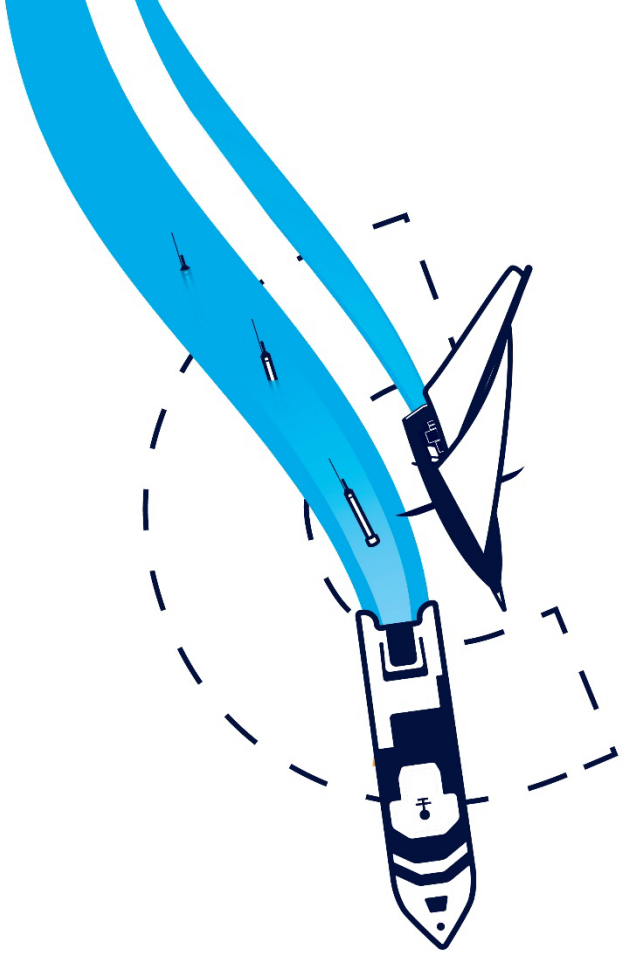
TRICUSO
SOUTHERN OCEAN CARBON OBSERVATION



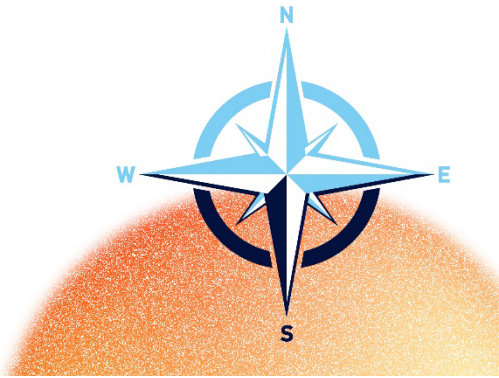
SOCAT Steering Committee established

Milestone 25

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About this document

Title	[MS25] SOCAT Steering Committee established
Work Package	WP6: Role of Ris in the G3W and the wider GOOS landscape Task 6.2: Building an International Governance Structure for surface ocean pCO2 observations.
Lead Partner	Maciej Telszewski (IOPAN)
Lead Author (Org)	Maciej Telszewski (IOPAN)
Contributing Author(s)	Dorothee Bakker (UEA), Siv Lauvset (NORCE), Kevin O'Brien (WMO), Are Olsen (NORCE), SOCAT Regional Group Leads, SOCAT Global Group members and other SOCAT contributors.
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X	PU: Public
	PP: Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission)
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	CO: Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission)

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1. Terms of Reference for the SOCAT Steering Committee

The Surface Ocean CO_2 Atlas (SOCAT, www.socat.info) is the global synthesis effort of *in situ* surface ocean fCO_2 (fugacity of carbon dioxide) observations made according to community-agreed standards with transparent and traceable quality control, allowing qualitative assessment of uncertainty in the data (SOCAT, 2026a). SOCAT was initiated in 2007 with the first SOCAT public release of quality-controlled synthesis products was in 2011 (SOCAT, 2026b) and annual updates since 2015. Over the years, this community-driven effort was coordinated and governed by a semi-formal SOCAT Global Group, with support from leaders and members of Regional Groups who focused mainly on delivering annual secondary quality control for submitted data.

