

## Secretariat Status Report

*The meeting is invited to review the status report on the activities and deliverables being developed by the Secretariat.*

*This report is an update of the “gut feeling” review of the status of implementation of the Secretariat component of the ICES Strategic Plan for the 2014 October Council meeting, and is contained in the attachment, together with a comparison and explanation of the status of implementation based on the developed Key Performance Indicators. The review is based on the examples below of activities and deliverables referring to the Secretariat actions outlined in the Implementation Plan (Implementing the ICES Strategic Plan, 2014-2018 Linking Science, Advice, Data and Information, and Secretariat).*

### **ICES Strategic Plan, 2014–2018**

Supporting the organization through the work of the Secretariat:

Goal 6 Foster the science, the advisory and the data information services through the work of the Secretariat

Goal 7 Ensure an efficient and effective organization

Supporting activities for Goals 6 and 7:

1. Securing the needed resources for the ICES Secretariat to support ICES science, advisory services, data processes and products and for publications and communications;
2. Implement effective tools and efficient process flows to streamline work processes and enhance the delivery of products;
3. Organizing and supporting the resource planning and coordination of network activities; and
4. Fostering cooperation and communication with Member Countries and partner organizations, stakeholders, and society.

### **Implementation Plan, Annex 5**

#### Goal 6:

*Strategic support to the Council, Bureau, and the Committees by provision of inputs regarding foresight of needs and options for development of science, scientific advice, and data*

*Interact with external networks and communicate scientific priorities*

Various deliverables are contributed under this activity. Examples of this have been listed below:

Streamlining of working practices; further development of the Stock Assessment Database and the Standard Graph outputs that these feed, to be integrated with the overall Content Administration for Reports and Advice (CARA), and the Resource Coordination Tool (RCT),

- development of assessment strategies; data-limited approach, and the planned extension to cover category 3-4 stocks in addition to category 5-6 stocks,

- support to integrated advice, through work to elaborate ecosystem overviews for ecoregions, extraction of information to create fisheries overviews (main target species, catch levels, and gear type), review of descriptors under the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, development of descriptors using ICES held data, such as the Database on Trawl Surveys (DATRAS), for development of the Large Fish Indicator, work to elaborate methodologies for how to go from indicators to assessments (e.g., from fishing intensity to state of sea bed habitats, and from indicators on exploited fish to an assessment status of exploited fish in an ecoregion),

- input to integrated monitoring work to be carried out jointly by EFARO and ICES; work in progress to compare an overview of MSFD related indicators and data needs, to the data needs for fish stock assessments,

- data handling and streamlining, including operationalization of data reference sets e.g., operational eutrophication products for HELCOM, and operational oceanographic products (OOPS) from the ICES network, establishment of an acoustics database and data flow),

- improvement and development of the Regional Database (RDB) platform for commercial catch sampling based on the financial commitment from Council (equity).

- a data calls workflow and template, to ensure that the quality and clarity of data requests originating from ICES are of a high standard and give clear direction to recipients on the eventual use of the data and the expectation of delivery .

- dissemination of deliverables (e.g., new simplified advice format, launch of an improved GIS tool for popular advice, with products accessible per ecoregion).

With many undertakings under various policy instruments, and supported by several different organizations/initiatives, the Secretariat would at times benefit from stronger priority setting and support from the Member Countries, and contacts with national representatives who are participating in these other organizations/initiatives. This would also enhance the possibility to represent ICES in other fora.

To ensure the best possible coordination of initiatives across the pillars in the ICES Strategic Plan and improve the communication on the various initiatives, meetings are set up in the Secretariat between relevant colleagues, and in a so-called Coordination Group, consisting of the Heads of the four pillars (SCICOM, ACOM, Data and Information, and the Secretariat). It has proven beneficial to have all heads in the Secretariat, in order to coordinate on a practical and operational level.

*Increase the level of professional support across the ICES work plan to provide data compilation, and initial analysis for consideration to ensure best use of expert resources, inter alia, by strengthening the ecosystem profile in the Secretariat to support priority working areas identified in the ICES Strategic Plan.*

This is being achieved through a two-part approach; 1) Freeing resources through efficient processes and with products fit for purpose; and 2) Ensuring a secretariat

profile which can deliver the necessary support. A further description of these two processes are found below.

