

ACOM Chair's – 2018 Annual Progress Report

1 Summary

1. The advisory plan for 2018 involves advice on fishing opportunities for 188 stocks, release of 2 Ecosystem and 1 Fisheries Overviews, responses to 3 recurring requests for advice on ecosystem impacts of fishing activities and 25 special requests, and 9 technical services.
2. The number of annual advice on fishing opportunities has declined by 20% since 2014, reflecting an increase in stocks for which biennial or longer advice is provided.
3. The complexity of the advice on fishing opportunities is increasing as a result of the adoption of stock specific management strategies. The implementation of Multiannual Plans within EU has added to the complexity with the introduction of F ranges and separation between target and non-target stocks.
4. While the number of special requests has been at the same level in recent years, the diversity and complexity of the requests are increasing.
5. ICES receives an increasing number of invitations from Clients and observers to present the advice at meetings. ICES has in 2018 accepted 29 invitations. The preparation and participation in these meetings take a significant proportion of the ACOM Leaderships time.
6. When presenting ICES advice to stakeholders a number of issues/criticism were raised:
 - Changes in advice caused by changes to assessments and not to changes in the stocks,
 - Justification for ICES advice rule for stocks that are below B_{lim} ,
 - Justification for ICES advice rule for category 3 stocks,
 - Advice often difficult to read for non-experts,
 - Justification for mackerel advice.
7. In general data has been delivered within the deadlines in 2018 and no major failures has been observed with the exception of VMS data and one case where changes to internal national procedures resulted in delayed delivery of data.
8. The pool of experts capable of addressing technically complicated assessments and analyses is limited and the demand on these experts is high. Consequently, it is increasingly difficult to find experts willing and able to perform advisory work in ICES beyond what is required to update stock assessments. This may threaten ICES ability to provide advice in the future.

9. The Secretariat has used substantial resources in implementing the review system. It has in recent years been difficult to find experts willing to act as reviewer.
10. ACOM's involvement in drafting and approving advice has improved in 2018 compared to previous years. However, the participation is still skew in favor of fisheries advice with limited involvement of a large part of ACOM in ecosystem advice requests.
11. ACOM has decided to move the annual ACOM meeting from November to March/April.
12. ACOM adopted a job description for ACOM Members and Alternates. The job description addresses the role of ACOM Members collectively and individually in ICES advisory services and in their home country.
13. ACOM agreed to implement the steering group structure, where all Expert Groups are referring to a Steering Group, previously adopted by SCICOM.
14. ACOM agreed, following a recommendation from the Workshop on ICES Framework for Ecosystem Advice, to recommend to Council to organize a Dialogue meeting in 2019/2020 to discuss with Stakeholders what ICES can offer on ecosystem advice.
15. The relatively few resources made available from ICES Member Countries to the development and finalization of Fisheries and Ecosystem Overviews remain a limiting factor for the publication of the overviews.

2 Overview of the advisory process and advice provided in 2018 until September

2.1 Advice provided by ICES

The advice provided by ICES in period 2014 to 2018 is shown in table 1. The figures for 2018 are preliminary based on the plan for 2018.

The decline during the period in number of advice on fishing opportunities is due to an increase in the number of stocks for which ICES provided biennial or longer advice.

The low number of special requests in 2015 was partly due to a delay in the signing of the MoU with the EU which meant that all EU special requests were delayed by more than half a year.

Advice type\year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Fishing opportunity	252	225	222	207	192
Special requests and other advice	19	14	29	25	32
Technical services	9	8	6	3	10

Table 1. Number of advice by type issued by ICES in the period 2014 to 2018.

2.2 Recurring requests for advice

ICES advisory plan for 2018 involves advice on fishing opportunities for 188 stocks.

Area	Number of stocks for which advice has been or will provided in 2018
Iceland and East Greenland	12
Barents Sea	8
Faroe Plateau	3
Celtic Sea and West of Scotland	56

North Sea, Eastern Channel, Skagerrak and Kattegat	35
Bay of Biscay and Atlantic Iberian Waters	42
Baltic Sea	11
Widely distributed and migratory stocks	21

Table 2. Number of recurring advice on fishing opportunities planned for 2018 by area.

The complexity of the single stock advice on fishing opportunities has increased. Especially the introduction of Multiannual Plans in the EU has added to the complexity by introducing F ranges, requesting MSY based advice only for target stocks and precautionary approach based advice for other stocks. ICES is now operating with five type of advice categories.

In addition to the recurring advice on fishing opportunities ICES has updated the Fisheries Overview for the Baltic Sea and plan to update the North Sea overview and publish a new Fisheries Overviews for the Celtic Seas in December 2018.

ICES plan to publish two new Ecosystem Overviews in December, one for the Baltic Sea and one for the Azorean ecoregion. Updated versions of already published Ecosystem Overviews (Barents Sea, Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Coast, Celtic Seas, Greater North Sea and Icelandic Waters) will be released in December.

ICES has also providing advice in response to recurring requests on ecosystem impacts of fisheries to:

EU Commission:

- Bycatch of small cetaceans and other marine animals;
- Impact of fisheries on other components of the ecosystem;

NEAFC:

- Vulnerable deep-water habitats in the NEAFC Regulatory Area.

2.3 Special requests

ICES expects to publish advice in response to 25 special requests in 2018. The number of requests is at the same level as in recent years. However, the complexity and diversity of the requests is increasing. Examples are the requests to evaluated management strategies, where both the technical complexity of the analyses and the number of management scenarios to be reviewed are increasing.

