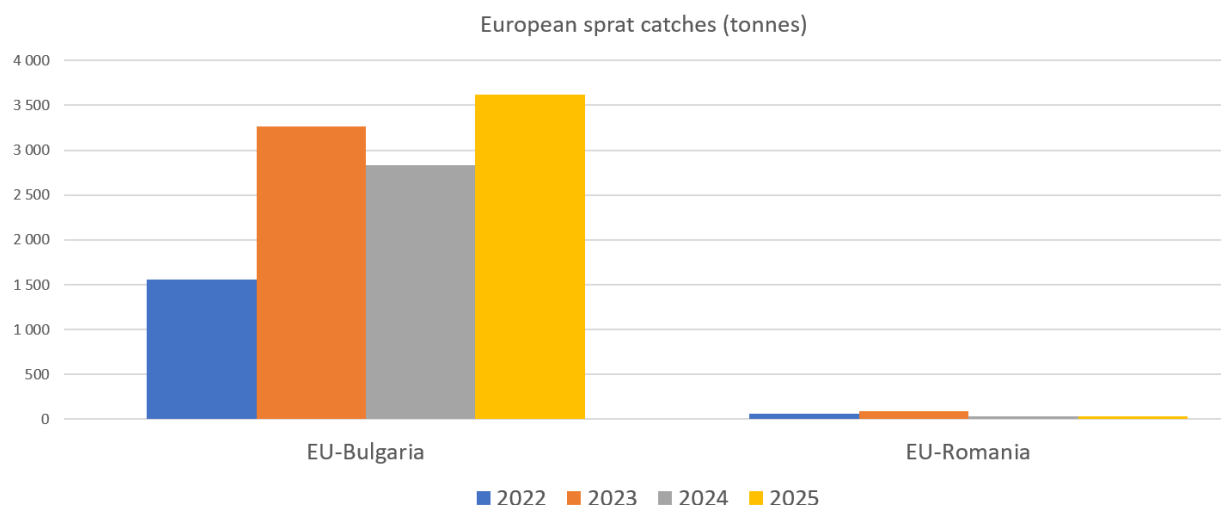


Figure 15 - European sprat catches (tonnes) by Bulgaria and Romania

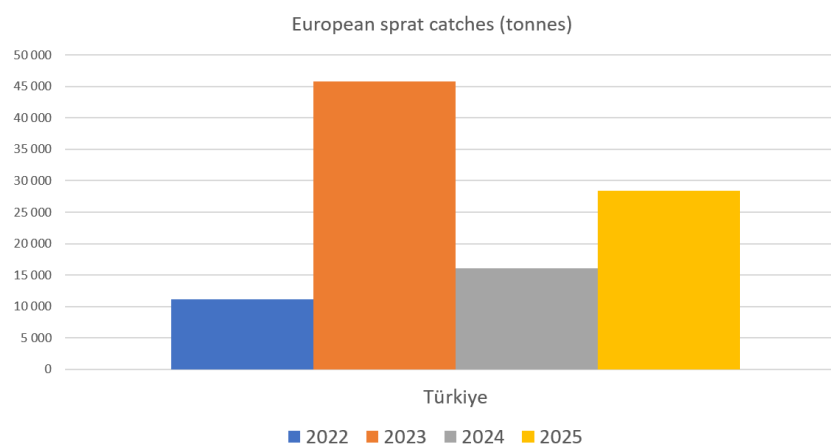


Figure 16 - European sprat catches (tonnes) by Türkiye

FISHING CAPACITY AND FISHING EFFORT

The management plan establishes to maintain the fishing fleet capacity or fishing effort at the levels authorized and applied in **recent years** for the exploitation of sprat in GSA 29.

Fishing capacity

NUMBER OF AUTHORIZED VESSELS				
CPC	Reference year			
	2023	2024	2025	2026
Bulgaria	47	61	78	90
Romania	71	61	75	53
Türkiye	175	212	188	192

Source: DCRF subtasks IV.4.13 and IV.4.16

FISHING CAPACITY (GT)				
CPC	Reference year			
	2023	2024	2025	2026
Bulgaria	1 567	2 111	2 418	2 754
Romania	1 268	1 225	1 509	1 117
Türkiye	11 545	13 491	11 853*	12 681

Source: DCRF subtasks IV.4.13 and IV.4.16

ENGINE POWER (kW)				
CPC	Reference year			
	2023	2024	2025	2026
Bulgaria	5 494	9 818	11 635	13 985
Romania	4 834	4 689	5 428	3 949
Türkiye	76 403	90 876	82 760	87 154