While the full development and implementation of new tools to streamline the working procedures will decrease the work load in the long run, both for the ICES community and the Secretariat, there is still some way to go before that point has been reached. This is not due to bad will, and a lack of buy in to the process, but simply a matter of a system that is so stretched that there is limited if any room for the additional work that the commissioning of a new system creates.

**Re 1)** Further development of efficient support involves; streamlining the processes focusing on deliverables with a quality fit for purpose, and the introduction of tools (Resource Coordination Tool, Stock Assessment Database, as part of the wider Content Administration for Reports and Advice - CARA) which will reduce the time spent by experts and the Secretariat to manage the process and deliver the products. The Secretariat is reviewing working procedures, which is necessary because of a heavy workload to support our network, and specifically:

- A new Advice format was introduced during 2015. The format was developed by ACOM with the support of the secretariat and the secretariat was responsible for its implementation. The new format has been positively received, by those developing and receiving the advice. The new Advice format will facilitate the implementation of the Content Administration for Reports and Advice (CARA), (see further below).
- Science Groups are challenged by the move to a new reporting style since the adoption of multiannual Terms of Reference. The current preparation of new streamlining tools/working procedures includes the development of the Resource Coordination Tool.

In the Secretariat this is reflected in considerable use of resources:

- Professional Officers continue to be loaded with administrating procedural tasks in the Expert Working Groups, taking away the focus from their ability to provide substantive and scientific support, especially on the advisory side.
- Assisting Secretaries have their time focused on labor intensive report formatting.

**Re 2)** A strategic approach has been followed and implemented in recent recruitments, whereby new profiles of Professional Officers and some Supporting Secretaries has been sought. The Professional Officer profiles demand strong analytical skills to assist with the strengthening of technical and scientific input to ICES work, including the development of new products and deliverables. The Professional Officers possess competences related to ecosystem and environmental issues, including fisheries as well as an understanding of underlying data needs. While Assisting Secretaries will still support the work with logistic and traditional secretarial assistance a new recruitment profile has been implemented for some positions where technical support to the processes is also expected.

*Projects - interface with scientific groups and organizations and identify and facilitate participation in strategic work that supports the aims of the ICES Strategic Plan. Seek to link project work with participants from academia.*

A more strategic and proactive approach is being sought, for both:

- 1) ICES participation in projects, and
- 2) for incorporation of project outcomes in further ICES work.

With regard to 1) there is a steady and increasing recognition by the strategic partners of the importance and value of having ICES as a partner in a project. These projects are feeding into deliverables for the ICES Strategic Plan. An example of this is the Project Market Place, arranged during the 2015 Annual Science Conference, enabling a discussion on the interaction between ICES and the projects.

Further work is still needed to consider more strategic approaches. This includes the need to consider how to deal with the increased resource demands, stemming from an increase in projects that ICES participates in, and whether there is a possibility to outsource tasks to member institutes (need to investigate both legal issues and willingness/resources).

With regard to 2) this is an important aspect of agreeing in the first instance to ICES participation in a project (cf. the ICES project policy<sup>1</sup>). While the formal procedures will be continued to be followed for ICES participation in projects, it is also planned to make use of the Coordination Group, to ensure a wider discussion of the ICES benefits across pillars, from a participation in a project.

#### Goal 7: Ensure an efficient and effective organization

*The Secretariat – foster a modern and fulfilling workplace.*

As described above new profiles, for both the Professionals and a group of the Assisting Secretaries have been sought, in an attempt to enhance the Secretariat's ability to provide support for the new competences demanded by the ICES Strategic Plan. This has been done in connection with the expiration of existing contracts. A new role for the Secretariat is an opportunity for Professional Officers and Assisting Secretaries to improve job satisfaction and build their careers by having opportunities to develop the technical and scientific substance of their work and spend a larger part of their time on such work.

A caveat in this process is the need to both fulfil existing demands, which is already difficult with the existing staff resources, and to be able to build up new competences in accordance with the ICES Strategic Plan. This is a complicated balancing act, which requires scrutiny of the existing work processes to deliver the recurrent products efficiently, leave room in the workplan for special requests, and a need to free resources, in order to be able to carry out new tasks, as outlined in the ICES Strategic Plan.