Special requested in 2018:

EU:

- Evaluation of the long-term management plan for Celtic Sea herring.

- Guidance on an appropriate method to integrate criteria, species, species group to higher groups of birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and cephalopods for a Good Environmental Status assessment.
- Locations and likely locations of VMEs in EU waters of the NE Atlantic, and the fishing footprint of 2009–2011.
- Long-term management strategy for southern horse mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus*) in ICES Division 9.a.
- Management areas for sandeel in the North Sea.
- Plausible and updated F_{MSY} ranges for the stocks of species inhabiting western EU waters.
- Review of the list of Baltic Sea wild salmon rivers in Annex I of the EC Multiannual plan on Baltic Sea salmon.
- Revision of the contribution of TACs to fisheries management and stock conservation for selected deep-water stocks.
- Revision of the contribution of TACs to fisheries management and stock conservation for selected stocks.
- Sentinel fishery for Norway lobster (*Nephrops*) in functional unit 25, Division 8.c.
- Independent review of MS progress reports and, when relevant, update or new estimation of stock indicators regarding eel.
- Analysis of the IUCN process for the assessment of the conservation status of marine species in comparison to the process used by fisheries management bodies.
- Further development of ICES mixed fisheries considerations.
- Horse mackerel in areas 8.c and 9.a- inter-area flexibility.

EU, Faroe Islands, Iceland and Russia

- Re-evaluation of the reference points for Norwegian Spring-spawning herring.

EU and Norway

- Evaluation of long-term management strategies for Norway pout in ICES Subarea 4 (North Sea) and Division 3.a (Skagerrak–Kattegat).
- Management strategies for North Sea stocks.

France

- Updated advice for undulate ray (*Raja undulata*) in divisions 7.d–e and 8.a–b.

NEAFC

- Long-term management strategy for herring in the Northeast Atlantic (Norwegian spring-spawning herring).

The Netherlands

- Comparison of the ecological and environmental effects of pulse trawls and traditional beam trawls when exploiting the North Sea sole TAC.

Norway and Russia

- Evaluation of harvest control rule (HCR) options for redfish (*Sebastes mentella*) in ICES subareas 1 and 2.

OSPAR

- Scientific peer review of the 'North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Seamount High Seas MPA' (NACES HS MPA) proposal.
- Peer review of the Haploops communities Case Report.

Poland

- Review of the effectiveness of current conservation areas and periods in place for the recovery of the cod stock in the Baltic Sea.

In addition to the special requests listed above ICES has under the AA with EU agreed to participate and active contribute in internal EU co-ordination process, Working Group on Good Environmental Status (WGGES) and Marine Strategy Coordination Group (MSCG) in the framework of the MSFD Common Implementation Strategy process.

2.4 Technical services

A Technical Service is the provision of scientific information, or a process that produces scientific information, for the use of managers and policy-makers. It is not an advice in the sense that it does not include a recommendation on behalf of ICES but it share some of the same characteristics as an advice:

- Scientific objectivity and integrity;
- Quality assurance, including peer review as appropriate;
- Transparency.

In 2018 ICES will deliver the following 10 technical services:

EU

- Training course on Introduction to Statistically Sound Sampling schemes
- Training course on Introduction to Stock Assessment
- Deliver an online international platform for age reading workshops and calibration.
- Support the development of a full specification of the RDBES, including a regional data model for commercial catch design based sampling and agreed estimations methods.
- Inclusion of DCF surveys and missing variables into DATRAS.
- Dissemination of ICES advice beyond pdf files.
- Mixed fisheries- likely catch of stocks for which ICES has advised zero catch.

EU and Norway

- Norway pout additional elements to advice on management strategy

OSPAR

- CEMP assessment tool for contaminants.
- Production of 2017 spatial data layers of fishing intensity/pressure.

3 Review of advisory process in 2018

3.1 Data

In general data has been delivered within the deadlines in 2018 and no major failures have been observed with the exception of VMS data where a couple of countries did not deliver or delivered too late for the data to be used in the 2018 advisory work and one case where changes to internal national procedures resulted in delayed delivery of data.

3.2 Expert Groups

The attendance of stock assessment Expert Groups seems in general to have been satisfactory to update assessment as planned.

The pool of experts capable of addressing technically complicated assessments and analyses is limited and the demand on these experts is high. Consequently, it is increasingly difficult to find experts willing and able to perform advisory work in ICES beyond what is required to update stock assessments. The availability of experts with the required skills is an increasing limiting factor for ICES advisory services and if not solved will be a major risk to ICES advisory services in the medium term.

3.3 Reviews

The advisory process involves peer review of responses to special requests, benchmark results and substantial changes to methods and data used in an advice. The difficulties observed in recent years to find experts willing to act as reviewer and ICES have continued in 2018.

3.4 Corrections

24 corrections to advice sheets have been issued in 2018 until primo October. All minor corrections with no impact on the advice.

