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Working Group on North–east Atlantic continental slope surveys (WGNEACS)

By correspondence



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Executive Summary

The present report was prepared by the Working Group for North-east Atlantic Continental Slope Survey (WONEACS) following correspondence in 2015.

Three subgroups of existing deep-water surveys were grouped by geographical area during the previous meetings: a Nordic, a central and a southern subgroup were identified. These three subgroups received a set of specific terms of references to work with. However, since 2014 only Nordic deep-sea surveys were considered, as the southern and central surveys are currently not carried out.

The Nordic group did not present any new data or analyses in 2015. Due to the lack of commitment, the Nordic group decided by correspondence that the continued existence of WONEACS should be discussed with SCICOM/ACOM. The recommendation from the group was that WONEACS had the potential to deal with important issues, but that these issues could be addressed in other expert groups; namely NWWG¹, AFWG², WGINOR³ and WGDEEP⁴. Following communication with SCICOM/ACOM, the recommendation was supported, and WONEACS is dissolved.

¹ ICES North-Western Working Group

² ICES Arctic Fisheries Working Group

³ ICES Working Group on the Integrated Assessments of the Norwegian Sea

⁴ ICES Working Group on the Biology and Assessment of Deep-sea Fisheries Resources

1 Introduction

The Working Group for North-east Atlantic Continental Slope Survey (WGNEACS), chaired by Rasmus B. Hedeholm, Greenland, planned to meet by correspondence in 2015 to evaluate and the discuss the progress being made on the issues outlined in the 2014 report. These were:

- a) Coordinate and evaluate new survey initiatives.
- b) Compare and possibly implement joint indices on deep-water species.
- c) Continue work on sampling protocols for surveys by Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway, and attempt to standardize the protocols. Special attention should be given to species identification, especially regarding non-target species. The protocol will be published as a SISP.

2 Structure of the report

The group met by correspondence sporadically throughout 2015. By the end of 2015 it became clear that no members had made any progress on the identified issues. Therefore, the group decided that no work would be done in 2015, and began the process of discussing the group's view on the future role of WGNEACS, and presenting this view to SCICOM/ACOM. This ended in the group being dissolved. Consequently there is little to report, and the report consists of a participants list and recommendations.

Annex 1: List of participants

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Annex 2: Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION	ADDRESSED TO
<p>WONEACS recommends that SSGIEOM dissolves the WONEACS group taking the following into consideration:</p> <p>The 2015 WONEACS participants agreed that WONEACS has handled important issues such as survey coverage and shifts in distribution of commercial and non-commercial species. Such topics should be addressed in other ICES EG groups such as NWWG, AFWG, WGDEEP and WGINOR to the extent time allows for it.</p>	SSGIEOM
<p>When dissolved, specific WONEACS issues that other ICES EGs should consider are: the development of ICES SISP for species spanning several EEZs and covered by multiple surveys, most importantly for Greenland halibut. This will improve the quality of already existing joint survey indices and be conducive for the comparison of other species across surveys. This would also aid in the identification of shifts in distribution, which in turn could lead to a discussion of survey coverage.</p>	AFWG, NWWG, WGDEEP, WGINOR

Annex 3: Terms of Reference

2013/MA2/SSGESST06 The **Working Group on North-east Atlantic continental slope surveys** (WGNEACS), chaired by Rasmus Hedeholm, Greenland, will work by correspondence/intersessionally in 2015, to work on ToRs and generate deliverables as listed in the Table below.

	MEETING DATES	VENUE	REPORTING DETAILS	COMMENTS (CHANGE IN CHAIR, ETC.)
Year 2014	By Correspondence		Interim report by 15 December 2014 to SSGIEOM, SCICOM and ACOM	Group worked intersessionally in 2014
Year 2015	By correspondence		Interim report by 15 December 2015 to SSGIEOM, SCICOM and ACOM	Group to work intersessionally in 2015.
Year 2016			Final report by XXX 2016 to SSGIEOM, SCICOM and ACOM	

