

## ICES Strategic Plan

On 13 August the draft ICES Strategic Plan, top-level component was sent for comments to Member Countries. As explained in the letter, with reference to last year's Council meeting, the new strategic plan is based on a 3-component plan:

- a top-level plan aimed at communicating the ICES vision and mission externally,
- a second level of objectives and sub-objectives common to all pillars of the organization, aimed at progress reporting to Bureau and Council, and
- a third level that will link operational tasks to the upper level goals and objectives, for all parts of the organization, to ensure coordinated allocation of resources.

Based on the comments received Bureau revised the top-level part of the draft ICES Strategic Plan. The revised text is presented in the following pages.

The plan has been presented in meetings of ACOM and SCICOM, and accounts for the ICES science priorities identified by SCICOM.

The Advisory Committee, Science Committee, and Secretariat are working with implementation plans, which are reflected in an overall ICES joint work plan, ensuring that all parts of the organization are coordinating resources in their efforts to achieve joint objectives and sub-objectives. ACOM will consider at its November meeting if additional input will be provided to the Science Plan.

Below is a short description of how comments and feedback have been accounted for in the revision of the ICES Strategic Plan.

Seven countries submitted [comments](#), covering the following categories:

**Editorial comments:** a number of editorial comments were put forward, to ensure readability and outreach

**Strategic messages:** to ensure coverage of strategic importance, for member countries, cooperation partners and recipients of ICES advice, reference has been made to a number of issues and themes.

**Core information about the organization:** there were several remarks relating to the need to revise the core information presented in the plan. These were just examples, and not the final text, which will be illustrated with infographics and shorter text pieces

**Reference to Science priorities:** it was agreed to refer to the seven science priorities reflected in the Science Plan

*Council is invited to **adopt** the ICES Strategic Plan.*

## ICES Strategic Plan – revised text

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### **Vision**

To be a world-leading marine science organization, meeting societal needs for impartial evidence on the state and sustainable use of our seas and oceans.

### **Mission**

To advance and share scientific understanding of marine ecosystems and the services they provide and to use this knowledge to generate state-of-the-art advice for meeting conservation, management, and sustainability goals.

### **Introduction:**

Our seas and oceans are essential to the lives and livelihoods of billions of people. They regulate climate and provide many other services and resources, as well as economic benefits and opportunities. Societal expectations that the marine environment will meet future needs have never been so high; but neither has the range and intensity of human pressures affecting them been so great.

With this Strategic Plan, ICES renews its commitment to better understanding marine ecosystems and securing the benefits that people derive from them. The purpose of this plan is to define our direction and priorities relating to science, data, and advice, and to develop the capacity needed to fulfil this commitment.

Implementing this plan will directly address the challenge of protecting and restoring the structure and function of the seas and oceans, thus improving food security and otherwise benefitting people's lives and livelihoods.

In fulfilling this plan, we will work collaboratively, using our broad international network, to generate and share the data, knowledge, and advice needed to meet current and emerging conservation, management, and sustainability goals.

### **Main text:**

Marine ecosystems are complex, interconnected, and influenced by many human and environmental pressures. Since 1902, ICES has recognized the significant challenges associated with studying, understanding, and managing these systems. We have responded to these challenges by fostering and facilitating scientific collaborations, exploration, and monitoring programmes that span national and political boundaries by sharing data and developing knowledge and evidence. The results of this work have provided decision-makers with impartial advice on human activities affecting and affected by marine ecosystems and informed society about their state and use.

Through our scientific work we will continue to advance understanding of marine ecosystems, their uses, and their connections with society. The resulting knowledge is essential to develop solutions to the sustainability challenges posed by natural variability and climate change as well as increasing human populations and their demands for food, energy, and other resources.

We will seek to increase the scope, impact, and efficiency of our science through innovation, integration, and increased interdisciplinary collaboration. We will facilitate the incorporation of a wider range of scientific knowledge into advice to

inform decision-makers and society about the state of the sea, the consequences of human use, and options for conservation and management.

Broad multidisciplinary collaboration provides us with the expertise to approach problems from many perspectives. For example, we can better understand local environmental impacts on coastal aquaculture and fisheries from insights into large-scale climatic, oceanographic and ecosystem processes; and we can better understand the collective ecosystem effects of diffuse pressures such as pollutants, plastics, and noise from knowledge of their local sources.

Monitoring is essential for assessing the state of our seas and oceans and human uses and impacts, as well as for providing feedback on the effects of conservation and management measures. We will continue to develop and co-ordinate integrated, quality assured, and cost-effective monitoring programmes and to explore the oceans to improve our understanding of the distribution and function of marine life and habitats. We will evaluate and optimize survey design and advance and implement innovative technologies to collect, process, and analyse data. This will be accomplished with a focus on supporting fisheries assessment, integrated ecosystem assessment and ecosystem-based management.