3.5 Advice Drafting Groups.

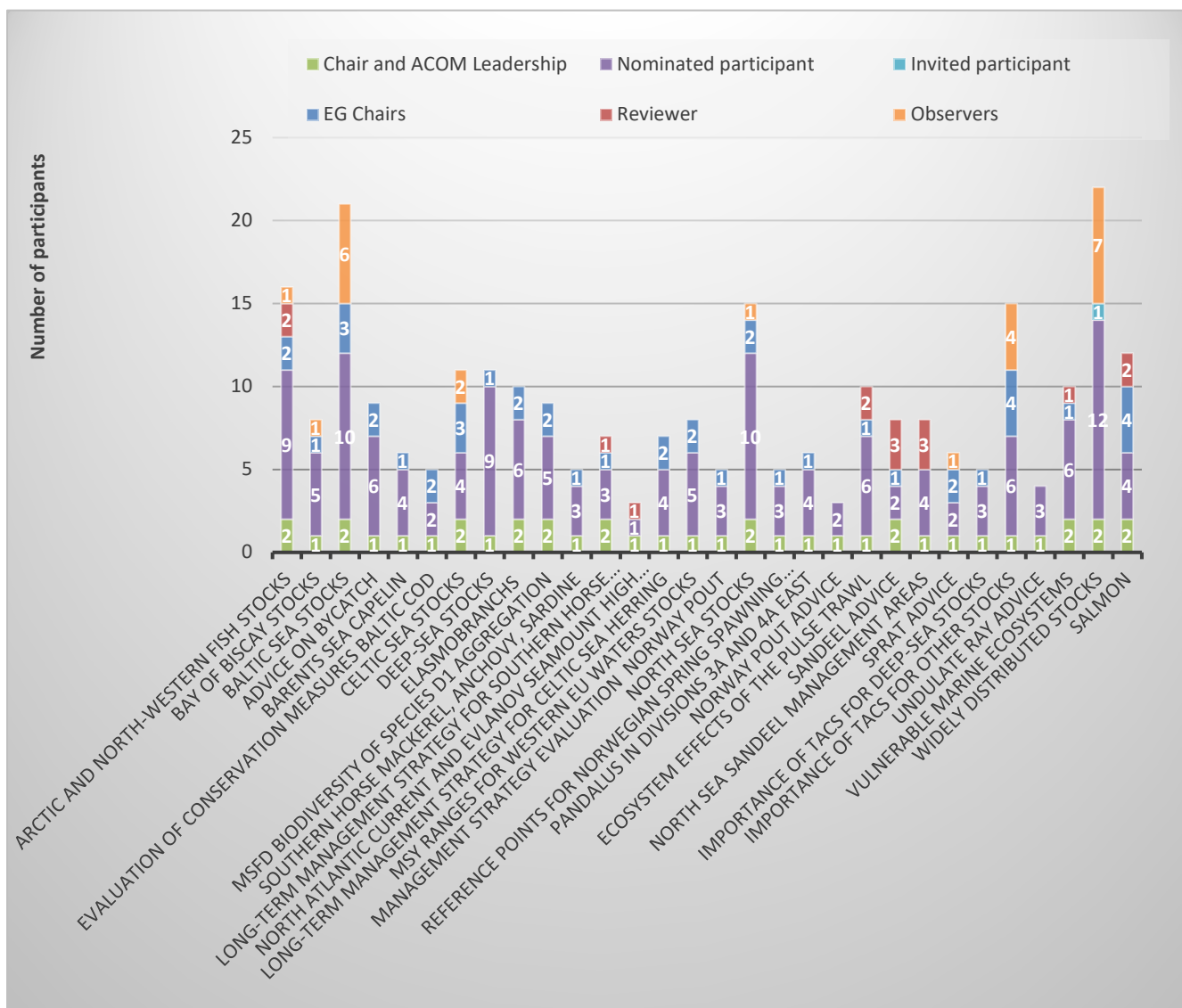


Figure 1. ADG Participation 2018 (Jan-Sep).

30 Advice Drafting Groups met in 2018 from January to September. The number of participants in the ADGs varied between 3 and 22. Attendance by participants nominated by ACOM national members varied from 1 to 12. The attendance by national nominated members was less than three in 4 of the 30 ADGs.

The participation in Advice Drafting Groups has improved and in general been satisfactory in 2018. ICES Member Countries engagement in Advice Drafting Groups is dependent on the items addressed in the Groups. The Advice Drafting Groups dealing with advice on fishing opportunities are with the exception of the groups dealing with one or very few stocks well attended and normally with an attendance beyond what is required to do the job. The interest in participating in non-fisheries Advice Drafting Groups seems much more limited and the Secretariat and the ACOM Leadership had in many cases actively to approach the ACOM Members to ensure a minimum attendance.

3.6 ACOM Advice Web-Conferences.

The participation in advice Web-Conferences in 2018 until October is shown in Figure 2. A total of 27 Web-Conferences were planned for the period. 14 (11 in 2017 and 7 in 2016) out of them were canceled because no substantial comments on the draft advice were received and the advices were adopted without a Web-Conference being held.

On average 48% (2017: 37%) of ICES Member Countries were represented at a Web-Conference, 23% (2017: 16%) did not attend but approved the advice beforehand and 29% (2017: 47%) did not respond to the Web-Conferences invitation.