Source: DCRF subtasks IV.4.13 and IV.4.16

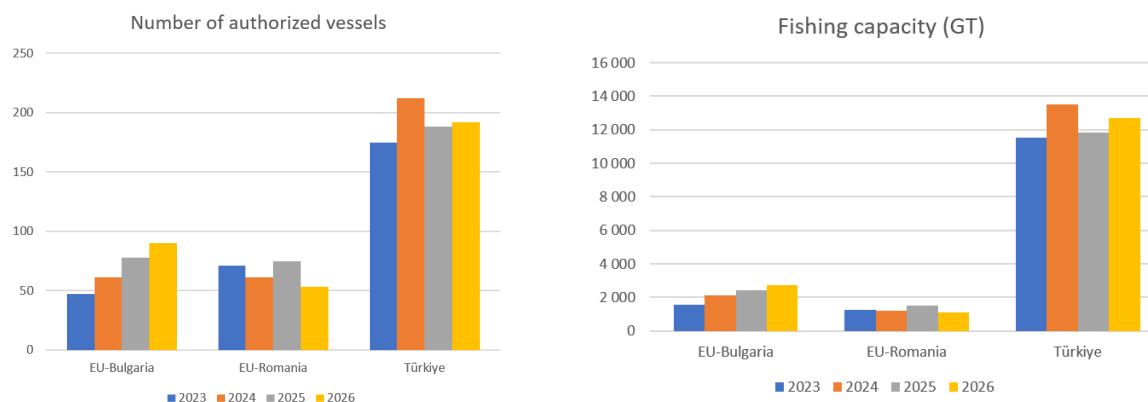


Figure 18 - Fishing capacity (GT) for European sprat fisheries

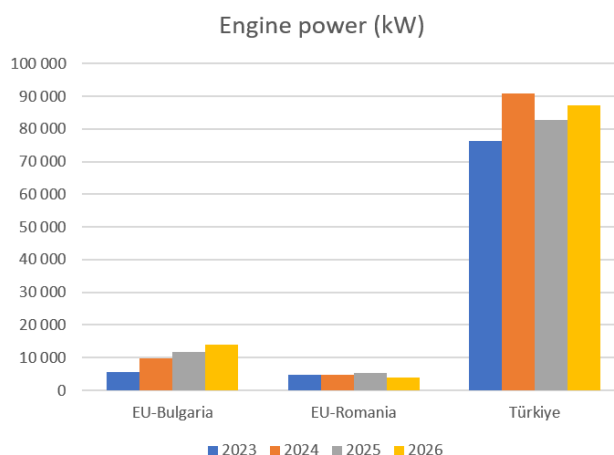


Figure 19- Engine power (kW) European sprat fisheries

Fishing effort

FISHING EFFORT (Fishing days)				
CPC	Reference year			
	2022	2023	2024	2025
Bulgaria	958	2 838	1 815	2 072
Romania	94	135	84	91
Türkiye	1 480	3 003	1 375	2 004

Source: DCRF subtask II.3.8

Recommendation GFCM/47/2024/9 on management measures for the sustainable exploitation of rapa whelk in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29)

Applicable CPCs: Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Türkiye and Ukraine. During the WGBS11, Ukraine reported that there is no fishing activity for rapa whelk since 2022, and Georgia confirmed the lack of quota and catches since 2017, therefore no data/information were expected to be received from both CPCs.

This recommendation establishes transitional management measures consistent with the precautionary approach to prepare the ground for the implementation of future management plan in 2027.

Applicable CPCs shall submit the landing obligation scheme (par. 16) if implemented, the authorized vessel list (par. 12, 13) and the fishing activities report (par. 14) from 2026 through the DCRF online platform.

DATA AND INFORMATION

CPC	2025 LANDING OBLIGATION SCHEME -Par. 16- [Before the GFCM annual session]	2026 AUTHORIZED VESSELS -Par. 12,13- [DCRF Task IV.4.16 by 31 Jan]	2025 FISHING ACTIVITIES -Par. 31- [DCRF Task II.3.9 by 1 Mar]
Bulgaria	Reported	150 vessels	Reported
Romania	Reported	38 vessels	Reported
Türkiye	Reported	792 vessels	Reported

2025 LANDING OBLIGATION SCHEME -Par. 16- [Before the GFCM annual session]	
Bulgaria	Landing obligation as provided in article 15 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013
Romania	
Türkiye	Specific landing obligation scheme not implemented

HISTORICAL DATA ON RAPA WHELK CATCHES (TONNES)

RAPA WHELK CATCHES (TONNES)										
CPC	Reference year									
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Bulgaria	3 435	3 653	3 515	4 222	2 746	2 166	2 165	2 290	2 297	1 160
Georgia*	NR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Romania	6 504	9 298	7 330	6 815	4 203	2 746	2 453	2 670	2 453	1 944
Türkiye	9 657	8 564	9 189	10 836	7 549	6 670	7 307	9 265	6 278	5 762
Ukraine**	95	1 375	5 563	11 201	6 305	-	-	-	-	-

Source: DCRF subtask II.2 (2017-2024) including data on RPW and RPP, and DCRF subtask II.3.9 (2025).