*Finance – monitor the budget and ensure resources are used as directed by Council. Prepare the draft and forecast budget for Council approval.*

The ICES budget has become more and more stretched, as a consequence of the stable national contributions (without inflation regulation), and increasing dependence on external financing. With a forecast budget elaborated two years in advance of the actual budget year, estimated incomes and expenditures have to be updated more frequently, and priorities have to be made for which activities to carry out, sometimes in the middle of the budget year.

Through support to the Council Working Group on ICES Business Model the Secretariat has been able to assist with detailed analysis of income and expenditures and consider areas for improvement.

*Tools to streamline processes (Resource Coordination Tool; RCT, and Content Administration for Reports and Advice; CARA)*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ices.dk/explore-us/projects/Pages/ICES-Project-Policy.aspx>

The Resource Coordination Tool is a component of a larger ICES workplan tool covering both advice and science which is the platform for process planning starting from the advice requests /scientific issues, ToRs for groups or processes, workflow calendar, and the affiliations of experts to various groups and processes in ICES, as well as the address manager.

The RCT is intended to serve as an information base for planning and prioritization of overall human-resource use. This is to ease the planning and budgeting for the institutes, help experts get a better overview of their commitments, and also to help ICES (and other advisory bodies including STECF and others outside of EU) get a better overview of commitments and identification of experts to handle incoming requests for advice. The process is initially being set up to respond to the need to match available scientific expert resources to the proposed work plan of the advisory process, and will eventually be expanded to include the science process.

*Deliverables and next steps for RCT are:*

The RCT has developed successfully, and during the remaining part of 2015 more work will be invested in making the tool accessible and usable for the ICES community (More information under Council agenda item 8.1.3). It is seen as a key criteria for success not only that a tool is developed, but also that the tool is used by those who originally requested it. Both for the purpose of getting a better overview of the resource availability and commitment, and to ensure a streamlining of the work processes, e.g., approval of Resolutions and follow up of ToRs.

#### **RCT Reports:**

The RCT is a powerful database with a lot of information and data available. Council delegates are encouraged to engage with the Secretariat if they have specific needs for certain kinds of reports or information on national participation. It is possible to create many kinds of reports. An example will be provided under 8.1.3.

The “Chair-invited” member reports will in the future be available online as a dynamic link with the most up-to-date information available for Delegates when they need it. From 2016 the weekly email notifications will be discontinued.

The below gives a summary of the steps taken, and planned for the remaining part of 2015:

The RCT was soft launched in 2015, allowing ICES meetings and processes to be viewable externally in a new dynamic and detailed meeting calendar (<http://ices.dk/news-and-events/meeting-calendar/Pages/default.aspx>). Initially, the soft launch required a “double system” for work-planning, but since August the advisory process planning occurs exclusively and efficiently within the RCT.

Work has started to collate information provided by Resources Managers in the Member Countries on 1) experts in their institutes and 2) matching experts with (categories) Skills of Expertise; Ecoregions; and Functional Groups. This will allow a search for experts with specific skills, as well as inform on their availability. The process, however, has been somewhat cumbersome, and focus in the further development of the RCT is on an easier way to include this information to the RCT. Likewise further work is planned to ensure the use of RCT

- as a way to follow-up the implementation of ToRs/Resolutions for ICES Expert Groups, and as a tool to support the integration;
- as a tool to incorporate, where possible other key processes/functionalities , such as the nomination system.

ACOM has launched a better fit for purpose advice format in relation to integration within ecoregions and simplification. *CARA* is a tool which is being developed in conjunction with, and also in support of ACOM work. This tool will streamline report and advice production by linking data and analysis to reports and text, by hardwiring guidance to experts and advice drafters into their working tools and to make reports and advice products easily available in many formats and for further analysis. The development of *CARA* will also be used as an opportunity to deliberately match the scope and quality of the reports and advice products with what is required for the specific purpose, which in most cases means a simplification and tuning.