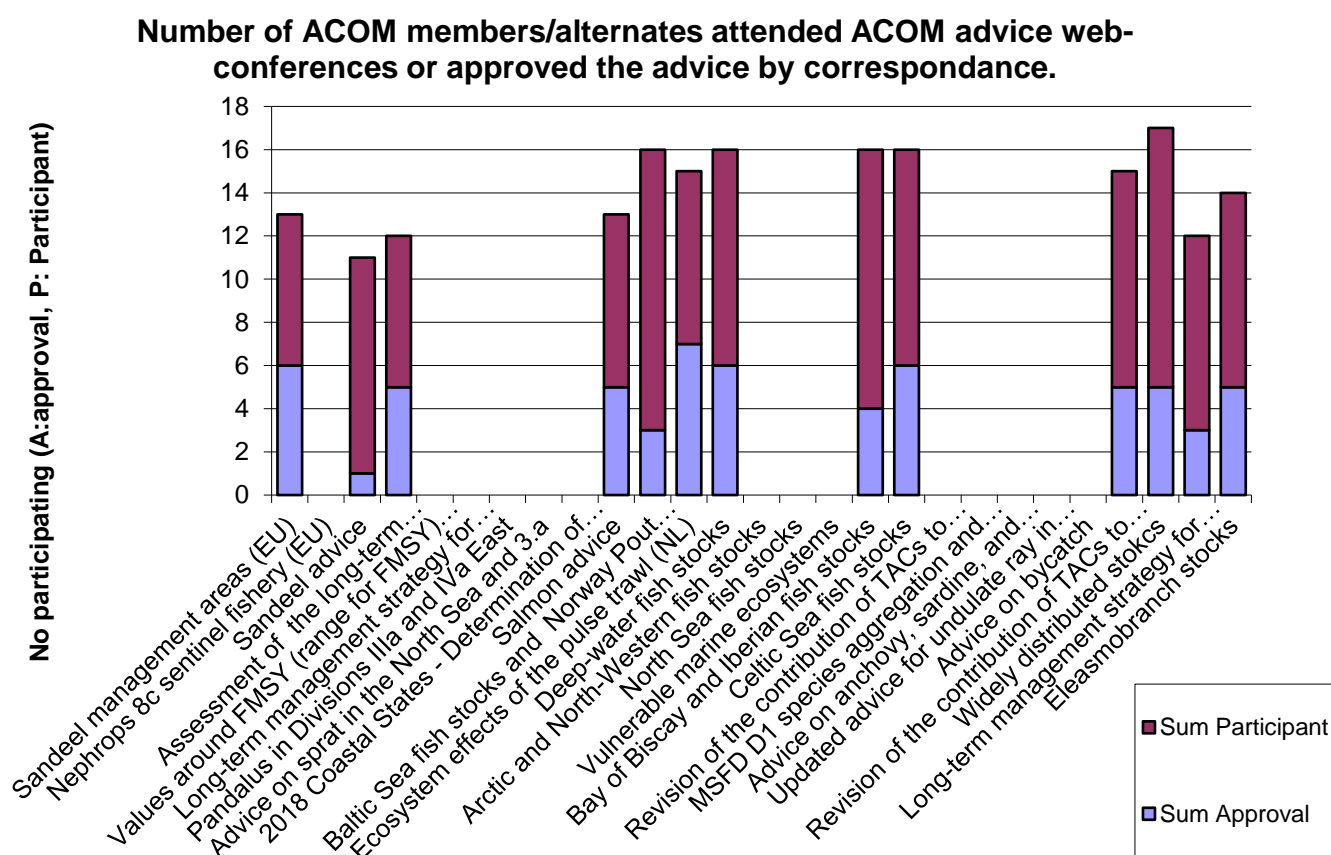


Figure 2 Number of ACOM members participating in advice Web-Conferences or approved the advice before the Web-Conference in 2018 until primo October. In cases where no participation is reported the Web-Conference was canceled because no substantial comments to the advice were received

3.7 Presentation of advice

The Administrative Agreement (AA) with EU, and the MoUs with Norway, NEAFC and NASCO include commitments for ICES to present, if requested, the advice at meetings organized by the clients. In addition the leadership has been invited to give presentations at Coastal State meetings, regional meetings and conferences. Table 3 provides an overview of presentations provided or planned in 2018.

The number of invitations is increasing and the preparation and participation in the meetings take a significant proportion of the ACOM Leaderships time. However, these meetings offer good opportunities for discussing the advice and approaches with stakeholders and to get feedback. The general feedback on ICES advice has in 2018 been very positive. However, some criticism were raised including:

- Changes in advice from year to year caused by changes in the assessments or reference points and not in stock development question the credibility of ICES advice.
- ICES advice rule for stocks below B_{lim} . The rationale for the rule to bring the stock above B_{lim} in one year is unclear and it has been questioned if this rule is necessary for the entire advice rule to be precautionary.
- ICES advice rule for category 3 stocks was questioned based on cases where stock seems to increase but advice is a reduction in catches.
- Unclear Precautionary Approach advice rule for category 1 and 2 stocks.
- Complexity of advice – often difficult to read for non-technical experts.
- Advice was questioned with reference to national scientist who are active involved in ICES advisory work not supporting ICES advice.
- Advice on mackerel for 2019 is very low and not acceptable to industry and many national administrations. ICES in on pressure to revise the assessment and advice with reference to tagging data having to large an impact on the assessment.

Table 3. Presentations by ICES of advice or advisory approach in 2018.

