
Water-tight?

Assessing the effectiveness of EU controls to prevent illegal seafood imports

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – NOVEMBER 2022



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Water-tight? Assessing the effectiveness of EU controls to prevent illegal seafood imports

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Background

- The European Union is one of the world's largest seafood markets
- The EU Regulation establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing (**the EU IUU Regulation**) establishes a catch certification scheme to help EU Member States detect and block products sourced from IUU fishing at their borders.
- MS must submit a report to the EC providing detailed information on the application of the EU IUU Regulation and on seafood import controls **every two years**.
- This analysis focuses on reports submitted by the then 28 MS, covering the 2018/19 reporting period, to assess whether all MS are effectively controlling seafood imports.

The EU IUU Regulation

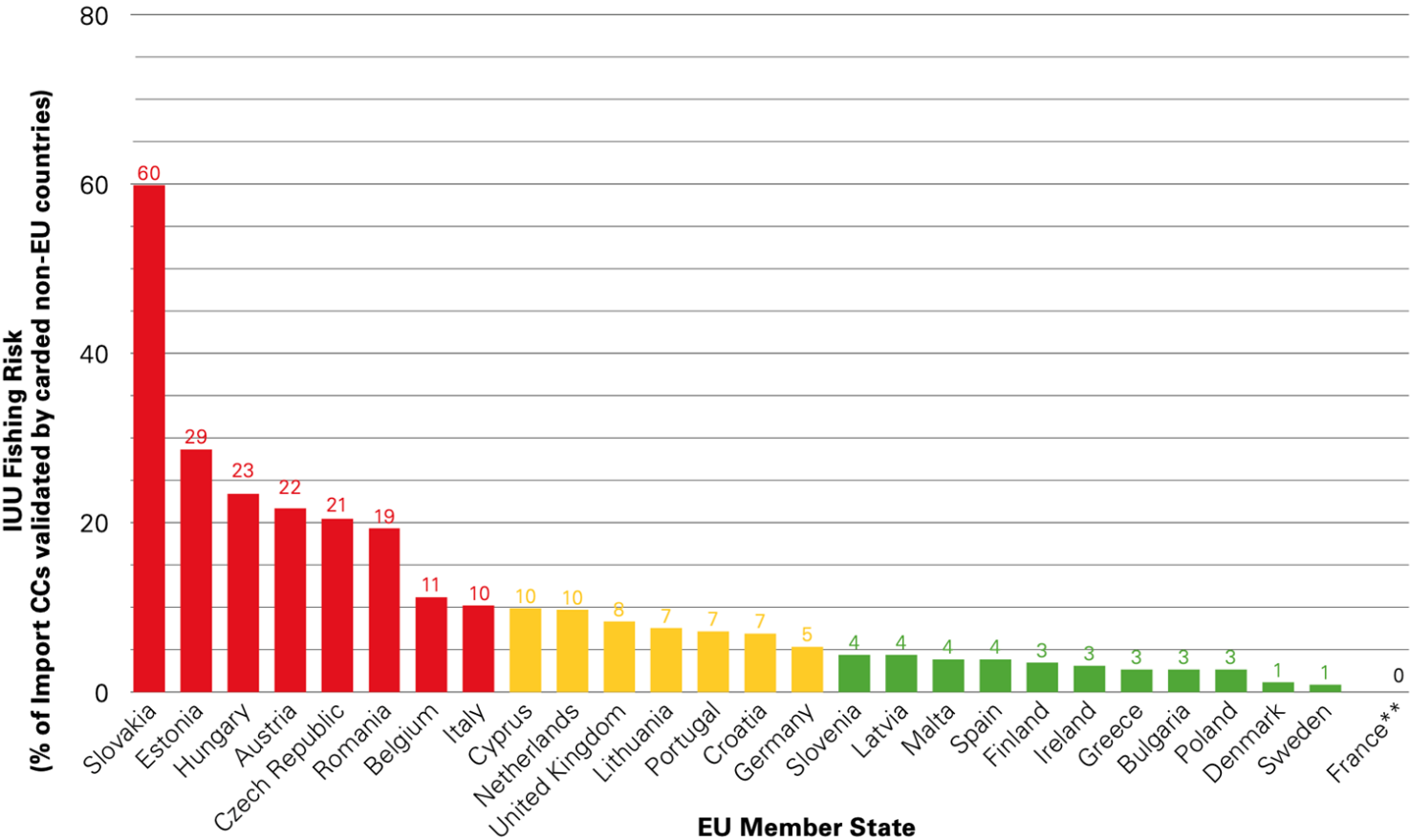
Analysis: Implementation of EU seafood import controls



