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The European Union's Observer Implementation report

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## **EU observer program implementation 1 January 2016-30 June 2017**

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### **1 General**

This report covers the activities of the observer program of the European Union (EU) in the SPRFMO Convention area from 1 January 2016 to 30 June 2017. At the time of writing this report (July 2017), the on-going observer missions in the Pacific for the year 2017 had not been completed yet, so for 2017 this report only covers observed trips up to June 2017. The remaining months of 2017 will be covered in next year's report.

### **2 Organisation of the observer program**

Until 2016 the observer program was organised by the Dutch consultant agency Corten Marine Research (CMR). This agency had been responsible for observer missions on board EU (Dutch, German, Lithuanian and Polish) trawlers in the SPRFMO area since 2007. The coordination of the observer program to collect data from the EU fishing fleet in the SPRFMO area in 2017 and 2018 was taken over by the National Marine Fisheries Research Institute (Poland) in charge of the EU Data Collection Framework implementation.

As from 2015, the program is financed by the EU Data Collection Framework and is based on the Multi-lateral agreement for biological data collection of pelagic fisheries in SPRFMO waters signed between the responsible institutions of the EU Member States concerned.

### **3 Observer training**

The observers employed in the program in 2016 and 2017 had a wide experience in observer missions at sea:

T. Raczynski is a PhD scientist who has worked as an observer on board EU pelagic vessels in the Pacific since 2008. He has also worked as an observer on board Polish vessels in the North-East Atlantic. In addition to his expertise on fish sampling, T. Raczynski is also an experienced bird observer.

L. Dziemian is an Ichthyologist with a University degree who has worked as an observer on board Polish vessels (pelagic and demersal trawlers, long-liners, gill-netters) in the Baltic Sea since 2011. He has also worked as an observer on board pelagic trawlers in the North and South-East Atlantic. Before joining fisheries observer program he served as Fisheries Inspector (Polish Fisheries Administration).

No special training activities were organised for the CMR observers in 2016 as no training needs were identified.

#### 4 Program design and coverage

The observer program on board EU trawlers in 2016 and 2017 was designed to obtain at least the 10% minimum observer coverage in terms of fishing days prescribed by SPRFMO CMM 4.01, paragraph 22, for vessels that make less than two trips in total. However, EU vessels, both in 2016 and 2017, made more than two trips each. Therefore, technically the coverage of only one trip would have been sufficient to comply with the SPRFMO CMM.

As SPRFMO is yet to establish a definition of “trip”, there are different criteria to ensure the minimum 10% observer coverage<sup>1</sup>. However, in order to ensure full compliance with the SPRFMO provisions it was decided to apply the more stringent criterion of 10% coverage of all fishing days. This criterion was met and exceeded in both years, as can be seen from the table below:

Year	Fishing Days	Observer Days	Coverage
2016	115	37	32%
2017*	135	35	26%

(\*) data for the period March-June. The vessels were still at sea at the time of writing this report

Fishing days are defined as the number of days for which catches were reported (including zero catches). Observer days are defined as days on which one or more catches were sampled.

The number of observed days in 2016, in terms of fishing days met the minimum requirement of 10%. Until June of 2017 two observers worked on board “Margiris” during 35 observer days covering 26% of the fishing days.

The details of all observer missions in 2016 and 2017 are presented in the text table below.

Year	Period	Vessel	Observer	Days With Observations
2016	15 May - 17 June	Janus	Tomasz Raczynski	14
	18 June - 17 August	Maartje Theadora	Tomasz Raczynski	23
2017*	15 March – 17 May	Margiris	Tomasz Raczynski Lukasz Dziemian	35

\*) by June 30, 2017

#### 5 Type of data collected

The observers collected data on species and length composition of the main species observed in the catch (*Trachurus murphyi*, *Scomber japonicus* and *Brama australis*). Biological characteristics such as sex and maturity stage, food composition, stomach fullness, fat content and otoliths for age reading were collected for *Trachurus murphyi*. In addition, discards and incidental by-catches of large species were monitored.

Otoliths of jack mackerel collected in 2017 will be read in the second half of 2017 by a specialist of National Marine Fisheries Research Institute (Poland) and the information on age/length relationship

<sup>1</sup> A trip may be defined for example as the period between two calls in port, or between two transhipments at sea. So far, SPRFMO has not defined the term "trip".

will be used to convert length distributions into age compositions of the catch. This information could be used subsequently by the Scientific Committee in their assessments.

Following a recommendation adopted by the 2014 SPRFMO Commission Meeting, the observers also reported the numbers of birds around the vessel, and the number of birds that were caught in the net or that had collisions with the vessel or fishing lines. Results of these observations are reported in the national reports of the EU to the Science Committee (Corten 2016, Corten and Wójcik 2017) and in a more detailed report on the bird observations in 2016 (Raczynski and Corten, 2016).

## **6 Problems encountered**

In general, the captains and crews of the vessels were very cooperative and the observers could execute their work without obstructions. Safety on-board, equipment and living conditions were up to normal standards.

## **7 References**

Corten, A, 2015. European Union 2015 Annual Report. Third Meeting of SPRFMO Scientific Committee, Port Vila, Vanuatu, SC-03-18\_rev1

Corten, A, 2016. The European Union Annual Report. 4th Meeting of the Scientific Committee, The Hague, The Netherlands, 10 - 15 October 2016, SC-05-15\_rev1

Raczynski, T, and Corten, A, 2016. Seabirds and large pelagic trawlers in the south-eastern Pacific. 4th Meeting of the Scientific Committee, The Hague, The Netherlands, 10 - 15 October 2016, SC-05-22\_rev1

SPRFMO 2014. Conservation and Management Measure for minimising bycatch of seabirds in the SPRFMO Convention Area. Report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commission Meeting, Annex N, CMM 2.04.