Organisation/meeting	Venue	Date	Presenter
European Parliament, Public Hearing, "Encounters" Between Science And Management In Fisheries	Brussels	21 March	Eskild Kirkegaard
Pelagic AC. ICES Advisory Approach	Den Haag	12 April	Eskild Kirkegaard
Pelagic Fish Forum. Status of pelagic stocks	Brussels	23 April	Eskild Kirkegaard
EU - Norway. Advice on Management Strategy for Pandalus	Skagen	24 April	Eskild Kirkegaard
Coastal States meeting on NSSH. Advice on management strategy for NSSH	London	14 May	Eskild Kirkegaard
OSPAR – NEAFC Collective Arrangement	Berlin	16 – 17 May	Eskild Kirkegaard
ICSP 13 United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement. ICES contribution to strengthening of the science-policy interface for sustainable fisheries	New York	22 – 23 May	Eskild Kirkegaard

PELAC-MAFMC workshop	Hirtshals	5 June	Eskild Kirkegaard
NASCO, Annual meeting	Portland, Main	6 - 8 June	Martha Robertson
BalticAC. Advice on Baltic stocks	Tallin	11 – 12 June	Colm Lordan
Conference on status of the fish stocks in the Baltic Sea, particular cod.	Szczecin	15 June	Eskild Kirkegaard
International Dialogue Meeting on Pulse Fishing. Advice on pulse trawl	Amsterdam	18 June	Eskild Kirkegaard
European Parliament, Committee on Fisheries. Advice on pulse trawl	Brussels	21 June	Eskild Kirkegaard
BaltFish. Advice on Baltic stocks	Copenhagen	29 June	Eskild Kirkegaard
NWWAC. Advice on North Western Waters stocks.	Ghent	3 July	Ghislain Chouinard
PelAC. Advice on herring stocks.	Copenhagen	5 July	Eskild Kirkegaard
DG MARE. Informal meeting on ICES advice for 2019.	Brussels	10 July	Eskild Kirkegaard
NSAC. Advice on North Sea stocks.	Edinburg	11 July	Colm Lordan
Seminar on ICES advisory approach and advice on Baltic stocks	Vilnius	17 August	Eskild Kirkegaard
Norway pout MSE special request EU-Norway Consultations	Gothenburg	5 September	Colm Lordan
EU Council WG on Fisheries. ICES advice for 2019	Brussels	13 September	Eskild Kirkegaard
EU Seminar on Fisheries Science	Brussels	14 September	Eskild Kirkegaard
Advice on other pelagic stocks	Den Haag	3 October	Colm Lordan
NEAFC, PECMAS	London	2 – 3 October	Eskild Kirkegaard, David Miller and Mark Tasker
Costal State meetings on mackerel	London	8 – 9 October	Lotte Worsø Clausen

Costal State meetings on blue whiting	London	9 - 10 October	Lotte Worsø Clausen
Costal State meetings on Norwegian spring spawning herring	London	10 - 11 October	Lotte Worsø Clausen
2 nd Costal State meetings on Norwegian spring spawning herring	London	5 November	David Miller
NEAFC Annual Meeting	London	13 – 16 November	Mark Dickey-Collas

4 ACOM

ACOM identified at its November 2017 meeting the priority areas for the Committees strategic work in 2018. Below is a short progress report for each of the areas.

4.1 Timing for the annual meeting

ACOM has two annual physical meetings. The Consultations, a one-day meeting held the day before the ASC, and the Annual Meeting in November/December lasting 3.5 days.

The meeting prior to the ASC is on national expenses while ICES is paying travel and per diem to ACOM members attending the Annual Meeting.

The Consultations were originally used to discuss the advisory plan for the following year including approval of resolutions. The planning and approval are now done by correspondence and the Consultations are mainly used to discuss strategic issues including further developments of the advisory frameworks.

The short time period between the Consultations combined with October and November being very busy months with many ADGs, NEAFC meetings, ICES Council meeting and coastal states meetings, makes it difficult to follow up on Consultations discussions in preparation for the November meeting.

ACOM therefore decided to move the annual ACOM meeting to March/April.

4.2 ACOM working procedure/job description.

The low involvement in non-fisheries advice has triggered a discussion in ACOM on needs for changes to the current structure of the Advisory Services. ACOM has concluded to maintain the current structure of ACOM with one member per country but with a changed set of skills and background requirements for national ACOM members, and with a change in internal ACOM working procedures to support this change.

In accordance with the decision, ACOM has in 2018 focused on the job description for ACOM members and on possible changes to ACOM's working procedures.

A job description prepared by an ACOM Subgroup was presented to ACOM at the Consultations in Hamburg. ACOM adopted the description (annex 1 to this report).

ACOM furthermore discussed its working procedures and mainly the membership and tasks of Advice Drafting Groups. A subgroup was established and tasked to propose a system for ACOM participation and overseeing of ADGs, including ADG membership and roles.

4.3 Quality assurance.

ACOM at its meeting in November 2017 did not identify new initiatives on quality assurance to be taken in 2018 but agreed that the follow up on existing initiatives should be given high priority. This includes ACOM initiatives on:

- ACOM working procedures and job description for ACOM Members. See above.
- Bias in stock assessments. Workshop planned for 2018 has been postponed to 2019 after requests from the Workshop Chairs,
- Management strategy evaluation. Workshop to revise current guidelines on management strategy evaluations is scheduled for February 2019.
- Frameworks for ecosystem advice. See below.
- Technical guidelines. See below.

In addition to ACOMs initiatives a number of data related initiatives on quality assurance have been taken by the Secretariat (see report to Council from Data and Information Services).

4.4 Frameworks for Ecosystem advice.

The second Workshop to scope the ICES framework for ecosystem advice took place in May 2018 to further develop an ICES framework for ecosystem advice. The Workshop made good progress in defining the principles for a framework and recommended the next step to be a Dialogue Meeting in 2019/2020. The recommendation was supported by ACOM.