*Deliverables and next steps for CARA are:*

- Continued work during 2015 and into 2016: expanded stock assessment data base and graphs, dealing with 70+ data poor stocks. Available for graph generation and utilization of the data in EG reports and advice. The stocks data base will be developed to incorporate data as required for all parts of standard fisheries advice both regarding stocks which are analytically assessed and stocks with less data available.
- First quarter of 2016: testing of an enhanced system, giving the users in the ICES Expert Working Groups, and Advice drafting groups the added benefits of the dynamic data linkage, an integrated ICES advice template reflecting the new format of advice, and enabling cross-linkage between science and advice groups.

*Training programme – Develop and improve the Training Programme and facilitate and test the online accessibility; reach out and engage with academia to widen target audiences of the ICES Training Programme*

A discussion on the possibility for online course, or e-learning courses has been initiated with the training group. It has been agreed to initially develop and offer the course “How to Lead an Effective Technical Meeting” as an on-line course. Strategic partners with experience in this field, such as the World Maritime University (WMU) in Malmö, have been approached and through a Letter of Agreement it has been specified how ICES will be able to make use of the online facilities at the WMU. While costs will be kept to a minimum, any additional costs will be covered by the approved use of equity to enhance the training programme. The foreseen start-up of the UNDP/GEF financed project, “Strengthening global governance of Large Marine Ecosystems and their coasts through enhanced sharing and application of LME/ICM/MPA knowledge and information tools” project, will likely offer a possibility for ICES to kick-start the online work, in our foreseen role as training programme coordinator. The development of the training programme is also being sought through project participation, such as the H2020 project BlueBridge where ICES will get the possibility to test and offer its training modules as online courses.

*Publications and communications*

**Publications** – *facilitating the electronic dissemination, availability and visibility of the products of ICES processes including technical reports, scientific publications, and advice*

During 2014, and continued in 2015 a move towards exclusive electronic dissemination has been made, also due to budgetary restrictions. Use of iPaper for electronic publishing has proven an effective and appealing way of presenting various reports and brochures.

A strategy for implementing permanent strategic traceable identities for all ICES documents and datasets are under development (Digital Object Identifier; DOI), including financial implications, and implementation will start off during the latter part of 2015. The implementation also has resource implications, and progress will depend on available resources.

**Communications** – *promote ocean literacy by making ICES work easily understandable to decision-makers, stakeholders, and the informed public*

A variety of channels have been used and further developed in an attempt to promote the work of ICES to a wider community, and the public at large. This includes: 1) New features on the ICES website; [ICES blogs](#) and [interactive map displaying ICES popular advice](#), 2) [The e-newsletter](#) published six times a year to over 1300 subscribers, 3) [Press releases](#), 4) Social media [LinkedIn group](#), (5711 members), [Facebook](#), (2113 “likes”), and [Twitter](#) (2524 followers) – figures as of 13 October. Social media brings a lot of traffic to the website – over 21,000 redirects over the past 12 months, 5) Promotional material, including [a brochure on integrated ecosystem assessment work in ICES](#), Postcards, to promote ICES training courses, ICES data centre, and ICES ASC 2015 and 2016, and 6) further enhanced early career scientists activities at ASC.

*Maintain and develop high quality meeting facilities at ICES headquarters, embracing new technologies*

Meeting rooms are continuously being updated, also to facilitate online meeting participation. New screens have been installed in all meeting rooms some with touch screen capabilities. New monitors and webcams have been installed in some meeting rooms. Improved connections and wired solutions have been installed to optimize picture and sound quality. These improvements also support the new web conferencing tool, Skype for Business that was taken into use during 2015.

# The ICES Strategic Plan (2014 2018) - Implementation - Linking Science, Advice, Data and Information and Secretariat

*The Secretariat Picture after 9 months - A first look at Performance - A Qualitative Approach*

**OVERVIEW - % in each Score Category**

2014		<b>Goal 6</b> <i>Foster the science, advisory Data and Information Services</i>	<b>Goal 7</b> <i>Efficient and Effective Organisation</i>
	1		1
	2		1
	3	2	2
	4	2	4
	5		1
		<b>N = 4 Actions</b>	<b>N = 9 Actions</b>

2015		<b>Goal 6</b> <i>Foster the science, advisory Data and Information Services</i>	<b>Goal 7</b> <i>Efficient and Effective Organisation</i>
	1		
	2		2
	3	2	1
	4	2	5
	5		1
		<b>N = 4 Actions</b>	<b>N = 9 Actions</b>