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Figure 3 – Percentage of import catch certificates validated by carded non-EU countries (IUU Risk) over the 2018/19 reporting period*



* **Red = Higher risk** (>10% of catch certificates validated by carded non-EU countries), **Yellow = Medium risk** (between 5-10%), **Green = Low risk** (<5%).

** No flag State information was provided by France in the 2018/19 biennial report.



KEY FINDINGS



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**ROUTINE DOCUMENTARY
CHECKS OF ALL IMPORT
CCS RECEIVED**



**APPLICATION OF A RISK-
BASED APPROACH TO
ASSESSING CCS**



**VERIFICATION OF CCS TO
ASCERTAIN COMPLIANCE
OF IMPORTS**



**PHYSICAL INSPECTIONS
OF CONSIGNMENTS**



**REJECTION OF
CONSIGNMENTS IN THE CASE
OF NON-COMPLIANCE**



**BIENNIAL REPORTING ON
ACTIVITIES UNDER THE EU
IUU REGULATION**



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Routine documentary checks of all import CCs received



Disparities between the documentary checks undertaken by MS:

- proportion of CCs that are subject to checks
- procedures involved

There are also sometimes issues with data reporting.



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Application of a risk-based approach to assessing CCs

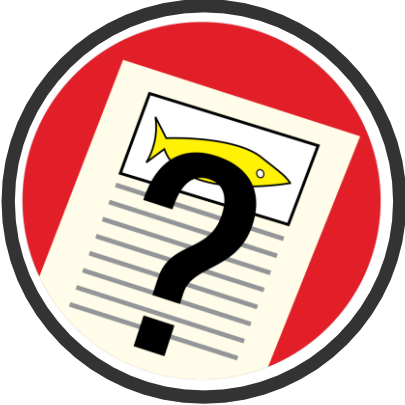


Figure 1 – Map showing Member States applications of a risk-based approach for assessing catch certificates*