In the past 12 months as part of TRICUSO WP6 delivery and in response to requests from stakeholders at the science-policy interface like the G7 FSOI (Future of the Seas and Ocean Initiative, https://www.g7fsoi.org/), the SOCAT leadership started a process of formalizing its governance structures. Developing a formal governance structure is aimed at strengthening SOCAT as an infrastructure. Formal governance often helps unlock capital, and funding sources such as major foundations, government agencies or regional and international funders rarely fund informal collectives. Also, when advocating for policy change or negotiating partnerships, a formal governance structure signals permanence and credibility. Decision-makers are far more willing to enter long-term contracts with an organization that has an accountable leadership body rather than a less-structured working group.

With that in mind, the core members of the SOCAT Global Group, including TRICUSO's Dorothee Bakker, Maciej Telszewski and Siv Lauvset worked on Terms of Reference (ToR) for SOCAT Steering Committee (SC), which was then discussed and edited through a series of videoconferences and intersessional writing sessions in the first half of 2026.

The resulting draft focused on three main governance aspects: the membership of the SOCAT Steering Committee, the responsibilities of the SOCAT Steering Committee members and expected commitment of each individual SOCAT SC member. This first draft was further amended by Global Group and Regional Group leads.

A final revised draft was circulated for input to all SOCAT contributors and the feedback received was discussed during the SOCAT Workshop, co-sponsored and co-organized by TRICUSO on 8 June 2026, at the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ), Belgium (SOCAT, 2026b). As one of the workshop outcomes final edits to the ToR were made and all workshop participants were given an opportunity to approve them or provide further improvements, which were received and incorporated. Following this community validation process, the final Terms of Reference of the SOCAT SC (SOCAT, 2026a) were agreed upon on 4 September 2026.

The community consensus around the following terms was achieved:

Membership of the SOCAT Steering Committee

- The SC is composed of a Chair or two co-Chairs and 6 - 12 members.
- Each SOCAT hub3 has one member on the SC.

- The OceanOPS SOCONET Technical Coordinator and at least one additional SOCONET SC member are members.
- Major SOCAT data providers and / or SOCAT quality controllers and / or SOCAT users comprise at least half of the SC. These are referred to as science members (of the SC).
- Representatives (if any) of government agencies, relevant international and intergovernmental bodies and national scientific programs can be appointed as a member on the basis of their major involvement in SOCAT activities.
- The OceanOPS SOCONET Technical Coordinator and representatives of the SOCAT hubs and (if any) of government agencies, international and intergovernmental bodies and national scientific programs are ex-officio SC members, i.e. by virtue of holding another office. If they leave that office, they leave the SC. Ex-officio members do not have a maximum period of service on the SC. They are not science members.
- Chairs (or co-Chairs) ideally have both scientific expertise and relevant external engagement.
- Science members are nominated with the aim of ensuring the SC members collectively encompass relevant scientific expertise as deemed necessary by the SC, while also reflecting wider diversity.
- The Chair is (or co-Chairs are) appointed for a maximum period of two 4-year terms, independently of any service as science members.
- Science members are appointed for a 4-year term with the possibility to serve for a total of three terms.
- Ex-officio SC members are not allowed to serve as Chair or co-Chair, unless they agree to serve a full term and change their status from an ex-officio member to a science member.
- All SC members, notably the Chair (or co-Chairs), science members and ex-officio members, have voting rights. Decisions are taken by a simple majority.

Responsibilities of the SOCAT Steering Committee

- Encourage timely data submission to SOCAT
- Coordinate the SOCAT timetable and annual release
- Coordinate the SOCAT secondary quality control
- Maintain and improve the quality of the SOCAT data products by regular review of the SOCAT quality control criteria
- Consult SOCONET on all changes related to SOCAT quality control criteria
- Respond to any SOCONET requests related to the SOCAT quality control criteria and protocols
- Keep SOCAT documentation up-to-date
- Communicate and consult with SOCAT groups and the SOCAT community
- Develop SOCAT strategy in consultation with the SOCAT, SOCONET and SOCOM communities
- Liaise with relevant user communities, including SOCOM, the Global Carbon Project and the G3W
- Represent SOCAT at international meetings and workshops
- Encourage scientific use of SOCAT data products and publicise achievements