SCORE

1	Not Started
2	Just Started
3	Some Progress
4	Good Progress
5	Doing Well



The ICES Strategic Plan (2014-2018) - Implementation - Linking Science, Advice, Data and Information and Secretariat

The Secretariat Picture after 9 months - A first look at Performance - A Qualitative Approach

Secretariat	Secretariat Plan - Action	Gut Feeling 2014	Gut Feeling 2015	Performance Indicators
Foster the science , the advisory and the data information services through the work of the Secretariat (Goal 6)	Strategic support to the Council, Bureau, and the committees by provision of inputs regarding foresight of needs and options for development of science, scientific advice, and data.	4	4	Provision of timely & relevant inputs re. emerging science and advice
	Interact with external networks and communicate scientific priorities	3	4	Identification of new partners Reflected by new MoUs, LoAs, and strategic projects
	Increase the level of professional support across the ICES work plan to provide data compilation, and initial analysis for consideration to ensure best use of expert resources, inter alia, by strengthening the ecosystem profile in the Secretariat to support priority working areas identified in the ICES Strategic Plan.	4	4	Data & analysis made available to meetings Identification of an appropriate process where SEC support useful Meeting prep tasks re-assignment amongst SEC staff to ensure efficient use of resources
	Projects - interface with scientific groups and organisations and identify and facilitate participation in strategic work that supports the aims of the ICES Strategic Plan. Seek to link project work with participants from academia	3	4	ICES represented in project consortia Ext. projects support work of ICES

Supporting Activity for Secretariat to achieve Goals 6 and 7

- 1 . Securing the needed resources for the ICES Secretariat to support ICES science, advisory services, data processes and products and for publications and communications;
2. Implement effective tools and efficient process flow to streamline work processes and enhance the delivery of products;
3. Organising and supporting the resource planning and coordination of network activities;
4. Fostering cooperation and communications with Member Countries, partner organisations, stakeholders and society.

SCORE

1	Not Started
2	Just Started
3	Some Progress
4	Good Progress
5	Doing Well

%

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

N = 4 Actions

The ICES Strategic Plan (2014 2018) - Implementation - Linking Science, Advice, Data and Information and Secretariat

The Secretariat Picture after 9 months - A first look at Performance - A Qualitative Approach

Secretariat	Secretariat Plan - Action	Gut Feeling 2014	Gut Feeling 2015	Performance Indicators
Ensure an efficient and effective organisation (Goal 7)	Facilitate effective and focused use of expert and infrastructure resources by making ongoing resource requirements transparent to national institute resource managers using the Resource Co-ordination Tool (RCT)	4	4	Tool developed for use internally and externally
	Facilitate common access to ICES processes by developing work that draw on external resources readily available including the tasks, processes and meetings	3	4	Accessibility to common access tool that facilitates external access and streamlines procedures
	Develop and Improve the Training Programme and facilitate and test the online accessibility of the ICES Training Programme	1 or 2?	2	A training course accessible via online participation
	Develop and improve the Training Programme: reach out and engage with academia to widen target audience.	1 or 2?	2	More joint training courses available
	Publications - facilitate the electronic dissemination, availability and visibility of the products of ICES processes including technical reports, scientific publications and advice	5	5	Move towards electronic publications dissemination ICES docs with permanent digital traceable identities
	Further develop and implement the Content Administration for Reports and Advice (CARA)	3	3	Uptake of CARA in exp groups Full use in Adv process
	Maintain and develop high quality meeting facilities at ICES headquarters, embracing new technologies	4	4	One meeting room developed with best tech, with eventual spread to other rooms
	Create communications that focus on prioritised areas as defined by the Strategic Plan - promote the work of the ICES community and its relevance to society - make available various tools (ICES website, social media) for the community to communicate their work	4	4	Outreach material linked to ICES deliverables and outcomes (ICES video) Social media presence & increased community use/discussion
	Ensure that the Secretariat is able to respond to emerging science, advisory and data needs with relevant professional competence, reviewed by Secretariat management	4	4	Ready to respond to emerging needs

SCORE

1	Not Started
2	Just Started
3	Some Progress
4	Good Progress
5	Doing Well

%

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

N = 9 Actions

Supporting Activity for Secretariat to achieve Goals 6 and 7

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