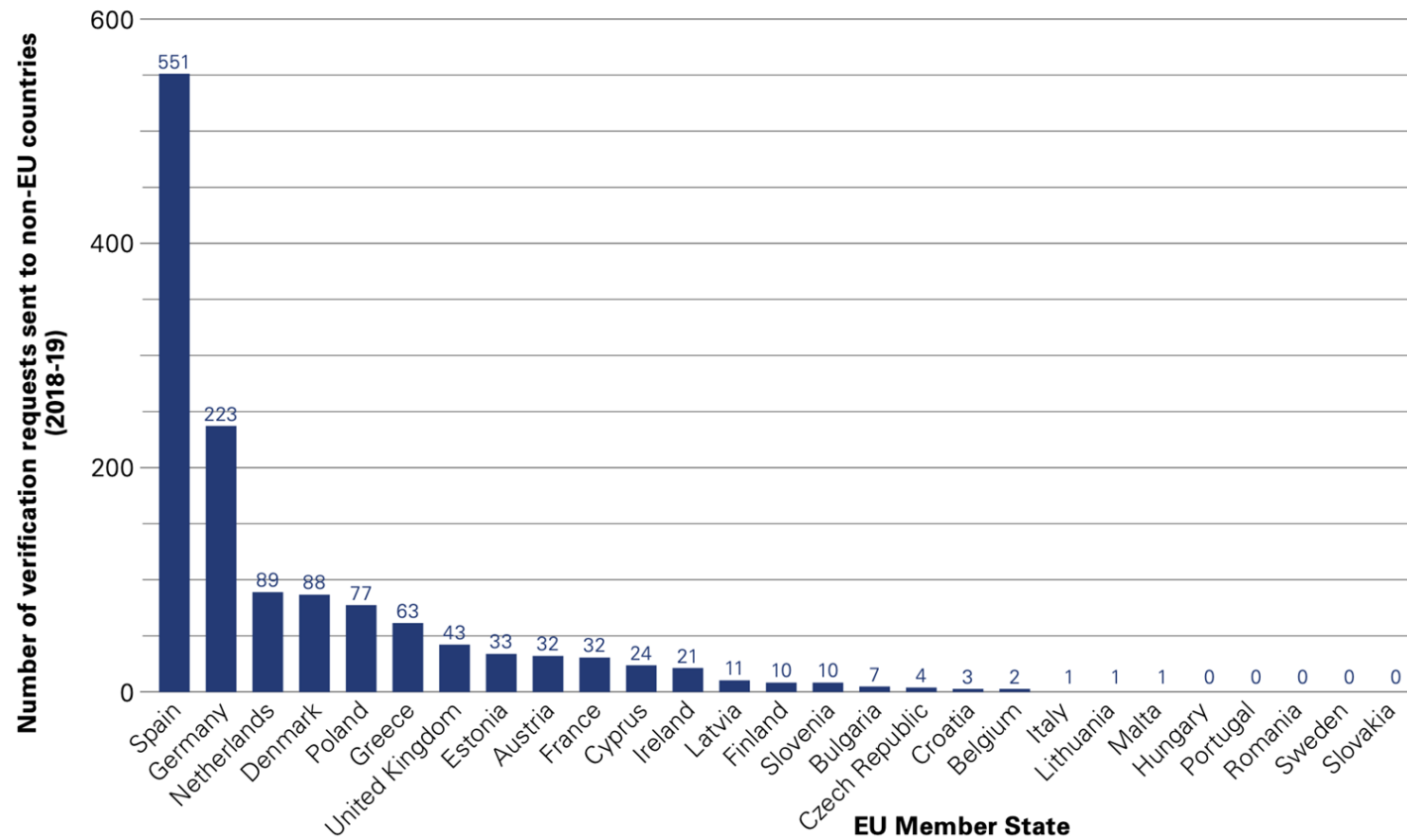


- KEY:**
- Red: No risk-based approach
 - Orange: National risk criteria
 - Yellow: No risk-based approach but 100% of CCs checked
 - Light Green: EU-level risk criteria
 - Dark Green: EU-level criteria, national criteria, and 100% of CCs checked
 - Blue: EFCA common methodology
 - Grey: No information provided