The Dialogue Meeting should aim to achieve an understanding of what ICES has to offer in the arena of ecosystem advice, the utility of explicit management objectives and the benefits (and how) of having a dialogue on determining these objectives, including (re-) evaluation, per request. The Dialogue Meeting should also discuss how to move towards longer term/iterative ways of working with clients, also involving ICES data, science and communication expertise. Government administrators at the national and international level, scientists involved in the process of developing scientific advice in relation to an ecosystem approach, and a range of stakeholders should be invited to the meeting.

4.5 Fisheries Overviews and Ecosystem Overviews.

The Fisheries and Ecosystem Overviews are now key products for ICES in delivering advice on ecosystem based management. The aim of the overviews is to provide information and advice of relevance for fisheries and ecosystem management. The Overviews were in 2018 included as requested advisory deliverables in the Administrative Agreement between the EU and ICES.

ICES will in 2018 publish three new overviews (Fisheries Overview for Celtic Seas and Ecosystem Overviews for Baltic Sea and the Azorean ecoregion) and update the already published overviews.

Although there has been progress in developing and publishing the Fisheries and Ecosystem Overviews, the relatively few resources allocated by ICES Member Countries to the work remain a limiting factor. As the Overviews are becoming central parts of ICES advisory deliverables it is crucial that ACOM engage in the work and ICES Member Countries give priority to it and allocated the resources required.

4.6 SG structure.

A proposal from the ACOM and SCICOM Chairs to develop a steering group structure covering all Expert Groups in ICES was discussed by ACOM and SCICOM at the Annual Science Conference in Fort Lauderdale. While SCICOM could support the proposal, ACOM requested more information before deciding. A Subgroup was established to work by correspondence to address the questions raised by ACOM and to draft a job description for a new steering group. The report of the Subgroup was discussed by ACOM at a WebEx meeting in February 2018. It was concluded that further discussion was needed and the Subgroup was requested to further develop the proposal. It was also agreed to turn the subgroup into a joint ACOM-SCICOM subgroup by involving the Steering Group Chairs.

The report of the joint ACOM – SCICOM Subgroup was discussed at the ACOM Consultations in Hamburg. ACOM supported the proposal of establishing a Steering Group structure with all ICES Expert Groups being affiliated to a Steering Group. ACOM was unsure if it would be sufficient to establish one new Steering Group to accomplish the Expert Groups currently under ACOM and requested the Chairs of ACOM and SCICOM to consider whether to establish one or two new steering groups and to draft a proposal for allocation of ACOM Expert Groups to Steering Groups. The aim is to implement the new steering group structure in 2019.

4.7 Frequency of assessments and reopening.

ACOM Leadership has since 2015 discussed with Clients the possibilities for reducing the annual number of advice on fishing opportunities. Clients are still requesting annual advice for most target stocks but have accepted less frequent advice for many non-target stocks and stocks with no analytical assessments. This has resulted in a reduction in the annual number of advice on fishing opportunities by approximately 20% since 2014.

ACOM Leadership will continue the dialogue with Clients with the aim of further reduce the annual number of advice on fishing opportunities.

ACOM has currently an agreement with EU and Norway to provide advice for demersal North Sea stocks by July and to revise the advice in the autumn if survey results from third quarter significantly change the assessment of recruiting year classes. ACOM has suggested to Clients to only provide the advice in the autumn to reduce workload. While Norway has indicated it could accept the suggestion EU has informed that changes to the current process is not acceptable.

4.8 Technical Guidelines

ACOM agreed in 2014 to publish 25 technical guidelines for ICES advice. It has proven very difficult to get the support from ICES Member Countries to finalise the guidelines. To speed up the work a plan for finalizing the guidelines was adopted by ACOM in November 2017. Despite ACOM agreed to the plan and to support the work it is still very difficult to find the resources to work on the guidelines and until now only 14 of the agreed 25 guidelines have been published.

4.9 Introduction to the advice.

The introduction to advice has been updated and is available on ICES Website.

4.10 Benchmarks.

ACOM agreed in 2016 a new benchmark system to be implemented gradually. The system will be used for North Sea demersal stocks in 2019.

5 **MIRIA (Meeting between ICES and Recipients of ICES Advice)**

The MIRIA meeting (16 -17 January 2018) was attended by representatives from Denmark, EC-DGMARE, Faroe Islands, France, HELCOM, Iceland, NEAFC, Norway, OSPAR, ACOM Leadership and ICES Secretariat.

Review of ICES advisory services in 2017

Clients and other Recipients of ICES advice acknowledged the hard work of ICES Expert Groups and Advisory Committee to produce the advice and were very satisfied with ICES advice in 2017. The quality of the advice was in general considered to have been high although the errors in the advice for mackerel and Norwegian spring spawning herring had questioned ICES quality assurance of advisory products.

While acknowledging an improved communication between ICES and Clients, ICES was encouraged to continue to improve communication including the accessibility and readability of the advice.

Quality assurance

MIRIA acknowledged the initiatives taken by ICES to strengthen the quality assurance of ICES advice in all parts of the process from data collection to presentation of the advice and encouraged ICES to give quality assurance of advice high priority.

Recognising that limitation in availability of experts to ICES advisory work may constitute a risk to the quality of the advice MIRIA encouraged ICES to consider how to attract new experts.

