

## **Report from the Chair of Council Strategic Initiative on the MSFD-Ecosystem Approach (CSIMSFD-EA)**

*This document provides Council with a summary of progress since last year's meeting.*

At Council 2015 it was agreed to broaden the mandate of the group to include the Ecosystem Approach, as well as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and to change it from a Council Steering Group to a Council Strategic Initiative.

The group met twice since last year, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 and 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2016 at the ASC. Minutes of these meetings are available on the group's Sharepoint site. Attendance at these meeting tended to be predominantly SCICOM/ACOM Leadership and the Secretariat.

In line with the discussion at last year's Council meeting, the group attempted to take a more strategic approach than in previous years. This means that the group did not undertake specific tasks itself but sought to identify MSFD/EA issues that needed to be addressed or that required better coordination or promotion both within ICES itself or with outside organisations. Using the CSIMSFD-EA in this manner, and also as a mechanism to bring issues of strategic importance to Council for discussion, was supported at the ASC meeting and would appear to be the most efficient approach for this Strategic Initiative.

### **Issues considered/addressed by CSIMSFD-EA during the past year:**

#### **ICES–EFARO initiative on Integrated Surveys.**

This is a proposal by ICES and EFARO to explore the possibilities of streamlining the use of research vessel surveys to collect data for MSFD and CFP by way of three desktop pilot studies. DGMare support the initiative in principle but were not in a position to allocate funds and considered this to be an issue for Regional Coordination Meetings (RCM) established under the DCF.

ICES and EFARO are exploring ways to progress this with the RCM. CSIMSFD-EA strongly supports this initiative and, other than keeping Council informed, has no specific actions identified.

**Action:** Council to take note.

### **DATRAS and OSPAR 2017 Intermediate Assessment.**

Using DATRAS data OSPAR has developed quality assured Groundfish Survey Monitoring and Assessment data products (GFSM&A DP) for use in the derivation of indicators for assessing Good Environmental Status for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. An R-script and full documentation has been prepared by Marine Scotland to identify inconsistencies in DATRAS. During this process inconsistencies were identified to Member States' Data Providers. Data Providers have corrected their DATRAS inputs or have provided corrected data to OSPAR.

Marine Scotland, the ICES Data Centre, the Data and Information Group and Steering Group on Integrated Ecosystem Observation and Monitoring are working collaboratively to align the two data sets.

ICES continues to develop the Large Fish Indicator (LFI) and these will be included in the Ecosystem Overviews.

**Action:** Council to take note and thank Marine Scotland for their work.

### **Benthic –fishing pressure / impact.**

On foot of requests from DGENv, considerable progress has been made on developing and evaluating indicators for assessing pressure and impact on the seafloor from bottom-contacting fishing. ICES, building on the work from the EU FP7 BENTHIS project, will progress this work in 2017.

The intention is to be in a position to provide advice that will be quantitative, measurable, facilitate cumulative pressure assessments and will be ecologically meaningful.

This will be a very important step forward and should facilitate regional coherence in the assessment of seabed impacts.

**Action:** Council to take note.

### **ICES and Ecosystem Based Management.**

The Ecosystem Overviews for the Barents Sea, Bay of Biscay and Iberian Coast, Celtic Seas and Greater North Sea have been published and the Fisheries Overviews are being prepared. CSIMSFD-EA considered it important that OSPAR, HELCOM, the EC and member countries be aware of these products and the work of ICES relating to ecosystem based management.

It was agreed that a short communication be prepared to inform MSs, RSCs, EC and relevant bodies of the ecosystem and fisheries overviews. This will highlight the potential for development of additional products and to promote the ongoing work of ICES.

Doc. Del. 4.1 "ICES and Ecosystem Based Management" fulfils this requirement and will be presented to Council.

This document will be published as part of the introduction to advice and will also be developed into an outreach product by Secretariat communications for use at *inter alia* at CBD.

**Action:** Council to take note and comment as appropriate

### **Preparation for future requests and policy needs.**

At its September meeting CSIMSFD-EA discussed how best to position ICES to be prepared for the future MSFD-EA policy developments and to be ready to influence these from a scientific perspective.

A discussion on the long-term science needs to respond to future policy developments with recipients of advice at the MIRIA meeting was considered to be a useful approach. Such discussions needs to be focused and the Group agreed that it could prepare a discussion document on how trade-off, risks and spatial measures could be integrated into fisheries measures and management plans. The views of the incoming SCICOM, ACOM and SSG Chairs could be sought on such a document. It is worth noting that the EEA has initiated a 2022 horizon scanning process.

**Action:** It would be useful to have the views of Council on the MIRIA approach proposed above and any other ideas on how ICES could position itself to influence the future development of the Ecosystem Approach. This would inform the work of CSIMSFD-EA for the next year.

### **Chair of CSIMSFD-EA**

**Action:** A new Chair for the Group needs to be identified.