Verification of CCs to ascertain compliance of imports



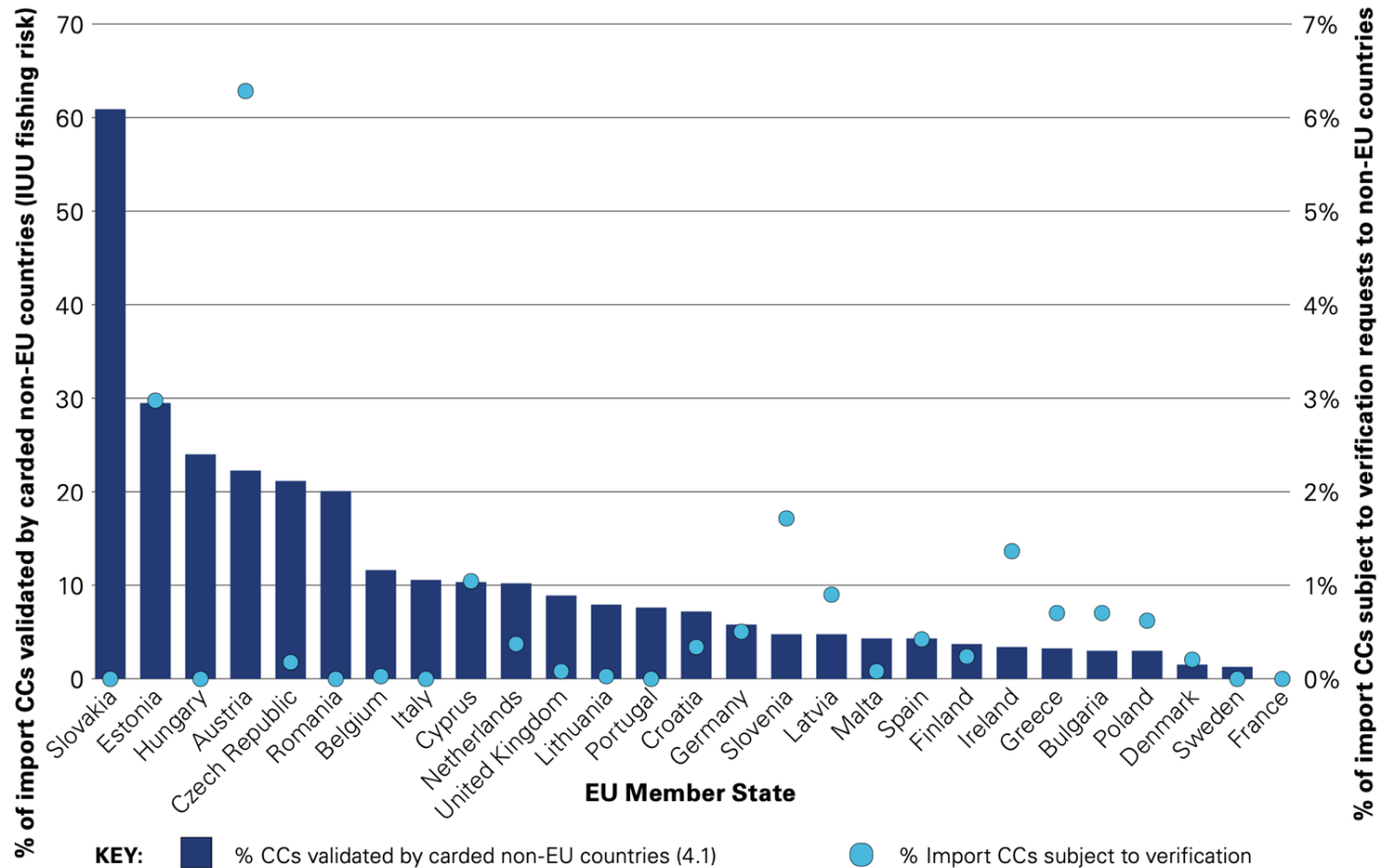
Figure 4 – Total number of verification requests sent by Member States to non-EU countries (2018/19)



Verification of CCs to ascertain compliance of imports



Figure 5 – Comparison of the share (%) of import catch certificates: (i) validated by carded non-EU countries under the EU IUU regulation (IUU fishing risk); and (ii) subject to verification requests to non-EU countries (2018/19)*



* Flag state information was not available for France

Physical inspections of consignments: direct landings



Table 4 – Annual statistics on the percentage of direct landings operations in Member State ports subject to inspection for the 2018/19 reporting period

Member State	% of direct landing operations inspected (2018)	% of direct landing operations inspected (2019)
Spain	91.0%	93.0%
United Kingdom	52.3%	64.0%
Ireland	27.7%	20.0%
Latvia	18.2%	22.2%
France	14.68%	17.0%
Lithuania	5.0%	13.0%
Netherlands	5.7%	7.4%
Sweden	5.7%	5.8%
Denmark	5.1%	4.0%
Poland	4.4%	2.5%

Figures in **red** highlight occasions where Member States failed to inspect 5% of direct landing operations in ports as required under the EU IUU Regulation (Article 9).

Physical inspections of consignments: freight consignments



In the 2018/19 biennial reports, 7 MS reported that they did not carry out physical inspections of import consignments.