ICES approach for advice on fishing opportunities

MIRIA discussed ICES MSY approach for category 1 and 2 stocks (stocks with analytical assessments) and confirmed that ICES should use its MSY approach as basis for the advice for stocks for which no agreed management plan exists. However, EC informed that they were revising their request for recurrent advice on fishing opportunities and that this may influence

the type of advice requested especially for non-target stocks (see report on bilateral meetings with the EC below).

Regarding category 3 and 4 stocks MIRIA supported ICES work on defining target and by-catch stocks and requested ICES to report on progress at the 2019 MIRIA meeting.

MIRIA was concerned that given the limited knowledge/information available for many stocks, there would be a significant challenge in trying to produce MSY advice for Category 3 and 4 stocks.

Fisheries and Ecosystem Overviews

The Clients welcomed the overviews and encouraged ICES to develop overviews for the remaining ecoregions. ICES was requested to keep the Clients informed on progress in developing the overviews.

6 MIACO (Meeting between ICES, Advisory Councils and other Observers)

The annual meeting with observers took place 18 -19 January 2018 and was attended by 28 observers representing 18 observer organisations: the Pelagic, Baltic Sea, North Sea, North Western Waters, South Western Waters and Long Distance Advisory Councils, the Dutch Pelagic Freezer-Trawler Association, Seas at Risk, DGMARE, Coalition Clean Baltic, Norwegian Fishermen's Association, OCEANA, European Fisheries Control Agency, EUFishmeal, Danish Pelagic Producer Organisation, FishSec, MSC, Norwegian Fishermen's Association.

On request from the Advisory Councils a separate 3 hours pre-MIACO meeting between ICES and the Advisory Councils were held prior the MIACO.

Review of ICES advisory services in 2017

The observers expressed a high degree of satisfaction with ICES and the advisory work in 2017.

Regarding communication of the advice the Advisory Councils all expressed appreciation of ICES attending their meetings to present the advice. However, ICES was encouraged to improve the accessibility of the advice.

Concerns were expressed on the large changes in advice from year to year for some stocks caused by changes in the assessments and not in stock development.

The possibilities for participating in benchmark workshops was seen as very positive.

ICES advisory process and basis for advice were generally found to be transparent. However, Baltic salmon assessment and advice was mentioned as an example of non-transparency, where it seems that only very few experts understand the assessment and the basis for the advice.

Quality assurance

ICES was appreciated for recognizing current flaws in the advisory system and the initiatives taken to address them. The meeting supported ICES policy to have all data used in the advisory work available at a detail level allowing quality check and estimation of uncertainties. Concerns were expressed on the degree of complexity inherent in assessment models, and lack of transparency and reproducibility, and the Transparent Assessment

Framework was welcomed. Lack of experience, knowledgeable assessment scientists/modelers was mentioned and ICES encouraged to further develop its training program.

Stakeholder involvement in advisory work

Meeting participants were in general very happy with the current system and especially the possibilities of participation in benchmark processed were commended.

Communication was raised as very central to ensure an active involvement. ICES was requested to use a consistent terminology for the different types of groups and to make sure the rules for participation are clear, and to make information on work-plans including information on changes to plans easier accessible.

ICES approach for advice on fishing opportunities

MIACO discussed ICES MSY approach. The general response was that the approach for category 1 and 2 stocks is considered transparent and appropriate. Some concern was expressed that managers too easily have accepted the 5% rule in ICES advice rule (the risk of the stock is below the limit precautionary biomass reference point Blim should be 5% or less)

ICES was commended for its work on stocks for which analytical assessment is not possible and observers supported the initiatives to develop and MSY based advice rule for these stocks.

ICES approach to landing obligation/discard ban

Main issues discussed in relation to landing obligation/discard ban were data quality, incorporation of survival rates of discards and inclusion of discards in advice.

Observers took note of ICES approach not to try to predict changes in discards and landings as result of the landing obligation and to base discards estimates in assessments and forecast on empiric data. It was noted that there are large differences in the discard estimates provided by ICES and by STECF although they were based on the same observer data. ICES was requested to solve the differences to ensure consistency in the data.

7 WGCHAIRS

The WGCHAIRS meeting (23 – 25 January) was attended by 54 Chairs representing more than 60 Working Groups.

The agenda contained a session on the role of Expert Group Chairs and two sessions addressing the next generation of Fisheries and Ecosystem Overviews, science and advisory opportunities for ICES, fisheries advice, integrating ocean data, and how can data collection keep up with developing data needs.

The meeting was very successful. In addition to allow the Chairs to exchange experiences and views on being a Chair it also provided very useful information on how the Secretariat, ACOM and SCICOM better can support and help the Chairs in their work. A number of actions points related to the role of Chairs, communication, Expert Groups outputs and mentoring Chairs were agreed.

8 ICES-EC meetings

The administrative agreement (AA) for 2018 between ICES and EC involves important changes to the recurrent advice deliverables. EC distinguish between target stocks and for non-target stocks. For target stocks the basis for advices will be unchanged (management plan if agreed by all relevant parties and consistent with the precautionary approach, otherwise ICES MSY or PA approach pending on stock category). For non-target stocks EC is requesting precautionary approach and not MSY advice if the stock is subject to TAC management. If no TAC is set EC is not requesting advice on fishing opportunities but only on stock status.

This change in request has been implemented and the advice provided in 2018 to the EC is based on the new stock request categories. The change has made the advisory approach more complex and difficult to explain.