Since monitoring now provides more detailed and interlinked data, we will continue to develop services and tools to enable visualization and easy access to these data for a broad range of users. We will build on our demonstrated capacity and expertise in managing, analysing, and interpreting data to provide data services.

Impartial evidence is essential for responsible decision-making. We strive to continuously improve the quality and transparency of our advice and the processes through which it is developed. We use the data we collect and manage, and our scientific understanding of marine ecosystems to meet current and future demands for advice on the state and sustainable use of our seas and oceans. Future approaches for delivering advice will build on our longstanding experience as a leading provider of fisheries and environmental advice.

We will regularly publish, update and disseminate overviews on the state of fisheries, aquaculture and ecosystems in the ICES region, drawing as appropriate on analyses of human activities, pressures and impacts, and incorporating social, cultural, and economic information.

Our historic successes have been achieved by people from diverse national and disciplinary backgrounds working together to accomplish shared goals. Through our community of marine scientists and our wider network of experts, we will strengthen these collaborations, continuing to work with our member country institutions, partners, clients, and stakeholders to advance cooperation and introduce new disciplines and perspectives to our science and advice.

We provide resources and infrastructure to develop and share knowledge and expertise, in expert groups, at international conferences, and through communications and publications. We will ensure that skills needed to advance science, data gathering and processing to generate state-of-the-art advice are nurtured and retained in the ICES community. For the new and emerging generation of scientists we will continue to provide effective training and networking opportunities.

All these activities are facilitated by the ICES Secretariat, which provides a wide range of capabilities in support of our network. In addition, the Secretariat acts as a liaison between the member countries, stakeholders, clients, our network of experts, and international partner organizations.

We will strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat, foster employee development, and optimize recruitment, conscious of the essential role of each individual in the implementation of this plan. Across the entire ICES community we will also continue to cultivate a welcoming, resourceful, diverse, inclusive, and gender balanced, as well as a respectful working environment.

This Strategic Plan will guide us as we seek to become a more comprehensive and influential network, sharing information and expertise to help sustain healthy oceans and the lives and livelihoods of the people who depend on them.

## **Science priorities and descriptions**

### **1. Understanding ecosystems**

*Advance and shape understanding of the structure, function and dynamics of marine ecosystems — to develop and vitalize marine science and underpin its applications*

### **2. Impacts of human activities**

*Measure and project the effects of human activities on ecosystems and ecosystem services — to elucidate present and future states of natural and social systems*

### **3. Observation and exploration**

*Monitor and explore the seas and oceans — to track changes in the environment and ecosystems and to identify resources for sustainable use and protection*

### **4. Emerging techniques and technologies**

*Develop, evaluate and harness new techniques and technologies — to advance knowledge of marine systems, inform management and increase scope and efficiency of monitoring*

### **5. Seafood production**

*Generate evidence and advice for management of wild-capture fisheries and aquaculture — to help sustain safe and sufficient seafood supplies*

### **6. Conservation and management science**

*Develop tools, knowledge and evidence for conservation and management — to provide more and better options to help managers set and meet objectives*

### **7. Sea and society**

*Evaluate contributions of the sea to livelihoods, cultural identities and recreation — to inform ecosystem status assessments, policy development and management*

**The following pages provide a preview of the design concept and layout  
being developed for the plan.**



# STRATEGIC PLAN



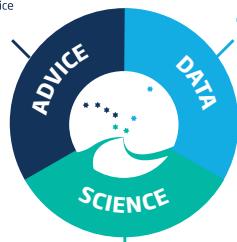
## Mission

To be a world-leading marine science organization, meeting societal needs for impartial evidence on the state and sustainable use of our seas and oceans.

## Vision

To advance and share scientific understanding of marine ecosystems and the services they provide and to use this knowledge to generate state-of-the-art advice for meeting conservation, management, and sustainability goals.

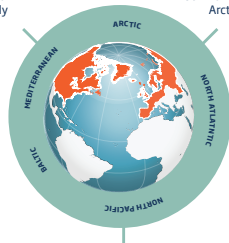
Independent, evidence-based scientific advice on environmental issues and fisheries management



Data hub for fisheries and environmental data and connection to data providers and end-users

Platform for cooperation in marine science

A network of 5,000 experts from nearly 60 countries



Our work also extends into the Arctic, the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea, and the North Pacific Ocean

20 member countries: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States of America

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# Science Priorities

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1

## Understanding ecosystems

Advance and shape understanding of the structure, function and dynamics of marine ecosystems – to develop and vitalize marine science and underpin its applications

2

## Impacts of human activities

Measure and project the effects of human activities on ecosystems and ecosystem services – to elucidate present and future states of natural and social systems

3

## Observation and exploration

Monitor and explore the seas and oceans – to track changes in the environment and ecosystems and to identify resources for sustainable use and protection