- **Belgium**
- **Czech Republic**
- **Finland**
- **Greece**
- **Hungary**
- **Latvia**
- **Romania**

Between the other Member States, physical inspections of import consignments vary in terms of

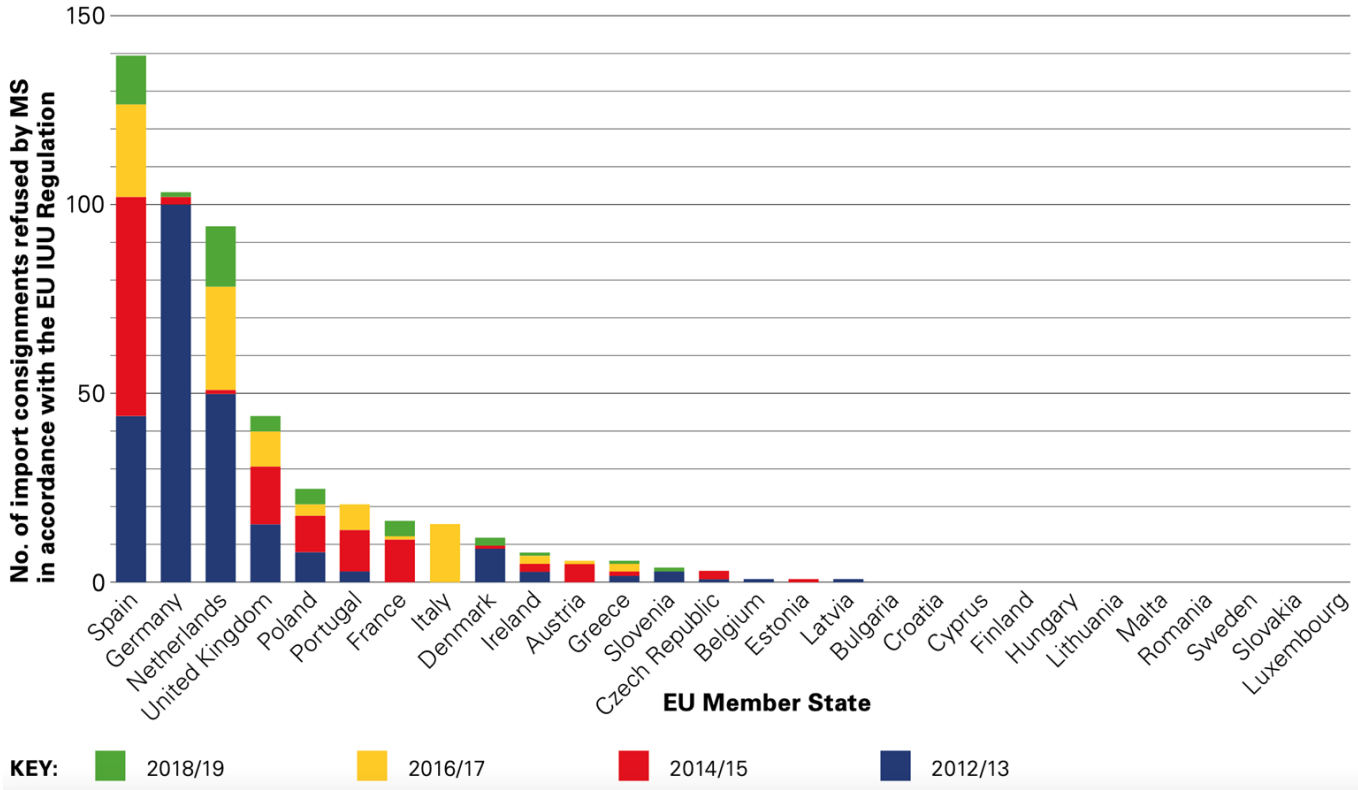
- How consignments are selected for inspection
- The competent authorities responsible for carrying out inspections
- The quantity of inspections



Rejection of consignments in the cases of non-compliance



Figure 6 – Number of import consignments refused by Member States in accordance with the EU IUU Regulation (2012-2019)