The Secretariat and DG Mare is negotiating a change in the administrative set up of the AA to be implemented in 2019. This is not expected to impact the substance and advice requests.

9 ICES – NEAFC

The bilateral meeting between ICES and NEAFC took place on the 17th January after the MIRIA meeting. NEAFC confirmed its satisfaction with the cooperation with ICES expressed at the MIRIA meeting.

Key issues discussed at the meeting were: data quality and availability, ICES participation in NEAFC meeting and presentation of advice, requests for advice in 2018 and long term developments in advice.

NEAFC and ICES secretariats have during 2017 discussed the use of VMS data provided by NEAFC and issues related to the format of the data have been solved.

NEAFC was very happy with ICES involvement in NEAFC meetings and ICES presentation of advice at these meetings. The Parties agreed to plan for a similar participation in NEAFC meetings in 2018. NEAFC welcomed the Fisheries and Ecosystem Overviews and would like to see fisheries and ecosystem considerations be further developed.

10 ICES – Norway

The annual meeting between ICES and Norway to discuss the cooperation under the MoU between the two parties took place 16 January. Both parties agreed that the cooperation had been very good. Norway mentioned the cooperation on the mackerel advice as positive process. The open communication and informal clarifications around the advice were appreciated.

Norwegian Spring Spawning Herring (NSSH) was, with the correction of the advice at a late stage, a difficult issue in 2017. The advice report on the correction, including the quality of the assessment description, was difficult for non-technical readers to understand. The desire for quality descriptions to be written more clearly and understandably was expressed.

Norway informed that they were still assessing their needs for aquaculture advice.

Whereas Norway sees the value of stimulating bio-economic assessments of fishery management, Norway did not find it correct for ICES to base advice on fishing opportunities on bio-economic assessments.

Norway furthermore informed that mixed fisheries advice is of less interest to Norway and mixed fishery assessments should not be the basis for advice on fishing opportunities.

Norway acknowledged the need for ICES to have access to data at a level allowing a proper quality check and informed that they would follow-up on the availability of Norwegian acoustic and biologic survey data.

11 ICES – OSPAR

A short meeting between ICES (Secretariat and ACOM Leadership) and OSPAR (Secretariat) was arranged on 17 January back to back with MIRIA. The main item discussed at the meeting was potential requests for advice from OSPAR. OSPAR foresee no major changes in number of requests.

ANNEX 1

The following description of the role of an ACOM Member was agreed by ACOM at the ACOM Consultations in Hamburg 23rd September 2018. ACOM will formal adoption the description at its annual meeting in November 2018.

The role of an ACOM Member

The membership of ACOM is one representative appointed by each Contracting Party, and the Chair and Vice-Chairs of ACOM. Contracting Parties may alternate the persons representing them as a member of ACOM. If they intend to alternate, a primary member and alternate members should be appointed.

Members and alternates of ACOM are expected to use their expertise in ensuring that ICES advice is based on best-available science, ensuring that the advice is relevant, timely, unbiased, independent, peer-reviewed and transparent

1. Being a Member of ACOM to collectively:

- a) ensure that ICES Advisory Service responds to current needs of ICES clients;
 - b) ensure that ICES Advisory Service develops to meet strategic needs of both ICES and its clients;
 - c) support the development and implementation of mutually agreed frameworks for advice between ICES and its clients;
 - d) agree on an annual plan for ICES advisory activities;
 - e) help to develop Terms of Reference and scientific ideas of relevance for ICES Advisory Service for ICES Expert Groups;
 - f) ensure procedures / best practices / guidelines of relevance for ICES Advisory Services are developed.
- In addition, ACOM collectively will
- g) help SCICOM to define and to develop a science programme to underpin current and emerging needs for advice;
 - h) identify shortfalls in skills and knowledge needed in support of ICES Advisory Service and to work with ICES community to develop the required skills and knowledge.

2. ACOM members individually to:

- a) participate in all aspects of ACOM activities;
- b) chair Advice Drafting Groups as agreed by ACOM;
- c) take a strategic view of direction of ICES advice, provide an oversight of the ICES advisory process, agree /modify guidelines, provide input to strategic and immediate planning of advisory process;
- d) communicate frequently and actively with national Delegates and SCICOM members on advisory matters relevant to their work with ICES;

- e) maintain and further strengthen links between ICES Secretariat, science, data and advice;
- f) encourage experts to take part in ICES activities, particularly advisory work by highlighting the benefits and importance;
- g) ensure adherence to procedures, best practices and guidelines.

In addition, ACOM members may

- h) review outputs from the Expert Groups and other structures in the network, identify gaps in scope and impact of work, or shortfalls in skills and knowledge, and advise on ways to fill these gaps and to improve our advice;
 - i) provide feedback to ACOM on science work needed for advice and the development of methods.
3. ACOM members also play a role individually in their home countries through
- a) co-ordination of Member Country advisory role;
 - b) promote and support effective communication between ACOM and the ICES Clients and national administrations/ bodies, including representing ICES advisory service nationally;
 - c) inform relevant national science communities about ICES advisory work;
 - d) managing national involvement in ACOM work, ensuring range of science/knowledge covered;
 - e) ensuring relevant expertise supplied to Advice Drafting Groups allocated to the country in addition to those of national interest;
 - f) ensuring that nominated Advice Drafting Group members understand their role;
 - g) work together with national SCICOM Member to support national participants in Expert Groups supporting ICES Advisory Services.