ToR descriptors

ToR	DESCRIPTION	BACKGROUND	SCIENCE		EXPECTED DELIVERABLES
			PLAN TOPICS ADDRESSED	DURATION	
a	Coordinate and evaluate new survey initiatives.	There is an unsurveyed commercial fishing area targeting Greenland halibut northwest of Iceland. Areas in Faroese waters and surrounding waters that are not well covered.		1	Advice on better Survey coverage of deep-sea resources.
b	Evaluate current surveys in relation to ecosystem monitoring.	Include "ecosystem survey components" in existing surveys.		3	Contribute to advice on deep-sea ecoregion. Report to WGDEC, NWWG
c	Compare and possibly implement joint indices on deep-water species.	Such work has been initiated on Greenland halibut data from the Icelandic and Greenlandic survey. However, the approach would possibly be applicable to other species.		2	Combined indices of stock trends Report to WGDEEP, NWWG, AFWG.
d	Evaluate if survey data allows for detection of migrations. Also if they can reveal shift in distribution of key species.	Stock structure of Greenland halibut and redfish and survey results suggest migration between EEZ's. Using length and area specific data some patterns may emerge.		3	Better definition of stock structure. Joint publications (if data allow for that)

e	Continue work on sampling protocols for surveys by Faroe, Greenland, Iceland and Norway, and attempt to standardize the protocols as much as possible. Special attention should be given to species identification, especially regarding non-target species. The protocol will be published as a SISP.	Facilitate use of data across national surveys. Joint publications (in case of interesting findings)	3	Standardized measurement methods.
f	Planning of deep-sea surveys in the central and southern areas as defined in earlier WGNEACS reports (Approximately the slope from Scotland to Portugal, and the Azores).	Coordinated deep-sea surveys are currently being applied for in EU waters that have been a central subject for WGNEACS in the past. WGNEACS will again be the correct body for further planning of these surveys when they are at the stage of being realized.	3	Deep-sea surveys in central and southern WGNEACS areas

Summary of the Work Plan

The task is to coordinate as much as practically possible about surveys on deep-sea resources in the NE Atlantic. The main focus the coming 3 years is on surveys in the Nordic area (Greenland, Iceland, The Faroese and Norway). Work is planned regarding un-surveyed areas, ecosystem monitoring, joint indices on deep-water species, detection of migrations, and standardization of measuring methods between countries.

Additionally coordinated deep-sea surveys are currently being applied for in EU waters that have been a central subject for WGNEACS in the past. WGNEACS will again be the correct body for further planning of these surveys when they are at the stage of being realized.

YEAR	COMMENT
Year 1	Tentative plan for new surveys in ToR a. Start evaluation of current surveys regarding ecosystem monitoring and suggest for improvements ToR b. Start evaluation of current surveys regarding migrations ToR c. Continue analysis for ToR c and e. React to eventual needs of central and/or southern surveys in ToR f.
Year 2	Complete work on combined indices ToR c. Continue analysis for ToR b, d and e. React to eventual needs of central and/or southern surveys in ToR f.
Year 3	Sum up ToR b, d and e. React to eventual needs of central and/or southern surveys in ToR f.

Supporting information

Priority	High. The work of the Group is essential if ICES is to collate even the most basic data and to progress the application of assessment techniques.
Resource requirements	None specific, beyond the need for members to prepare for and participate in the meeting. Some of the international deep-water surveys are subject to funding
Participants	The Group is normally attended by some 5–10 members and guests.
Secretariat facilities	None.
Financial	No financial implications.
Linkages to ACOM and groups under ACOM	<p>This working group would fulfil the need of internationally coordinating the existing dedicated deep-water surveys that are currently being carried out along the European continental shelf and Nordic seas. These internationally coordinated deep-water surveys would be a potential source of abundance indices for roundnose grenadier, black scabbardfish, deep-water sharks, Greenland halibut, bluemouth red-fish, greater silver smelt and greater forkbeard and also be a platform for carrying out studies of seamounts identified by WGDEC and any related studies of the efficacy of closed areas.</p> <p>Close links with WGDEEP and WGEF and also for the Nordic deep-water surveys NWWG and AFWG to provide abundance indices on deep-water species including deep-water sharks; links with WGDEC for the collection and analysis of environmental data and deep-water habitat characterization.</p>
Linkages to other committees or groups	Links with IBTS in order to benefit from expertise in the international coordination of trawl surveys.
Linkages to other organizations	NEAFC