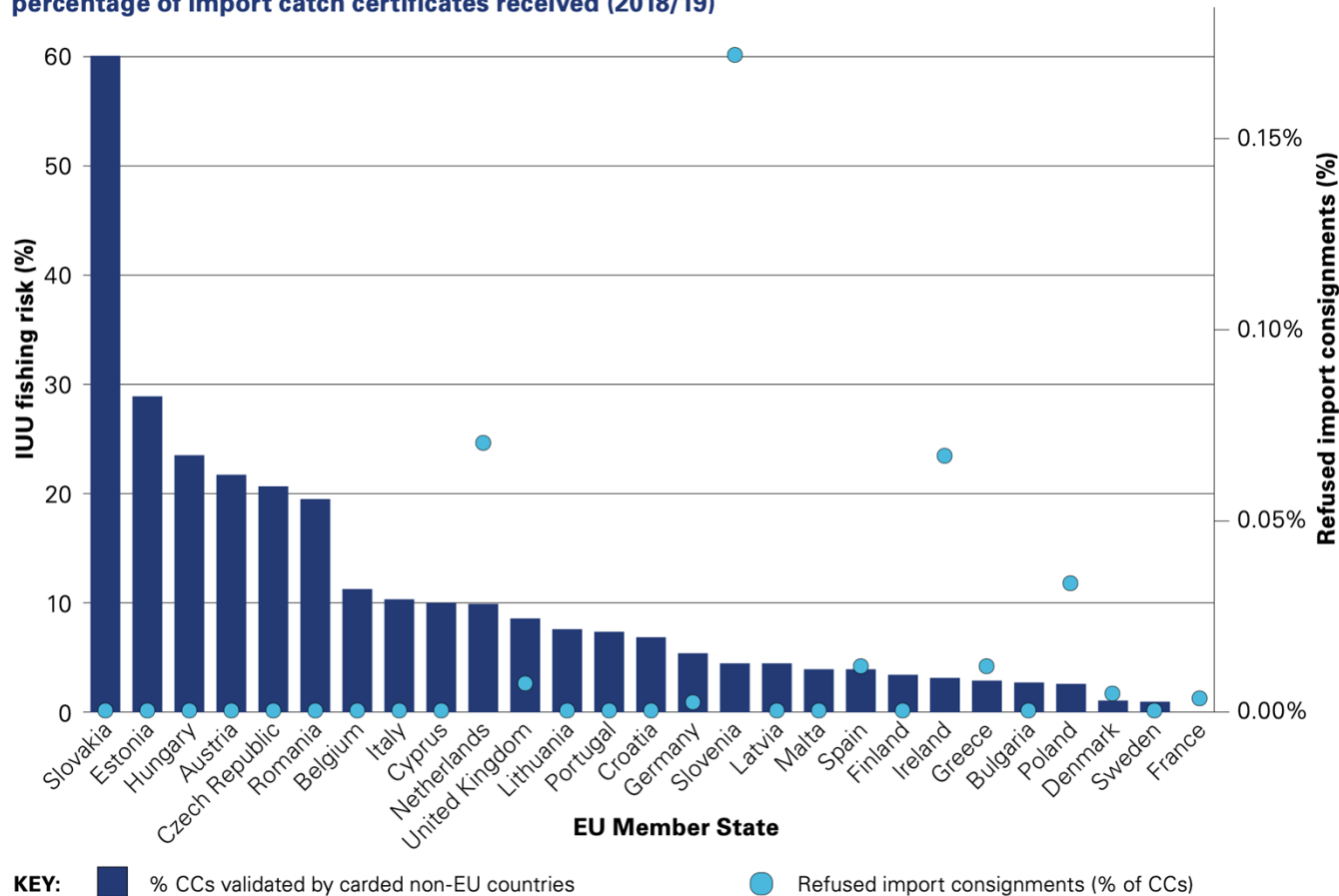


- Over the 2018/19 period, only 47 import consignments were rejected by Member States.