- Encourage funding agencies to support SOCAT activities
- Encourage coordination of efforts with organizations involved in relevant surface ocean observations
- Foster training and capacity building as relevant for SOCAT

Expected commitment of each individual SOCAT SC member

- Actively contribute to the responsibilities of the SOCAT SC
- Participate in virtual SC meetings at least four times a year
- Participate in in-person SC meetings (nominally every two years)
- Provide input to the agenda for SC meetings
- Contribute to virtual and in-person SOCAT workshops

SOCAT is endorsed by GOOS (Global Ocean Observing System of IOC (Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission) of UNESCO), IOCCP (International Ocean Carbon Coordination Project) and SOLAS (Surface Ocean-Lower Atmosphere Study).

2. SOCAT Steering Committee Established

Based on the developed ToR, the SOCAT Steering Committee replaced the SOCAT Global Group on 1 October 2026. All members of the SOCAT Global Group agreed to join the SOCAT SC for their first, 4 year long, term starting on 1 October 2026.

The SOCAT Steering Committee is the decision-making body of SOCAT and provides scientific leadership and oversight for the development and execution of the synthesis effort.

SOCAT data are trusted and transparent because they are delivered through an open, community-driven quality control and synthesis process aligned with FAIR (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, Reusability) data principles. The freely available, annually updated SOCAT synthesis and gridded products form the observational basis for open ocean and coastal carbon sink estimates generated by the Surface Ocean CO_2 Mapping (SOCOM) program and others, and for ocean acidification assessments. The ocean sink estimates provide, together with the rate of atmospheric CO_2 increase, an independent constraint on the land carbon sink. SOCAT data are used in the Global Carbon Budget, the World Meteorological Organization's Global Greenhouse Gas Watch (G3W), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports, the Planetary Health Check, United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14, the Decade of Ocean Science and other high-level policy- and management-relevant assessments. SOCONET, SOCAT, and SOCOM are linked international efforts that, along with additional critical data from satellites, models and re-analysis, enable the inclusion of ocean carbon and carbonate system information in these assessments. SOCAT products are used in circa 100 scientific publications per year. SOCAT is endorsed by GOOS (Global Ocean Observing System of IOC (Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission) of UNESCO), IOCCP (International Ocean Carbon Coordination Project) and SOLAS (Surface Ocean-Lower Atmosphere Study).

The current (First ever!) SOCAT SC has a chair, 7 additional science members and 4 ex-officio members from seven countries on two continents:

- Dorothee Bakker (Chair, Science Member, UK)
- Alex Kozyr (Science Member, USA)
- Are Olsen (Science Member, Norway)
- Denis Pierrot (Science Member, USA)
- Siv Lauvset (Science Member, Norway)
- Thanos Gkritzalis (Science Member, Belgium)
- Tobias Steinhoff (Science Member, Germany)
- Vlad Alexandru Macovei (Science Member, Germany)
- Kevin O'Brien (Ex-Officio Member, OceanOPS, France)
- Linus Kamb (Ex-Officio Member, Data Management Hub, USA)
- Maciej Telszewski (Ex-Officio Member, IOCCP, Poland)
- Steve Jones (Ex-Officio Member, Coordination & Support Hub, Belgium)

A dedicated page on the SOCAT website was developed to list the SOCAT SC members: https://socat.info/index.php/steering-committee/. The SC met for the first time online on 1 October 2026.

References

SOCAT (2026a) Terms of Reference for the SOCAT Steering Committee. September 2026. Available here: https://socat.info/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/Terms-of-Reference-SOCAT-SC.pdf. Last access: 13/11/2026.

SOCAT (2026b) SOCAT governance, SOCAT links with SOCONET and a possible joint structure for SOCONET, SOCAT and SOCOM. Workshop report, 8-9 June 2026, Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ), Oostend, Belgium. 17pp. Available here: https://socat.info/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/SOCAT-Workshop-Report-_-June-2026.pdf.



Figure 1: Participants to the SOCAT Meeting on 8 June 2026, VLIZ, Belgium.