*Georgia communicated during the WGBS11 lack of catches since 2017

**Ukraine communicated during the WGBS11 that catches from 2021 are 0.

NR: Not reported.

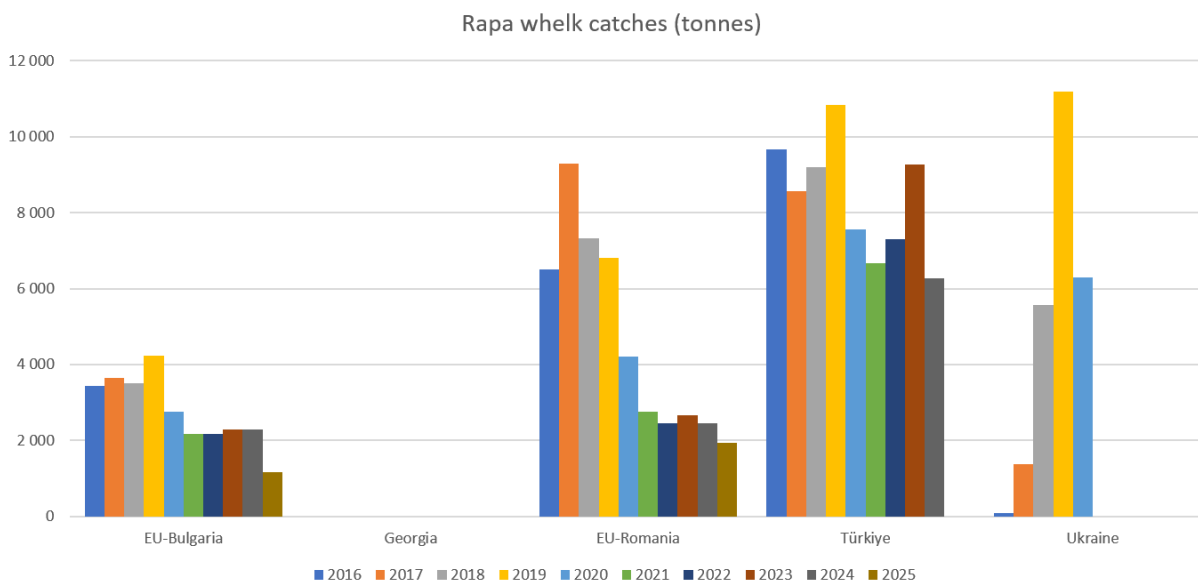


Figure 20 - Rapa whelk catches (in tonnes)

FISHING CAPACITY AND FISHING EFFORT

This decision foresees to maintain the fishing fleet capacity or fishing effort for beam trawlers (TBB) at the levels authorized and exerted in either:

- on the basis of the average of the period **2016–2019** or
- on the basis of the average of the last three years **2021–2023**

CPCs were requested to report to the GFCM Secretariat such levels of fishing capacity or fishing effort by 30 June 2025 (par. 17)

Fishing capacity

CPC	FISHING CAPACITY	Average 2016-2019	Average 2021-2023	2025	2026	% variation 2026 data vs avg 2016-2019
Bulgaria	Total number of fishing vessels	255	-	163	150	-41%
	Total GT	1 954	-	1 926	1 084	-3%
	Total Engine power (kW)	16 258	-	15 211	3 977	-9%
Georgia	Total number of fishing vessels	No activity since 2017	-	No fishing activity	No fishing activity	-
	Total GT		-			-
	Total Engine power (kW)		-			-
Romania	Total number of fishing vessels	61	-	41	38	-37%
	Total GT	1 206	-	1 304	1 084	-10%
	Total Engine power (kW)	5 134	-	4 553	3 977	-23%
Türkiye	Total number of fishing vessels	Not reported	817	Not reported	792	-3%

CPC	FISHING CAPACITY	Average 2016-2019	Average 2021-2023	2025	2026	% variation 2026 data vs avg 2016-2019
	Total GT		5 381		3 966	-26%
	Total Engine power (kW)		101 127		85 575	-15%
Ukraine	Total number of fishing vessels	Not reported	-	-	-	-
	Total GT					-
	Total Engine power (kW)					-

Source: DCRF subtask IV.4.14 and IV.4.16

Fishing effort

CPC	Average fishing effort 2016-2019	Average fishing effort 2021-2023	Fishing effort (Fishing days) 2025
Bulgaria	-	-	1 808
Georgia	No fishing activity since 2017	No fishing activity	No fishing activity
Romania	1 709	-	791
Türkiye	-	-	-
Ukraine	Not reported	-	-

Source: Limits from DCRF subtask IV.4.14 (2025), fishing effort (fishing days) from DCRF subtask II.3.9