Rejection of consignments in the cases of non-compliance



Figure 4 – Comparison of: (i) percentage of import catch certificates validated by carded non-EU countries under the EU IUU Regulation (IUU fishing risk); and (ii) refused import consignments expressed as a percentage of import catch certificates received (2018/19)



- No trend seen for increased rejections by MS with higher risk imports

Biennial reporting to the Commission on activities under the EU IUU Regulation



- Although MS reserve the right to withhold information from the public, the information provided to the EU IUU Fishing Coalition has **generally improved** over time.
- Certain sections within the biennial reports for the 2016/17 and 2018/19 reporting periods provided by the European Commission in response to an ‘access to information’ request were **redacted by some MS**.
- A number of identified improvements could be made to the reporting template, as some non-specific questions result in a **lack of consistent responses from MS and differences in the level of detail provided**.



CONCLUSIONS



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Summary Table – Risk associated with seafood imports and disparities in import controls applied by EU Member States

EU Member State	N° of Catch certificates received in the 2018/19 reporting period	Seafood imports (Tonnes) from non-EU countries over the 2018/19 reporting period	IUU Fishing Risk (% of import Catch certificates validated by carded non-EU countries)	Physical Inspection of consignments?	Risk-based approach to assessing Catch certificates?	At least 5% of non-EU country direct landings inspected (2018/19 reporting period)?
Slovakia	552	13,000	60.14	Yes	No	No non-EU country direct landings reported
Estonia	1109	14,000	28.85	No	No	No non-EU country direct landings reported
Hungary	196	5,000	23.47	No	No	No non-EU country direct landings reported
Austria	512	14,000	21.68	Yes	Yes	No non-EU country direct landings reported
Czech Republic	2,001	31,000	20.54	No	No	No non-EU country direct landings reported
Romania	1,165	34,000	19.40	No	No	No non-EU country direct landings reported
Belgium	5,962	204,000	11.17	No	Yes	No non-EU country direct landings reported
Italy	96,736	859,000	10.03	Yes	Yes	No non-EU country direct landings reported
Cyprus	2,267	15,000	9.93	Yes	No	No non-EU country direct landings reported
Netherlands	22,878	1,090,000	9.72	Yes	Yes	Yes
United Kingdom	54,278	894,000	8.43	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lithuania	2,948	116,000	7.36	Yes	Yes	Yes
Portugal	24,446	353,000	7.17	Yes	Yes	No non-EU country direct landings reported
Croatia	851	15,000	6.70	Yes	Yes	No non-EU country direct landings reported
Germany	41,965	788,000	5.24	Yes	Yes	No non-EU country direct landings reported
Slovenia	580	8,000	4.31	Yes	No	No non-EU country direct landings reported

It is important to note however that a number of Member States are performing well with regards to implementation of the EU IUU Regulation.

BUT, the variation in implementation of the EU IUU Regulation **weakens the entire EU import control scheme**, opening the system up to abuse as operators involved in IUU fishing may likely target Member States with lax controls – ‘control shopping’.

The IUU trade will persist and illegal products will continue to enter the EU until all Member States implement the requirements of the EU IUU Regulation effectively.



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SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS



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For the European Commission:

- Continue to strive towards a consistent application and implementation of import control procedures across the EU:
 - including CC checks
 - a risk-based approach and verifications
- Initiate infringement procedures against MS who fail to meet the requirements of the EU IUU Regulation



For the European Commission:

- Audit MS to verify the submitted information
- Hold MS accountable for failure to uphold key EU IUU Regulation requirements
- Standardised risk analysis criteria and benchmarks for the verification of high-risk CCs and inspection of consignments
- Encourage MS engagement with CATCH IT
- Support MS authorities responsible for seafood imports within MS



For EU Member States:

- Allocate sufficient capacity and resources
- Ensure that necessary procedures in place for the legal adoption of the CATCH IT System
- Establish and apply a standardised EU-wide approach to risk analysis
- Apply standardised, thorough verification and inspection procedures of higher-risk CCs and consignments
- Ensure comprehensive data submission for the biennial reports





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THANK YOU

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